

Press Release | Automotive

## Batteries high on German agenda

### Advanced Automotive Battery Conference in Atlanta

Feb 02, 2014

**Berlin/Atlanta, (gtai)** - German Economic Minister Sigmar Gabriel's speech to the German parliament on Thursday was notable for several things, one of which was a resolute intent to get battery technology and production up to speed in his country.

Mr. Gabriel used electromobility as his prime example of an industry where Germany had a huge opportunity to translate good work done in R&D into the industrial production which Germany has made a mainstay of its economic strategy during the global economic crisis.

"Electromobility is a big theme in our society," said Mr. Gabriel.

"We need to get back ... what was once a national industrial mainstay: battery technology, which drifted away from us in the 70s, and which now is a chance for us to bring back as a production industry; that also has to be a target for us now."

While the general context of the speech was in the direction of energy policy in general, this stated intention should be a boon to Germany's car industry, where the country willing to push through a stated target of one million electric vehicles on its roads by the year 2020 looks increasingly able to do so.

Electric car sales in Germany in 2013, while hardly in the millions, rose more than 100% on 2012. As the economy picks up further, this figure is sure to rise, with the price of e-vehicles cited as one of the main reasons for a sluggish start. One of the other reasons was the lack of sufficient battery technology to make longer distance travel possible – indeed, most German e-cars, such as the Smart car, have been marketed thus far as runabouts rather than road trippers. But the trend is changing, and German manufacturers are certainly spending the time on ensuring that.

This will be a leading topic at the forthcoming Advanced Automotive Battery Conference (AABC) in Atlanta, Georgia, from February 3 through 7, at which Germany Trade & Invest will be listing the virtues making Mr. Gabriel so confident that the battery agenda can be pushed through, including the current glut of foreign direct investment opportunities and positive business trends.

At the recent North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit, German manufacturers were conspicuous not only for their commitment to electromobility but for the advanced level they had got their models to. While other countries' producers used e-cars either as an anecdotal afterthought or sideshow at best, BMW, Audi, Porsche, VW and Mercedes all used hybrid or e-cars as centrepoints of their presentations. BMW's i8 and VW's e-Golf drew especially good reviews.

Meanwhile, confirming Germany's place as Europe's leading e-car market, American e-car manufacturer Tesla is set to invest heavily in charger infrastructure across the country, saying that: "Germany is a country that appreciates automotive technology and is therefore extremely important to us." The intention is for 25 showrooms to be opened in Germany from the end of 2014 onwards, while a network of charging stations set to be in place by March this year should enable electric car drivers to reach many places in Germany without fear of running out of power.

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