

E-mobility Today & in the Post-Pandemic World



Thursday, 14. May 2020

On Wednesday, 13 May 2020, SARIO organized another free webinar, this time with the title „E-mobility Today and in the Post-pandemic World“. Not only was this the first webinar focused on the topic of electric mobility, but at the same time, it was the first webinar organized within the cooperation of the agency’s Innovation services and Diversification services.

The webinar aimed to bring insights and observations of representatives from the e-mobility sector closer to the professional and general public, which was represented by almost 80 registered participants. In addition to the current situation, associated with several challenges and opportunities, the speakers disclosed their expectations and possible scenarios of future development, especially on how electromobility can contribute to a more sustainable economic renewal after the pandemic.

The speakers of the online discussion, hosted by Oto Pisoň (Deputy Head of Department & Innovation Manager, SARIO), were Jonathan Carrier (InoBat), Ivan Lindovský (AgeVolt) and Patrik Križanský (Slovak Electric Vehicle Association, SEVA). In the beginning, all speakers and participants were welcomed by Róbert Šimončič, SARIO’s CEO, who also provided an introduction of the Innovation and Diversification Services of the agency and pointed out their recent activities developed in a response to the current situation, which has been shifted to an online environment.

Covid-19 has undoubtedly harmed the demand-driven automotive sector, it disrupted its supply chains and hampered production. In some cases, however, e-mobility might have gotten an edge over internal combustion engines. One of the main catalysts of the growing electric vehicles (EV) market is the decreasing demand for „traditional cars“, which started even before the pandemic. On top of that, the speakers mentioned several drivers that have significantly influenced this shift, whether we talk about improvements on the supply’s side (by providing a wider range of EV models,

which are becoming more available because of shorter delivery times and new sales approaches), or demand, often supported by government subsidies. Although it is a topic of debate, CO2 standards for car-makers remain the same and as development cycles of their EV products take several years, the current situation should not change their long-term strategies. Social distancing also plays an important role, as personal transportation will be preferred over public alternatives. However, car-sharing might experience a downturn as users will prefer safer travel options.

Even though the charging infrastructure might have been hit by the pandemic, mostly by losing otherwise regular customers (hotels, restaurants, etc.) or an overall decrease of charging sessions, the situation is expected to be back to normal soon. We have also learned that it might not particularly be the number of charging stations, but rather their strategic placement, efficiency, variability and user-friendliness that will be crucial for the further development of charging infrastructure. The speakers agreed that the new stations should be mostly aimed at the evolution of smart charging, the convenience of their users offering „right to plug“ options mainly in residential and office areas, price transparency, and better roaming standards.

From the perspective of Jonathan Carrier, Slovakia, as the long-term number one per-capita car producer of the world, has been facing an immense opportunity to shift from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based one. E-mobility can act as a stepping stone in this process, however, to become a significant player, this requires a complex cross-sector partnership between the energy industry, EV manufacturers, and government. Even though there have been solid foundations, the future development will be strongly influenced by trends such as uptake of green and sustainable business models or focus on innovations of multisectoral technologies which have not been adopted in Slovakia yet. From the user perspective, according to Patrik Križanský, the further development of e-mobility in Slovakia will also depend on how the variety in supply (in terms of additional EV models) will be able to satisfy the overwhelming EV demand. He tried to contradict the commonly used myth about EV being more expensive, arguing with lower total costs of ownership and running costs of EVs compared to vehicles with internal combustion engines. He also added the whole scheme of subsidies should be reconsidered and shifted from motivating people to buy EV cars rather than demotivating them from buying cars causing increased pollution (e.g. by higher taxation).

The debate clarified another traditional misconception that energy production capacities are insufficient for the further development of e-mobility in Slovakia. There are plenty of capacities, the only bottleneck could be the distribution network. This problem could be overcome for example by a smarter charging infrastructure, a solution offered by AgeVolt.

Apart from sharing their future expectations and predictions, the speakers also talked about their contributions towards enhancing e-mobility. Jonathan Carrier introduced the unique features of InoBat, which lie especially in accelerating the development of the chemical composition of batteries through an AI-based testing approach. This combined with an integrated R&D and high volume production facility located in Slovakia will provide a firm base to competitively supply the EV battery demand of the broader region and ensure a smooth localized supply chain, which can be otherwise, especially in times of such crises, hit by unexpected obstacles.

On the other hand, from the perspective of charging stations, AgeVolt already operates in two business lines. The first one, their distribution line, is focused on integrating hardware to the existing charging infrastructure, which enables dynamic management of charging levels by calculating the availability of electric capacity and using various electric connections within a building. The cloud center software, their second line, represents a sharing system of charging stations that can be controlled in terms of sharing, pricing policy, or used as an advertisement tool.

Patrik Križanský from SEVA, which is a member of The European Association for Electromobility (AVERE), shared SEVA's position on the development of sustainable electrified transport after the pandemic. From the long-term perspective, climate change represents a far worse threat than the current emergency situation, which, even though is urgent, will not be permanent. Therefore, even though Covid-19 might have been causing hard times for many car manufacturers, they should keep fulfilling their responsibilities towards CO₂ targets, especially since the post-pandemic world will be strong on the uptake of green and sustainable economies.



[1]

Source URL: <https://sario.sk/en/news/e-mobility-today-post-pandemic-world>

Links

[1] https://sario.sk/sites/default/files/images/oto_webinar_e_ilustraacna_2_0.jpg