

Press Release

90 years of DEKRA

From German Motor Vehicle Inspection Association to global partner for a safe world

- Founded in Berlin on June 30, 1925
- “Commitment to safety” established in Articles of Association
- More than 35,000 employees in 50 countries on all continents

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Committed to safety for nine decades: The expert organization DEKRA is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. On June 30, 1925 The Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein e.V. was entered in the register of associations at the Berlin-Mitte District Court. 90 years later, it has become one of the world’s leading expert organizations. More than 35,000 employees work in 50 countries on all continents With 26 million vehicle inspections per year, DEKRA is by far the world’s number one. A commitment to road and plant safety, which the founding fathers wrote in the Articles of Association as their purpose in 1925, is still the central concern of DEKRA e.V. and its subsidiaries today. Since the founding years, the company now has an even more extensive and international understanding of its commitment to safety. “As a globally positioned expert organization, we are working around the world for road safety, safety at work and safety in the home,” said Stefan Kölbl, CEO of DEKRA e.V. and DEKRA SE. “Our vision for 2025 is to become the global partner for a safe world.”

At the start of the 20th century, the industrial magnate Hugo Stinnes and other prominent figures of German industry recognized the challenges to safety arising from rapid motorization. Together, they developed the idea of a voluntary technical inspection for motor vehicles. DEKRA was born from this idea. Its mission is stated unambiguously in the Articles of Association of the Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein e.V.: “The purpose of the Association [...] is to support and promote the operational and road safety of motor vehicles [...] and the same in relation to other equipment and machinery, and research in these areas.”

The idea quickly became a success. Companies and public institutions with their

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own fleets became members of the association. As an expert partner, DEKRA ensured the safety and reliability of vehicles. By the start of the 1930s, DEKRA was represented by inspection stations at around 80 locations.

New beginnings in the post-war period

After World War II, rebuilding began in Stuttgart from 1946. The number of branches and inspection stations grew swiftly. Soon, DEKRA was represented all over the Federal Republic of Germany. It initially focused on inspections of commercial vehicles and fleets, above all those of its own members.

In 1960, the general inspection was introduced as Germany knows it today, with an inspection tag on a vehicle's number plate. Virtually at the same time, DEKRA was recognized as an inspection organization. Since then its experts have also performed inspections on privately owned cars and thus made a vital contribution to road safety. Since the end of the 1970s, DEKRA experts have also conducted general inspections in car workshops.

The beginnings of DEKRA Academy can also be traced to the 1970s. In the decades that followed, the first training sessions for professional drivers developed into one of the biggest private training enterprises in Germany. DEKRA Academy today trains and certifies more than 100,000 people each year in a wide variety of areas and at 150 locations throughout Germany.

Internationalization and rebuilding in East Germany

DEKRA's international journey began in France at the end of the 1980s: vehicle inspections were offered in a neighboring European country for the first time.

This was shortly followed by the enormous challenge in Germany of the fall of the wall and reunification: The first freely elected government of the GDR appointed DEKRA to create the Technical Testing Authority for East Germany on 1 July 1990. In just a short time, a comprehensive network of branches was established, securing the position of market leader that DEKRA still holds today. The first inspections were still being performed in tents, though these were equipped with state-of-the-art technology. The one millionth inspection tag was issued in the East by October 1991. As the Technical Testing Authority, DEKRA is also responsible for driving licenses in the eastern German states: By the middle of 2014, DEKRA's examiners had carried out 10 million practical driving tests in the eastern German states. In the same year that it is marking 90 years since it was founded, DEKRA is also celebrating a second anniversary: 25 years as the Technical Testing Authority in the eastern German states.

DEKRA becomes an international brand

In 1990, a new legal framework was created in preparation for the demanding challenges of the future: The newly founded DEKRA AG took over the operating activities of DEKRA e.V.

In the 1990s, DEKRA was represented on the international stage through its Formula 1 sponsorship of Michael Schumacher. The company's internationalization was progressing at the same time: Investments in the Czech Republic, Poland and Russia, and later in Slovakia, Hungary and Italy, raised its profile in Europe. By the end of the decade, DEKRA was operating in most EU States – offering vehicle inspections, expert opinions, claim settlement and quality assurance.

In 1998, DEKRA Arbeit, a subsidiary of DEKRA Academy, added the promising area of temporary employment to its range. Today, the DEKRA Arbeit Group is one of the leading organizations in staffing services with more than 120 locations in Europe.

After the year 2000, the company bolstered its position in technology: The cutting-edge DEKRA Automobile Test Centre (DATC) neighboring the EuroSpeedway Lausitz race track was launched in 2003. Together with DEKRA Accident Research, founded in 1978, and the DEKRA Crash Test Centre in Neumünster, it bundled expertise for automotive industry clients.

DEKRA has further raised its brand awareness with its sponsorship activities as the Technical Partner to the DTM German Touring Car Championship (since 1989) and the Official Partner to DFB German Football Association referees (since 2003). At the same time, this allows the company to highlight its position as a neutral and independent third party in service of safety and fair play.

Industrial testing and safety consulting

At the start of the new millennium, DEKRA also continued the strategic expansion of its industrial testing services: After this area was spun off into an independent business unit, the acquisition of NORISKO, a leading industrial testing service provider in France, followed in 2005. In 2010 DEKRA AG changed its legal form to that of a "Societas Europaea" (SE). This entailed an acceleration of international activities. There were further acquisitions in automotive and industrial areas, including in Brazil and Sweden. The new DEKRA office in Shanghai opened in 2011. In the same year, DEKRA acquired the French AutoContact Group and boosted its international position in used car management.

With the acquisitions of the UK explosion protection company Chilworth (2011) and the US specialist for behavior-based process and organizational safety BST (2012), DEKRA significantly extended its standing as a safety consulting provider. The consulting services of Chilworth and BST, together with the company RCI Safety, a specialist for work safety software solutions, are today bundled in the DEKRA Insight unit.

In 2013, the Group bought out Vehicle Testing New Zealand (VTNZ) and thus furthered the international expansion of its automotive testing business. In South Africa, DEKRA stepped up its industrial business offering with its purchase of Raysonics, the market leader for non-destructive materials testing. The acquisition of the Dutch Plurel B.V. in 2014 extended the Group's services for the railway sector. DEKRA Rail in the Netherlands and Germany is now one of the market leaders for the testing, inspection and certification of railway vehicles in Europe.

Global partner for a safe world

In its anniversary year, the DEKRA service portfolio extends from vehicle inspections and expert appraisals to used car management, claims services, industrial and building inspections, safety consultancy and the testing and certification of products and systems to training services and temporary work.

In its 90th year, DEKRA has established a clear outlook for its future. As its CEO Stefan Kölbl says, "safety is a central requirement for everyone. And we know that accidents can be avoided – on the road, at work and at home. So our vision for 2025 is still to uphold the commitment of our founding articles for today and tomorrow: to become the global partner for a safe world."

Captions:

Image 1: The Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein e.V. was registered at the Berlin-Mitte District Court on 30 June 1925. Driving in the Hanomag 2/10 PS, known by the nickname "Army Bread", the first DEKRA engineers rode out to their member companies to test the safety of their vehicles.

Image 2: Until the 1960s, the company's activities still centered around the testing of commercial vehicles and fleets.

Image 3: First steps in internationalization: At the end of the 1980s, DEKRA offered vehicle inspections in France for the first time.

Image 4: Rebuilding in East Germany: In July 1990, the first freely elected government of the GDR commissioned DEKRA to create the Technical Testing Authority. The first vehicle inspections were carried out in temporary facilities.

Image 5: The DEKRA Automobile Test Centre in Klettwitz with its test track seen from the air.

Image 6: The Management Board of DEKRA SE in its anniversary year: (from left) Clemens Klinke, Jörg Mannsperger, Roland Gerdon (rear), Ivo Rauh, Stefan Kölbl (CEO) with the Hanomag 2/10 PS, known by the nickname "Army Bread". The first DEKRA engineers used such cars to visit their member companies to test the safety of their vehicles.