

“We Need a German Industrial Master Plan”

09/06/2025 VDIK President Imelda Labbé calls for closer cooperation between industry and politics

The transition to electric mobility in Germany has stalled. Imelda Labbé, President of the Association of International Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (VDIK), attributes this to inadequate charging infrastructure and the high cost of electricity and vehicles. She argues that long-term coordination among all stakeholders is essential for the transformation to succeed.

Ms. Labbé, where does the German automotive industry currently stand?

Imelda Labbé: The industry is right in the middle of a major transformation. We've already made significant progress—whether it's in vehicle connectivity or the development of driver assistance systems on the path toward autonomous driving. We're seeing strong growth in electric vehicles, and especially high growth in plug-in hybrids. That said, we're still not on track to meet the EU's CO_2 targets. As long as the conditions for e-mobility aren't right, customers won't buy in at the scale needed—and that means the industry continues to face looming penalties. That's something we urgently need to

address.

What are the most critical conditions that need to be in place?

Labbé: There are three main factors. First, range anxiety is still an issue. We've made progress in expanding the charging infrastructure, but it's become clear that more needs to be done. We need significantly more fast chargers, especially in rural areas. Right now, three-quarters of all municipalities in Germany still don't have a single fast-charging station. Second, electricity prices are far too high, making the total cost of ownership for EVs unattractive. And third, we need appealing entry-level offers. The coalition agreement mentions plans for new incentives—and that's essential if we want to bring more affordable electric cars to market.

Who do you believe is responsible for solving these issues?

Labbé: This has to be a joint effort between government and industry. All relevant stakeholders need to come together and develop a coordinated five-year plan. Right now, we're seeing too many ad hoc measures. Take subsidies, for example: they were available for a while, then abruptly ended right before Christmas, followed by months of silence. Now there's talk of bringing them back—but no clarity on what that will look like. It's the same with charging infrastructure and electricity pricing. That kind of uncertainty just doesn't work. We need to bring everyone to the table—including urban planners and infrastructure developers—and create a real industrial master plan for Germany. A plan that's reliable, goal-oriented, and coordinated across sectors. If we can piece that puzzle together, the transition will succeed.

What's your outlook for international carmakers in the German market?

Labbé: In recent years, we've seen steady growth among international manufacturers. Their market share now stands at 43 percent—and I believe reaching 50 percent is entirely realistic. Affordable mobility plays a central role here. Consumers want cars that are budget-friendly—not just to buy or lease, but to maintain. So far, international brands have led the way on this front. But we're also seeing that the entire industry is catching on to this trend and responding with new offerings in the entry-level segment. So yes, things will remain very dynamic in the coming years.

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