

[German automakers](#) yesterday offered to help cut inner-city pollution by updating the software of 5 million diesel cars in an attempt to avert vehicle bans and repair their reputation. Since Volkswagen admitted to cheating US diesel emissions tests in September 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel's government has come under fire for not doing enough to crack down on vehicle pollution and for being too close to powerful carmakers. The issue has become a central campaign topic ahead of next month's national election, prompting the government to call crisis talks yesterday to show it is taking action as environmental groups try to force bans on diesel vehicles. But ministers are also wary of angering the drivers of 15 million diesel vehicles and damaging an industry that is the country's biggest exporter and provides about 800,000 jobs. The VDA automakers lobby said its members had agreed to pay for software updates of 5 million cars, including 2.5 million VW cars that have already been recalled, to reduce their average emissions of toxic nitrogen oxides by 25-30 percent. The move should cut pollution at least as much as driving bans proposed in major cities, the VDA said in a statement, adding: "The car industry knows it has lost a lot of trust. We must and will work on winning back that trust." The stakes have risen for German carmakers in recent weeks. Britain and France have announced plans to eventually ban all diesel and petrol vehicles and Tesla has launched its first mass-market electric car.