Charging stations conforming to German metering regulations in sight: necessary adjustments for operators

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Since April 2019, operators of charging stations which offer charging services for electric vehicles have been required to conform with German metering regulations. In addition, the Pricing Ordinance states that billing is to be based on power consumption, measured in kWh. These statutory requirements pose considerable challenges for the industry. A particularly complex issue is ensuring that rapid charging stations using direct current (DC) comply with metering regulations, due to the fact that power meters conforming with German metering regulations are not yet available for such stations, as no such meters are ready for serial production.

The German Ministry of Economics agreed on a transitional arrangement with the industry last year for the handling of charging stations which are not in compliance with metering regulations. As part of this arrangement, the Ministry’s Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) for Electric Mobility program publishes semi-annual reports analyzing a survey of manufacturers of DC metering equipment and charging stations regarding the conversion of their DC charging stations and their plans to open conformity-assessed charging stations in Germany including DC metering equipment.

According to the study presented on 21 January 2020, 11 of the 17 manufacturers surveyed at the end of 2019 were already involved in a conformity assessment procedure. 1 manufacturer expected its products to be ready for serial production as early as the 4th quarter of 2019, while 3 other manufacturers expected this to come in the 2nd quarter of 2020 and 4 more in the 2nd or 3rd quarter of 2020.

The Ministry has stressed that obtaining a type examination certificate for the DC metering equipment is not the sole criterion in the conversion process. Rather, the decisive point is that the equipment must be ready for serial production and available on the market in appropriate quantities. It is also necessary for it to be installed in a conformity-assessed charging station.
The results of the study also serve as an orientation aid for state offices of weights and measures and should enable a market overview as to the progress of conformity assessment procedures and the availability of DC metering and charging equipment on the market.

Although expectations have had to be lowered slightly in some cases with respect to when equipment conforming with metering regulations will be ready for serial production, the responses from participating manufacturers show that the conformity assessment procedures will be completed shortly and that DC metering and charging equipment will soon be available on the market.

Accordingly, operators of DC charging stations should immediately develop or revise suitable conversion plans for communication to the authorities, if they have not done so already, so that they will be able to respond to any official measures.

The warning issued by the Consumer Association of North Rhine-Westphalia to Shell subsidiary New Motion, also in January, for lack of transparency in its billing models is further demonstration that current practices in the charging infrastructure sector are no longer acceptable. The Consumer Association has already announced that it will be turning its attention to other providers as well and that it intends to enforce compliance with consumer protection rules.