Setting the Future Direction

Dear Reader,

At the start of July this year Germany took over the EU council presidency. Of course the main priority in the second half of 2020 will be to overcome the coronavirus crisis, but Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel has also committed to a green recovery. Now we will begin to find out how different the solutions adopted across the European Union will be. The German approach, which puts the emphasis on subsidizing electric vehicles, is not likely to last in the long term. And the belated and rather cautious inclusion of hydrogen in the plans simply does not go far enough.

Promoting green hydrogen produced using renewable energy is, of course, a good idea. The ability to store excess electricity locally makes sense, as does government funding for developing the infrastructure for clean energy storage. However, building the infrastructure will release huge quantities of fossil CO₂, instead of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases as planned. In addition, when it comes to bringing about a genuine reduction in Germany's emissions, a fleet of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles is just as irrelevant as the slowly growing number of electric cars that the German government has pinned all its hopes on. In this case too, the development of the production capacity and the infrastructure will lead in the medium term to the generation of far more CO₂ than can be saved.

Perhaps Germany's European partners can encourage Angela Merkel to focus on the key issues and the areas where the potential savings are greatest, in other words, the existing fleet of 263 mil-

lion vehicles in Europe, less than 10 % of which have alternative powertrains. Even analysts who support electric mobility do not believe that this figure will increase to more than 30 % by 2030.

The concept is not hard to grasp. If a quarter of a billion vehicles can be made carbon neutral, it will have a genuine impact on the climate and this could be achieved with synthetic fuels. A lot of energy and a lot of hydrogen is needed to produce these fuels and therefore subsidies can make a valuable contribution. However, the gas has to be processed to produce liquid fuels that can be used in the existing fleet. The technologies and the infrastructure for this are already in place. Only the production capacity needs to be created, but this should be achievable with the help of all the European member states.

I hope you enjoy this issue of MTZ.

Marc Ziegler
Deputy Editor in Chief

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