

Press Release

DEKRA at the 2020 *auto motor und sport* conference

Controlled Access to Vehicle Data Is Fundamental for Future Road Safety

- Risk of “computers on wheels” should not be underestimated
- Vehicle inspection must also cover electronic systems and software
- DEKRA CEO calls for trust center model

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Connectivity and automation are the buzzwords for the development of automotive technology in the years to come. “To ensure road safety in the future, it will be vital that these in-car functions deliver permanent functional reliability. They will need to be inspected properly by inspection organizations to ensure that this is the case,” explained DEKRA CEO Stefan Kölbl at the 2020 *auto motor und sport* conference. At the online event from Stuttgart, Germany, Kölbl called for legally controlled access to safety- and environment-related vehicle data.

“Who does vehicle data belong to?” was the title of the joint roundtable discussion with Karsten Schulze, Vice President of German automobile club ADAC, and Dr. Jörg Rheinländer, member of the Board of Directors of insurance company HUK-Coburg. The participants were unanimous in their view that vehicle data belongs, first and foremost, to vehicle owners or users, and they should have the power to decide who they would like to grant data access to and what data the designated stakeholders would have the right to access. The DEKRA CEO believes, however, that public service orders – like general inspections – should be an exception to the rule. “It is impossible here for access to inspection-related data to be contingent on approval from the vehicle owner, but there needs to be a set of clear legal regulations in place,” said Kölbl.

Over-the-air updates can change vehicles overnight

The call for data access relates to only a relatively small percentage of vehicle data that is relevant for performing a general vehicle inspection. It also relates to software versions. “Over-the-air updates mean that a vehicle can be fundamentally different today from the way it was yesterday,” said the DEKRA CEO. “So, in the medium term, checking the status of a vehicle every two years when it has its general inspection will no longer be enough. Vehicle inspections will have to be performed as and when needed.”

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To allow safety- and environment-related data to be checked for defects, malfunctions and manipulations at any time and enable vehicle inspectors to perform their public service, the DEKRA CEO argues that inspection organizations need direct, unfiltered and non-discriminatory access to inspection-related vehicle data.

Trust center model intended to provide security

This would be possible using a trust center model with the trust center acting as a trustworthy and independent body on behalf of the state. It would give authorities, inspection organizations and other authorized bodies secure, equal and non-discriminatory access to the relevant data for automated and connected vehicles. "It is a far cry from completely storing every single data exchange with the vehicle; it's just about accessing safety- and environment-related data that has been labeled as such during vehicle type approval," explained Kölbl.

He believes that steps should be taken to ensure that data used to carry out the vehicle inspection is genuine and complete. "Delivering this data via the vehicle manufacturer's server does not meet these requirements. It is unfeasible for the manufacturer to retain full ownership of the data," specified the DEKRA CEO.

The "computer on wheels" poses a risk

For Stefan Kölbl, the image of the car of the future as a "computer on wheels" risks trivializing the issue. He believes that vehicles could present an entirely different kind of risk: "When a computer crashes, we usually reboot it and – most of the time – everything goes back to normal. But when this computer weighs more than a tonne and travels at 50 kilometers per hour, the word crash could become a different meaning altogether."

It is true that driver assistance systems and automated functions offer considerable potential to prevent or mitigate accidents, said Kölbl. "But the only way they can fulfill this potential is if they function reliably over the whole lifespan of the vehicle." He argued that this was all the more important because highly automated driving intends to eliminate humans as a fallback option. "Although many accidents are caused by human error, humans are also capable of avoiding critical incidents by responding to the traffic situation. So if humans are to no longer have a role to play in the system in the future, the technology needs to be even more reliable."

About DEKRA

DEKRA has been active in the field of safety for more than 90 years. Founded in 1925 in Berlin as Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein e.V., it is today one of the world's leading expert organizations. DEKRA SE is a subsidiary of DEKRA e.V. and

manages the Group's operating business. In 2019, DEKRA generated sales totaling 3.4 billion euros. The company currently employs almost 44,000 people in approximately 60 countries on all six continents. With qualified and independent expert services, they work for safety on the road, at work and at home. These services range from vehicle inspection and expert appraisals to claims services, industrial and building inspections, safety consultancy, testing and certification of products and systems, as well as training courses and temp work. The vision for the company's 100th birthday in 2025 is that DEKRA will be the global partner for a safe world.