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FAST CHARGING NETWORK AS A JOINT EFFORT

Electromobility A plea for solidarity: A nationwide and efficient fast-charging network is indispensable, especially in cities. But bureaucratic hurdles are slowing down the expansion. Municipalities, public utilities and charging network operators must work closely together, urges Jolt CEO Maurice Neligan.

There is no shortage of ambitious plans: as part of its climate protection offensive, the German government wants to see around 15 million electric vehicles on the road by 2030 and provide at least one million charging points for them. But the ramp-up of electromobility is threatening to collapse precisely because of this: due to numerous bureaucratic hurdles, the expansion of the urgently needed fast-charging infrastructure with charging capacities of 300 kW and more in cities and conurbations is making only slow progress.

No wonder the German automotive industry complains about hesitant sales - people want to charge as easily and quickly as they do refuel. For this, however, instead of thousands of slow AC charging points with a maximum of 22 kW charging power, modern, battery-supported HPC charging stations (High Power Charging) are needed throughout the country, at which a range of around 100 kilometres can be charged in five minutes - without costly network expansion. Despite this knowledge, in practice there are huge problems in setting up this fast-charging infrastructure. This is a problem for the electrification of motorised individual transport in cities. The task now is to strengthen consumer confidence in electromobility with ultra-fast charging solutions and to create broader acceptance.

Joining forces for the fast-charging offensive.

The challenges of expanding the fast-charging network are enormous. That is why municipal and private companies are equally challenged. The municipal economy alone will not be able to cope with this mammoth task in view of tight municipalities and a mountain of tasks for overburdened, understaffed municipal utilities. We therefore need a fast-charging offensive in which the most important players - municipalities, municipal utilities and charging network operators - join forces. Only in this way can the rapid expansion of a safe and reliable fast-charging network at highly frequented inner-city locations succeed.

More diversity needed for the expansion of charging.

At present, enormous obstacles are slowing down the expansion of the fast-charging infrastructure in public spaces. One obstacle is the monopolistic position of the local municipal utilities. Cities and municipalities often see them as natural partners for the expansion of the charging infrastructure, but this restricts competition. This inhibits innovation and investment in



fast charging. Instead of powerful HPC columns, many municipal utilities build slow AC chargers. A single 320 kW HPC charger could replace 15 AC chargers and free up much needed space - for example for cycle paths or bus lanes. It is about climate-friendly mobility and intelligent transport planning, not about the electrification of parking spaces. Cities should promote mixed concepts for charging infrastructure and municipal utilities could, for their own relief, award contracts to specialised providers for charging infrastructure in order to concentrate their limited human and financial resources on their core competences within the framework of municipal services of general interest.

Awarding practice urgently needs to change.

But that's not all: the awarding of locations for charging stations must become more efficient. Lengthy tendering procedures, legal uncertainties and bureaucratic hurdles make business difficult for private-sector providers. Municipal utilities are often favoured; there are no clear guidelines for non-discriminatory site awards. The Energy Industry Act (§ 7c) prohibits grid operators from owning or operating charging points, but this is often circumvented in practice. It would make sense to regularly allocate small site quotas to promote private-sector solutions and relieve the burden on municipal utilities.

Accelerating grid connections for fast chargers.

The long approval times for grid connections - often up to twelve months - are also unreasonable at times. This means that completed charging stations cannot go into operation quickly enough. The municipalities must exert more pressure on the local grid providers. Every request for a power connection for charging stations should be completed no later than three months after application.

Municipalities, charging network operators and municipal utilities should openly discuss the multitude of challenges that hinder the expansion of the charging network in round tables and find a sensible division of labour that ultimately benefits everyone. Only by working together will we succeed in establishing an efficient fast-charging network and thus enable the drive system turnaround in Germany. The citizens, as well as the environment, would thank us for that.