

# Electric cars purr at post-'dieselgate' Paris car show

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CEO French carmaker Renault, Carlos Ghosn, talks in front of an electric car on the first press day of the Paris motor Show, on September 29, 2016

Automakers at the Paris Motor Show on Thursday unveiled several electric cars with a range of up to 400 km, a technological leap designed to turn the page on the "dieselgate" scandal that sullied the industry's image.

Troubled German automaker Volkswagen led the electric charge on the opening day of the biennial show, where it aims to rebound from the emissions cheating scandal that engulfed it a year ago.

VW presented the "I.D.", the prototype of an electric car it says will be able to travel 600 km (375 miles) without recharging by 2020.

Europe's biggest carmaker touts the vehicle as being "as revolutionary as the Beetle was seven decades ago".

VW is still reeling from the scandal in which it was forced to admit that it used emission "defeat devices" in millions of diesel vehicles worldwide.

The company, facing a raft of lawsuits that are expected to set it back tens of billions of euros, has sought to make amends by shifting to cleaner technology.

"The future is electric," CEO Matthias Mueller declared on the eve of the Paris show, announcing plans to develop more than 30 new electric vehicles by 2025.

Opel countered Thursday with the new Ampera-e, the European cousin of the Chevrolet Bolt, which will have a range of 400 km.

Not to be outdone, France's Renault announced a new model of its electric supermini Zoe, with a range of up to 400 km compared with 240 km currently.

Renault boss Carlos Ghosn said the company aimed to overcome the "psychological barrier" among motorists, who fear an electric car's battery will run out while they are on the road, leaving them stranded.



Mercedes Benz CEO Dieter Zetsche presents a car from the Smart Electric drive range on the first day of the press days of the Paris Motor Show on September 29, 2016

Mainstream carmakers are chasing electric car pioneer Tesla.

The Californian niche player is planning its mass market debut this year with the launch of the Model 3, a smaller, more affordable follow-up to its pricey Model S.

Tesla has already booked more than 370,000 advance orders for the Model 3, which will have a range of 350 kilometres.

## **Brexit guarantees**

The October 1-16 Paris Motor Show, which alternates with Frankfurt every other year, is the industry's top showcase in Europe.

Britain's decision to leave the EU was a key talking point on the first day of the show, with Renault's Ghosn demanding guarantees from Britain that the company's Sunderland plant would not be penalised by the Brexit decision.

Ghosn said he would seek compensation from the British government for any tariffs imposed by the EU on cars made in Britain after the divorce becomes final.

The mood in Paris was, however, revved up for the most part as car sales in the EU race ahead after several years of crisis, growing 8.1 percent since the start of the year.

Sales of VW cars have also largely held up, despite the emissions furore which knocked billions off the company's stock.

"We made a big mistake that we are in the process of correcting," Mueller said Thursday.

"We are trying to win back the trust of our customers," he said, adding he hoped the group would turn a profit in 2016 after posting its first annual loss in more than two decades in 2015.

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