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Lost the User's Eyes

Why have electric vehicles remained so unpopular in Germany? One way to answer this question is to present a new version of the old chicken-or-the-egg dilemma. Are people in Germany opting not to buy electric vehicles because the country's public charging infrastructure is insufficient? Or has too little been done to build a sufficient charging infrastructure because people aren't buying electric vehicles? Choosing not to wait for an answer to the dilemma, the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure actually announced a plan to allocate 300 million euros throughout the next three years to help finance a more comprehensive charging network.

This move on the part of the government sends the right signal both to the owners of electric cars in Germany and to all those other people in Germany who are considering the purchase of an electric vehicle. Indeed, when considered together with recent industry announcements about the approaching market introduction of new electric vehicles offering more attractive ranges, it seems that something is at last being done.

While the federal program is essentially no more than a stimulus measure, it is nonetheless important when it comes to promoting a breakthrough for electric vehicles in the coming years, and thereby establishing a cleaner alternative to vehicles powered by internal combustion engines.

However, given that there is still quite a bit of room for failure, the program's implementation will have to be guided by good

judgement and a spirit of pragmatism. Moreover, the relevant stakeholders in the automotive industry are called upon to play a constructive role. And this is where a good measure of caution is advised because the past performance of these stakeholders looks more like a brazen disregard of the needs of consumers – difficult to comprehend in times of design thinking, customer experience and total product customisation via digital manufacturing.

Why are companies building affordable electric vehicles with long-range batteries that can only be properly charged using expensive fast-charge technology? How have we wound up with a growingly heterogeneous and poorly functioning commercial charging infrastructure with target-area limitations? Why do the drivers of electric vehicles have to complete multi-parameter research projects to determine where and when they can recharge their vehicles before taking a trip? Isn't the tangle of multiple plug standards, charging currents, station types and infrastructure systems a clear sign that the consumer has been left out of the equation?

The use of new electric vehicle technology needs to be a matter of second nature to the driver, i.e. both intuitive and carefree. Achieving this will enable drivers to rediscover the pleasure of driving in its new ecologically responsible and sensuously quiet electric form – cross town and over hill and dale.

So let's get started, the time has never been better for a real change.