



Traffic Lights

Dear Reader,

“Whaaaa, I wanna have iiiit!!” – most parents will have experienced the lovely high-pitched screaming of toddlers at the supermarket checkout who want one of the products on offer there. This is precisely why so-called pester power items, usually candies such as Kinder Surprise Eggs, chocolate bars, and fruit gums, are displayed on the shelves where customers queue. These pester power products often have a high sugar content and may well play a role in the growing number of overweight or obese children. The traffic light system of colored labels on food packaging has been designed as one solution to this problem. However, the German traffic light coalition has not yet succeeded in making labeling of this kind mandatory.

But another labeling requirement that recently came into force in Germany is imposed by the snappily named “Ordinance on Energy Consumption Labeling for Passenger Cars (Pkw-EnVKV).” The reason for the adoption of the new version of this ordinance is the shift throughout Europe from the NEDC to the WLTP for measuring fuel consumption and the desire to provide new car buyers with more accurate information about the consumption and emissions of their potential new automobile sweetheart. The announcement of the traffic light system by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs explained that cars would be divided into CO₂ classes from A to G indicated by colored arrows in green, yellow, or red, very similar to the energy efficiency labels on refrigerators.

The aim of the amended legislation is to help “consumers to choose a new car on the basis of all the facts and to opt for the most fuel-efficient models,” the ministry let us know. To put it more simply, the traffic light system is intended to reduce the growing number of over-

weight or obese cars on the roads. Ultimately, the question is to what extent the new legislation can have a lasting influence on the autoimmune forces of buyers towards red marked vehicles. And, of course, the pester power of a shiny new SUV in the showroom is likely to be much the same as that of the Haribos in the supermarket.

Is the ordinance likely to have the desired effect? It may well do when it comes to company cars, which in 2023 made up more than 67 % of new registrations in Germany. Many of the companies that are the keepers of these vehicles are keen to demonstrate that they have a positive carbon footprint. Therefore, it is entirely possible that they will exert their influence on employees’ choice of company car and buy small models labeled with green arrows. On the other hand, given the current shortage of skilled labor, the company may not want to lose a valuable employee who goes to the fleet manager and ... “Whaaaa.”

Frank Jung
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