



'Governments want this transition'

In Europe, the Better Place battery-swap model will be first tested in Denmark, a small country with a well-connected road system and a lot of green idealism. EER spoke to Jens Moberg, ceo of Better Place Denmark, about the Danish experiment.

| by Stefan Nicola



Have you succeeded already in attracting finance?

In Denmark, we have raised €103 million. Our investors include Dong, the biggest Danish utility, and many smaller investors. I am pleased to say that raising that amount was possible even in our difficult economic times. And that is because people see that it does not only offer them a return on investment but also gives them an opportunity to do something good for society.

What do you say to those who are sceptical about electric cars?

The movement to the electric vehicle (EV) is unavoidable. Automakers, energy companies all agree that EVs will happen. The big question mark is when. We believe it will happen sooner rather than later. Because the benefits are so immense that we have to realize them as a society. Of course hybrid vehicles will also have some success, and they offer certain benefits, but not the full benefits a fully electric vehicle would offer. Therefore I think the transition to the electric car will happen fast.

How fast could it happen in Denmark?

I am convinced that there will be at least half a million EVs on the road in Denmark by 2020. That would be 25 percent of the cars in Denmark. There will be tipping points along the way. The first will be when people say 'Now I understand that EVs offer me great freedom, great comfort, great range at a reasonable cost.' When people truly believe that, you will see that the prices for used gasoline/diesel cars will drop dramatically, which by the way is something many car leasing companies are quite worried about. And then sometime after that, there will be three consecutive months with more EVs sold than diesel and gasoline cars.

But electric cars are still more expensive to produce than regular gasoline or diesel cars.

Yes, but that's because the volumes are not there yet. But they will get there. And when they get there, the EV will be less costly to produce, simply because there is less than half the number of moving parts in an EV compared to gas or diesel car. And by then, certainly, I am convinced as production, operating and service costs are lower, then it will take over. Governments like the Danish actively support that development, by slashing registration tax for EVs. That's a very positive sign. In France, Spain and the US, governments are giving you a check, and that will also happen in China. So governments want this transition.

What about the car companies?

We are in very active discussions with most if not all automakers around the world. Some are really fully embracing the EV and think the way to get around range limitations is to switch the battery. And those are the ones we are most actively engaged with. But we are also in discussions with those who believe in fixed batteries. But one thing we have to realize is that the Chinese are moving very very fast. So a word of caution to the European automakers: Watch out for the Chinese, because they are coming fast. ■