

"We wait up to one year for the approval of a connection to the grid".

Rauno Fuchs, Vice President Government Affairs at the Munich-based charge point operator JOLT Energy, talks in an EID interview about inefficient award procedures for charging locations, information deficits of municipalities in the field of electromobility - and a voluntary commitment of the infrastructure provider.

BY DOMINIK HEUEL

EID: Mr. Fuchs, JOLT Energy recently pointed out political and regulatory obstacles to the implementation of municipal charging station projects in the media, for example in the area of award procedures. What exactly are you criticising?

Fuchs: On the one hand, there are the excessive and slow award procedures. Well, you have to live with that. But if you look at the fact that most contracts are awarded exclusively to the local municipal utilities, you have to question the openness of the awarding process. Many municipalities award the implementation of the entire urban charging infrastructure for eight or more years. This creates monopolies that lead to slow and uneconomical expansion. The ones who suffer are the customers and, in the end, the city itself, which does not achieve its expansion and climate goals.

EID: What would be the better solution in your view?

Fuchs: We advocate a return to a tender-free allocation of site quotas for which companies can apply freely, for example for individual districts or neighbourhoods. This is already standard practice in the allocation of sites for wind and solar power plants.

EID: What do you see as the advantages?

Fuchs: A more small-scale allocation practice would lead much more quickly to sensible private-sector solutions that are in line with the market and thus also relieve the burden on the municipal utilities. They usually do not have the capacity to create an efficient charging infrastructure. Accordingly, the topic is low on their list of priorities. Furthermore, shorter award periods would create room for technical innovations in the future instead of cementing existing structures.

EID: You are calling for a three-month period for grid connections. What has been your experience so far?

Fuchs: Applying for grid connections is usually a lengthy process that can quickly take a year or more. Occasionally, however, approval is granted within a few weeks. We are always grateful to the respective public utilities for this. On average, however, it takes eight months nationwide. For a company like ours, which is geared towards agility and rapid implementation, this means an extreme planning and financial burden.



EID: Do you think the municipalities are sufficiently aware of these problems?

Fuchs: There is definitely a growing awareness there of the importance of a well-developed charging infrastructure and of the need for faster processes. At the same time, we have noticed that there is often little knowledge about electromobility and charging technologies - especially with regard to the differences between types of charging technology such as alternating current, direct current and fast charging. A lot of things are confused or completely unknown. At this point, we see it as our responsibility to do a better job of educating people.

EID: How do you want to proceed?

Fuchs: We propose the introduction of regional round tables in which municipalities, public utilities and charging network operators participate. Here, all participants could talk openly and in a protected setting about the problems and work out solutions together. This form of dialogue could contribute to eliminating the prevailing information deficit.

In addition, clear and binding timetables could be established in such runnings.

EID: Mr Fuchs, thank you for the interview.

Rauno Fuchs is Vice President Government Affairs at JOLT Energy. In this function, he is responsible for relations with politics and administration nationwide and is an expert in cooperation between business, politics and administration.

Jolt BACKGROUND

JOLT Energy is a charge point operator (CPO) headquartered in Munich. The company builds and operates ultra-fast charging stations for electric vehicles. At these charging points, vehicle owners can recharge a range of 100 km in five minutes. The charging stations are installed in urban areas, especially at petrol stations and in the car parks of supermarkets, DIY stores or fast-food restaurants.

Thanks to a battery buffer, the HPC (High Power Charging) charging stations only need to be connected to the low-voltage grid, which eliminates the need for costly construction work. JOLT's business model is essentially based on the sale of electricity. However, since the charging network can also be used as an intelligent and area-wide energy storage system, JOLT is planning to offer grid-serving system services in the future.