

Hydrogen Valley goes uphill

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Just as California's Silicon Valley is known throughout the world as the home of information technology, Germany's Ruhr region could be set to become 'Hydrogen Valley' if the masterplan of Volker Linder bears fruit.

[F043 Image 2](#)

Volker is project leader of H2-Netzwerk-Ruhr, which aims to encourage the development and use of hydrogen in the Ruhr region and gain international acclaim by doing so.

How are they going to do this? By leading discussions that will show businesses and the general public that hydrogen is a cost-effective solution for the future.

Growing numbers

Volker says the network is growing and currently has between ten and 12 members, although he expects the number to triple by the end of the year.

In Herten, an old coal mine has been redeveloped into a new modern industrial and technological project. Energy company Blue Tower will produce hydrogen out of biomass and it will primarily use cuttings from greenery along roadsides in the Ruhr region.

[F043 Image 1](#)

Also in Herten are enterprises that develop and sell fuel cells, such as Masterflex, which received a contract from the city for the world's first fuel cell powered bicycle fleet.

Volker explains: "All this is part of the scene which we have established in the Metropolregion Ruhr and, all in all, it won't be only the Hydrogen Valley, but a very strong cluster of production and development of new energies".

It is this cluster that inspired the creation of H2 to publicise the activities and bring them to the attention of the world, as well as the local people. Its local activities involve visiting schools and hosting workshops to introduce children to the benefits of hydrogen.

So you could say H2 is the PR company for the region's hydrogen activities.

One of the tasks of the network is to promote the benefits of new developments to major players, such as LWE and EON, because their involvement in the whole process is vital.

Hydrogen Highway planned

Germany has a national programme to establish demonstration fleets of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles in the centres of Berlin and Hamburg initially.

As part of the wider plans this will be rolled out to other regions and H2 wants to promote the infrastructure, together with the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia, for what is being termed Hydrogen Highway.

The people in the Ruhr region are already aware of such technology through project Hychain, which operates two small buses that provides a city connection service, with one refuelling station for the fuel. This venture enables the general public to see a glimpse of the possible future.

However, Volker admits people also understand it is expensive to run.

H2 to lead the way

“We have to lead the discussion and we will have to show that this is technically secure, that it is realistic and that we can improve the technology and the logistics of hydrogen so that the price is affordable within the next 20 years,” he explains.

Volker believes demonstration projects such as Hychain show daily application is a realistic prospect and although it is costly now, times will change. In the future we could all look back at Hydrogen Valley as where it all began.