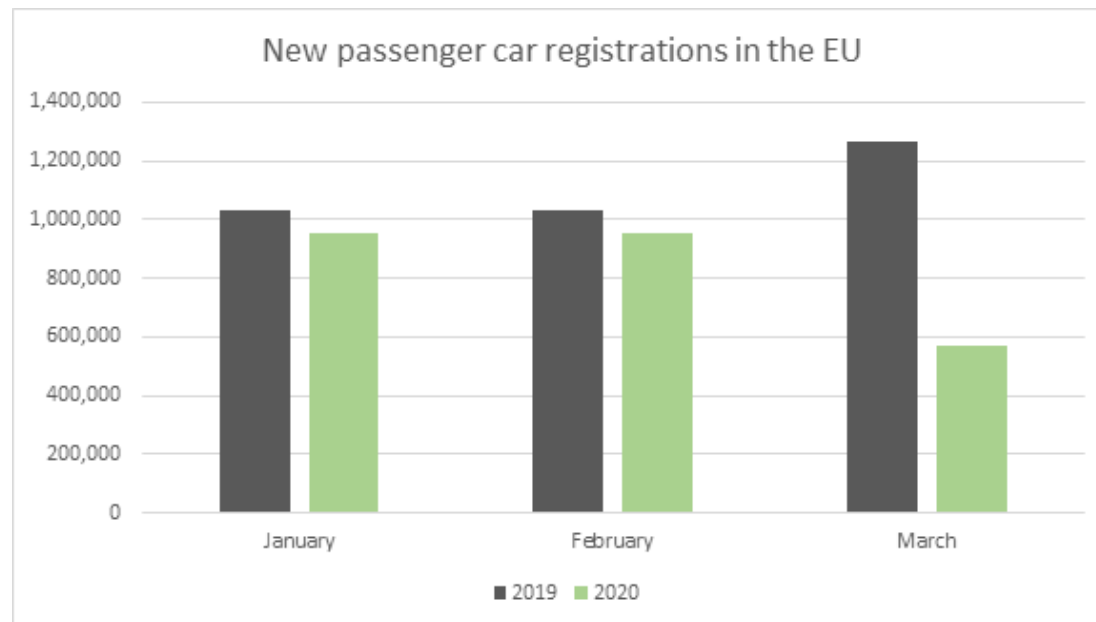


20 April: A drop in vehicle registrations due to the Coronavirus

The Coronavirus pandemic has led countries to restrict the movement of citizens, which can be seen in reduced traffic on most modes of transport. Economic activity has also slowed down as shops and services have been closed. One of the industries hit is the car industry, with demand for new vehicles falling compared to previous years. This is reflected in the number of vehicle registrations, which has dropped considerably.

Data from the [European Automobile Manufacturers Association](#) show that the economic impact on the car industry has been significant. In the European Union, new passenger car registrations began to decline at the start of the year, and in March they fell by over 50 per cent year-on-year.



Source: ACEA

Italy

Countries struggling most with the pandemic have seen the largest drops in vehicle registrations. For example, in [Italy](#), during January-March 2020 new car registrations fell by 35 per cent compared to the same period in 2019. In March 2020 alone, vehicle registrations dropped by 85 per cent compared to the previous year.

Switzerland

According to the [Federal Statistical Office](#), vehicle registrations in Switzerland have also been on the decline since the start of the year. In January, new registrations of passenger cars fell by 10 per cent, in February by 14 per cent, and in March the drop was 39 per cent, compared to corresponding months in 2019. Interestingly, March data shows that as registrations of new petrol and diesel cars have almost halved, registrations of hybrid vehicles has actually grown by over 60 per cent.

Germany

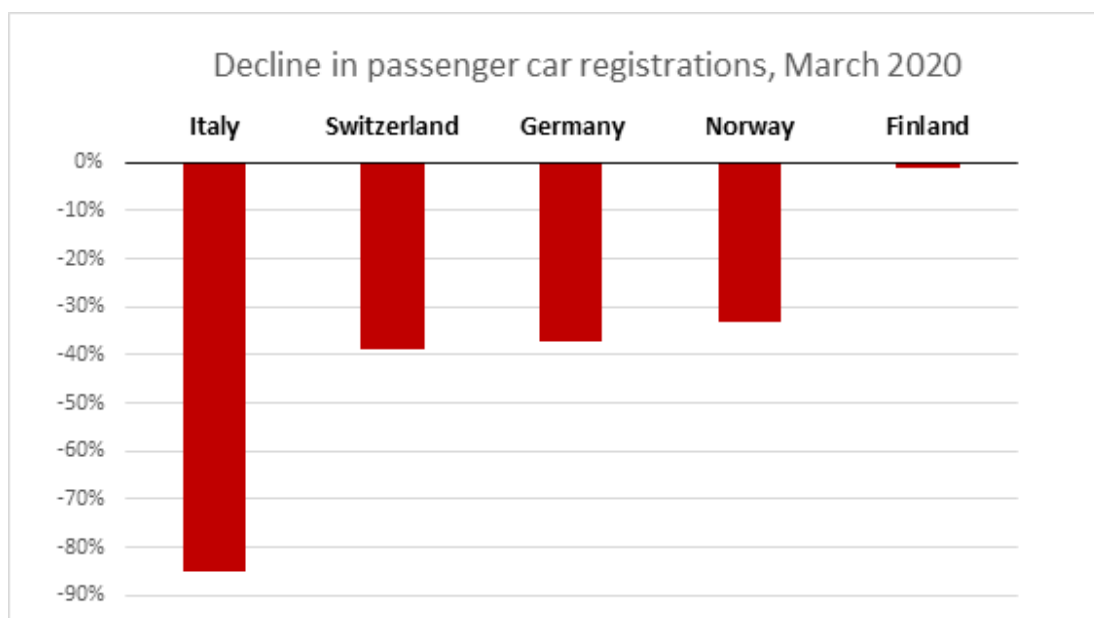
In [Germany](#) the trend in new vehicle registrations has been similar to that in Switzerland. Vehicle registrations began to decline in January and fell by 37 per cent in March. Comparing the 2020 January-March period to 2019, there have been 20 per cent less vehicle registrations in Germany.

Norway

Similar trends can be seen beyond Central Europe. In [Norway](#), the number of new vehicle registrations fell in March by 33 per cent compared to 2019. However, the decline didn't start until February. In January, vehicle registrations still increased, although by a very slight 0.3 per cent. Altogether, in January-March 2020 there were 18 per cent less new car registrations compared to the same period in 2019.

Finland

On the other end of the spectrum, in Finland, the number of new passenger cars registered has not yet seen any notable decline. According to [Statistics Finland](#), there was a decline of 0.9 per cent in the number of new passenger cars registered in March. During the period January-March 2020, registrations fell by about 3 per cent compared to the same period in 2019.



Source: National Statistical Offices or other national agencies and UNECE calculations

Importance of this indicator

The number of new vehicle registrations is less important than e.g. traffic volumes as a measure of how transport activity has changed, but it is very revealing as an indicator of how economic activity is being affected. It is also possible that in the medium term the reduced take-up of new vehicles will have a marginal impact on issues like road safety and air quality, as newer cars are typically safer and cleaner.