Realism Is Required

Dear Reader,

Germany will fail to meet its climate target for 2020 by a wide margin. This news item has recently featured prominently in the media. The study carried out by the think tank Agora Energiewende simply confirmed what everyone already knew. By 2020 Germany's greenhouse gas emissions will only have been reduced by around 30 % from 1990 levels and not by the 40 % that has been predicted. For anyone who is familiar with the subject, this does not come as a surprise. Coal-fired electricity still plays a major role, there are no buffers in place for unpredictable renewable energies, the grids have not been made more efficient and no one seems to have heard of digitisation.

It is not enough to transform a vision into a plan. This is where the energy transition has gone wrong and McKinsey has confirmed that it is also out of control from a financial perspective. Let's take a look at what is happening in Norway, Europe's environmental role model. Here 98 % of the electricity is generated by predictable hydropower. But the problem is that the growth in the charging station infrastructure cannot keep pace with the registrations of electric cars. The Norwegian association for electric cars has recently advised the country's citizens not to buy an e-model. And larger electric vehicles will be taxed more heavily to compensate for the bigger environmental footprint of battery production. The authorities have also realised that people without an own home cannot charge them at home. The Norwegians believe that the solution lies not only in expanding their charging system more quickly, but also in making it more reliable.

Besides the phase-out of coal-fired power stations, Germany is faced by problems caused by the move-away from nuclear power. It is important to stop using coal

to generate energy, but it will be a long time before our current electricity supply can be replaced by a reliable and sustainable one. Banning cars with combustion engines and speeding up the introduction of e-vehicles in parallel with the transformation process would put energy supply and the transport system at risk. The changeover will only be a success if we treat the cause rather than the symptom. It is not the cars with ICE that are causing the damage, but the fuel used to power them. Electric cars are not zero-emissions vehicles. Vehicle emissions can only be reduced quickly, permanently and globally by means of both hybridisation and synthetic fuels. This is the only way that the transport and energy transition can take place in parallel. This is not a vision: e-fuels have been fully tested and are ready for market launch. The first production facilities are already being built – in Norway of course.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of ATZ.

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