



**Press Release No. 4/00
7. September 2000**



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(This press release was originally distributed by [Forum Zukunftsenergien](#) on occasion of the conference "HYFORUM 2000" held on 11. to 14. September 2000 in Munich)

Dr. Rolf Ewald, Chairman of the German Hydrogen Association
Hydrogen is at hand - state and economy must act quickly

The foreseeable depletion of the resources and ecological problems enforce the transition to renewable energies, mainly as electricity. For their storage and maybe transport we need an energy carrier which acts as buffer; only hydrogen can reasonably perform this task.

This was stated by Dr. Rolf Ewald, chairman of the German Hydrogen Association, on 5. September to the [Science Press Conference](#) in Bonn. The German Hydrogen Association exists since 1996. It has 29 corporate and 115 personal members. A European association was founded this year.

The hydrogen era has already begun. A number of countries (USA, Japan, Italy, Iceland, China, Germany) consider this topic with great intensity. All major carmakers develop hydrogen propulsion. BMW trusts the proven technology of the internal combustion engine. Most of the others prefer the fuel cell. DaimlerChrysler and Ballard have invested several hundred million US-\$ in this field.

Hydrogen generation on board of the car by means of a small chemical factory which reformates methanol works already; such a car, however, is still about 300 kg heavier than a gasoline vehicle. Serial products have been announced for 2004/2005. Many institutions work on a direct methanol fuel cell with great intensity.

Public transport companies as well prepare for hydrogen vehicles. And for the utilities hydrogen is the fuel of the future, either direct or indirect. They do a lot of work on the development of stationary fuel cell power stations. These make better use of the energy; thus their technology is an important contribution to energy efficiency.

Economy, politics, and society must act

Economy, politics, and society must act, because the future prospects related to hydrogen must be made known. It must be made clear that the transition from fossil fuels to hydrogen is at hand. Politics must now set boundary conditions which guarantee the involved companies that in the middle and long term they are on the right track.

A 100.000 Basements program would be useful

System oriented projects, as they are necessary for market introduction, need public support during the collection of experience, both in mobile and the stationary field of domestic heating. It would be useful to have not only a 100.000 roofs program, but a 100.000 basements program as well.

Fast actions will result in early benefits.

DWV press release 4/00 of 7. September 2000
Published by the German Hydrogen Association, Berlin
Editor: Dr. Ulrich Schmidtchen, Berlin

Top of page 	Press Releases 
Hydrogen Mirror 	Event Calendar 
DWV Homepage 	Please mail us! 