

PRESS RELEASE

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Exclusive interview

Today with Dr. Klaus Bonhoff

“The WHEC 2010 is a highlight that the professional world is looking forward to”

Dr. Klaus Bonhoff has been Managing Director of NOW GmbH National Organization Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technology since 2008. NOW, wholly owned by the German federal government, is tasked with implementing the National Innovation Program Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technology (NIP). Since 2009, NOW has also been responsible for implementing and overseeing the program “Model Regions Electric Mobility” of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS). The aim of both programs is to prepare products from the technology sector hydrogen, fuel cells and battery-powered drives for the commercial market.

WHEC-Newsletter: Dr. Bonhoff, what in your view is the significance of the still-young National Organization Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technology NOW for the industry? And, how has NOW succeeded in establishing itself domestically and internationally?

Dr. Klaus Bonhoff: NOW’s concrete task is to link the individual projects that the partners contribute to create a consistent overall picture as part of the programs NIP and Model Regions Electric Mobility of the BMVBS. That means that the dialog with our partners is very intensive and produces substantial results. This is evidenced by the great number and high quality of the projects. So to this extent I do believe that the industry perceives NOW as a partner with whom it can achieve meaningful results.

Nationally, I see NOW at the interface between policy, industry and science. The NOW platform is, on the one hand, important for the political sphere, so that it can stay on top of technological developments and current activities of the industry. On the other hand, the industry needs public support to enable it to introduce new sustainable technologies on the market. That is not possible simply through normal business. It needs start-up assistance in the form of public support.

Internationally, we maintain close relationships with numerous central partners in the US, Asia and Europe. Additionally, NOW serves as the secretariat of the International Partnership for Hydrogen and Fuel Cells in the Economy, IPHE, which Germany chairs from 2010 to 2011. 18 countries are represented in the IPHE, and they use this platform to accelerate the movement of hydrogen and fuel cell technology to the market.

WHEC-Newsletter: What major projects have been launched, particularly within the context of the NIP development programs, which are surely receiving significant international attention? And what others are planned in the medium and long terms?

Dr. Klaus Bonhoff: As of March 2010, after less than two years in the NIP, we have approved projects with an overall budget of over € 350 million. In all, we are conducting concrete negotiations with actors from industry and science on projects with a total budget of over € 800 million. These figures are impressive when you consider that the NIP will run until 2016 and has resources totaling € 1.4 billion. But these figures illustrate one thing above all: the industry is deeply committed to the strategic viability of hydrogen and fuel cell technology.

The flagship NIP projects here are the lighthouse Clean Energy Partnership, Callux, e4ships and, quite recently, BODENSEE. In all NIP program sectors – transport, stationary, energy supply, special markets – the lighthouses are operationally successful.

WHEC-Newsletter: The campaign “Energie im Wandel” (“Changing Energy”), conceived by the regional agency EnergieAgentur.NRW and NOW, was recently launched, and is due to end with the start of the WHEC 2010. What is the aim of this campaign?

Dr. Klaus Bonhoff: In future, Hydrogen and fuel cell technologies will play an important role in the everyday segments of mobility and energy supply. The basis for this is the context of the right environmental and climate policy parameters, technological feasibility and economic opportunities. However, the fact is that the general public knows next to nothing about the potential of the technology and the development status of the projects.

This is where the “Energie im Wandel” campaign comes in. We want to give the general population and the media an opportunity to become informed – about the technology and how it works, but even more about the specific applications and their importance for our future. Our message is: This technology is coming; not tomorrow, but it will play a role in everyone’s life in future. Particularly ahead of the World Hydrogen Energy Conference in Essen this May, we want to show that we in Germany do not need to shy away from international comparison when it comes to our know-how.

In “Energie im Wandel”, close to 50 businesses, scientific establishments and organizations are organizing events with a high public profile, such as open houses, symposiums, and school activities. The Clean Energy Partnership will organize a rally from Berlin to Hamburg, Callux is approaching the vocational schools in multiple regions, and NOW and MTU are holding a journalists’ workshop in Munich. A complete overview can be found at {
HYPERLINK "<http://www.energieimwandel.de>" }.

WHEC-Newsletter: NOW has since expanded its mission to include the topic of electric mobility. What role does hydrogen play for this issue; does the often propagated partnership with batteries really exist or does hydrogen ultimately stand little chance in this field?

Dr. Klaus Bonhoff: The public discourse often creates the impression that the industry is focusing exclusively on battery-electric mobility. A closer look, at the strategic orientation of automobile manufacturers, utility companies, suppliers, medium-sized manufacturers of heating devices and systems, as well as municipal administrations and federal-level ministries, however, reveals that all these partners have recognized that batteries and fuel cells complement each other, that both technologies offer solutions for tomorrow’s environmentally friendly mobility and energy supply.

Electric mobility rests on two key technologies: fuel cell drives and pure battery-electric drives. The two complement each other. Vehicles with highly efficient battery-electric drives

have a particularly great potential in urban transportation, where the distances are generally shorter. Fuel cell vehicles additionally offer greater range and short fueling times, and are thus also suitable for longer overland journeys. If we are to achieve our climate objectives, we need zero-emission technologies for a wide range of customer requirements.

Due to the close link between the two topics and the resulting synergies, The Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development was right to assign the implementation of the Model Regions Electric Mobility to NOW.

WHEC-Newsletter: How important is the WHEC 2010 for hydrogen and also for fuel cell technology for the industry, for Europe and for Germany? What will NOW undertake there?

Dr. Klaus Bonhoff: With the WHEC 2010 in Essen, the eyes of professionals the world over will be on Germany. Our enterprises are global leaders when it comes to their technological level, and in the area of strategic market preparation as well, we have in the NIP a program that measures up internationally. And let us not forget what German scientific institutes contribute. So internationally, the expectation is that a WHEC in Germany will generate a certain momentum for the hydrogen and fuel cell business.

NOW is involved in the preparations for the conference and the supporting program. An IPHE steering committee meeting is scheduled in Essen ahead of the conference. During the event itself, we will be active in the conference program, as well as in other activities. As part of the supporting exhibition, we will present the activities from the NIP at a large booth. We will also name the winner of our Germany-wide student competition.

WHEC-Newsletter: Finally, your honest opinion – which of the 330 speaking topics do think is most interesting? What highlights are you looking forward to?

Dr. Klaus Bonhoff: The WHEC itself is a highlight that the professional world is looking forward to. For one thing on account of the high density of expert presentations, but also because an international conference like this is a great opportunity to share experiences with colleagues from all over the world.

Hydrogen and fuel cell technology is moving ever closer to market readiness. In some areas, such as portable power supplies, it is already commercial. The challenges of reducing costs and increasing service life and dependability remain on the agenda of research and development activities – and in this respect I am very much looking forward to new results both in the area of basis research and on the system level. But I won't decide what sessions and talks I can attend until I get there.

Finally, I'd like to thank all the people who have been working intensively for months to prepare the WHEC.

WHEC-Newsletter: Dr. Bonhoff, thank you for this interview.

(The interview was conducted by Werner Stützel, PressContact)

Program:
{ HYPERLINK "<http://www.whec2010.com/nc/about-the-conference/sessionplan/sessions-overview.html>" }

Information on the conference

18th World Hydrogen Energy Conference 2010 (WHEC 2010)

Dates: May 16 – 21, 2010

Venue: Essen, Germany

Internet: { **HYPERLINK** "<http://www.whec2010.com>" }

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