



The slower rise of electric cars

The head of the trade association of car-parts manufacturers tells **Tim King** that though the electrification of cars is on its way, the shift from carbon should not be rushed

European Union policymakers are scaling back their expectations of a speedy switch from traditional petrol and diesel vehicles to electric cars. That, at least, is the assessment of Peter Tyroller, the president of CLEPA, the European Association of Automotive Suppliers.

Tyroller, who is a member of the management board of Robert Bosch, where he is in charge of marketing and sales, had a series of meetings in Brussels last week as part of his CLEPA duties.

He said that in his discussions last year with MEPs and the European Commission, the talk was all about electric cars, but the mood had changed since.

"It seems to me that there is getting to be a little more realistic thinking in the heads of the Commission," he said.

He regretted that the public had been given a misleading impression that in a few years they could have electric cars and the problem of carbon dioxide emissions would be solved.

The environmental benefits had been exaggerated, he said, as long as Europe's energy mix remained the same (because electric cars might, for instance, be getting their power from gas-fired power stations).

Work to do

Electrification was indeed on its way, he said, but there was still work to do. The cost per kilowatt hour of electric vehicle transport was still too high to be competitive, the size and life of batteries had to be improved and the range of electric vehicles had to be extended.

Tyroller foresees that by 2020, electric vehicles will have a 10% share of the worldwide market. Of that 10%, one-third would be pure electric; most would be hybrids and plug-in hybrids. "Thereafter, there will be a strong market," he said, with a first phase of electrification between 2020 and 2030. "We will see sufficient

It seems to me that there is getting to be a little more realistic thinking into the heads of the Commission

infrastructure for those vehicles in the cities," he forecast.

But Tyroller thinks that, in the meantime, the emissions performance of petrol and diesel cars can still be improved "by roughly 30%" in the space of a few years. Not all of Europe's carmakers would be happy to have such improvements demanded of them, but CLEPA members, who supply the carmakers with innovative technology, would stand to benefit.

Tyroller is wary, however, of talk in some member states and in the Commission of introducing energy taxes, particularly on diesel. The EU's carbon dioxide emissions legislation sets a target of an average of 95g per kilometre, to be achieved by 2020. The CLEPA president believes that that target is achievable, but warns that it might not be so if further energy taxes are introduced, because they might upset the balance between petrol and diesel engines.

Tyroller is confident that the European car industry will retain its competitive advantage over other parts of the world in the technology of traditional engines. But he says that Europe will have to work hard to stay ahead of China and India, which will be the biggest areas of future growth. The car industry and the car-parts industry are global, he warns, and the EU should not harm the ability of the European industries to compete on world markets.



EuropeanVoice.com
Visit the website for
news updates.

European Voice
4-10 November 2010
VOL. 16 Nr. 40