

More drive for e-mobility

Munich, September 2021 – A conventional petrol station is easy to find and reaching for the pump is routine. On the other hand, charging your electric car on the road is often inconvenient. The Munich-based company Qwello has developed its own AC charging solution so that in future more charging stations can be found in public spaces that are also easy to use. Cities can use these flexibly to expand their charging infrastructure. Depending on the requirements, Qwello acts as an operator who sets up, operates and maintains the charging points with its own funding; but also as a service provider for end customers who, among other things, takes over payment processes and support.

Battery level low, range low, it is very important to recharge the vehicle. But the number of public charging points in urban areas is limited. Because the market share of vehicles with electric drives is growing so rapidly, cities are having a hard time keeping up with the expansion of the charging infrastructure. According to a global e-mobility ranking by IAA MOBILITY, more than three million cars with electric drives were on the road in Europe last year. Most of these are in Germany, where, according to the Federal Motor Transport Authority, there are now more than one million ... and rising. Almost 400,000 more new registrations had already been registered this year by the end of July – as many as in 2020 in total.

"If we are to advance the mobility transition in urban areas, the gap between newly registered electric vehicles and charging stations must not widen," says Henrik Thiele, who founded the company Qwello in 2017. "If you don't have a wall box or your own garage at home, you have to rely on public charging facilities. It has to be commonplace to charge your electric car on the go while shopping – which is also much cheaper than fast charging at a petrol station." However, Qwello is not only tackling the problem of growing demand, but has also looked at user-friendliness. "The way to the charging station and the charging process must be just as intuitive and effortless as filling up a conventional car," adds Thiele.

Easy charging for every electric car driver

Public charging points are not only few and far between; the charging infrastructure also resembles a patchwork quilt. Numerous providers confront users with different payment methods, elaborate registrations, authentications and make the charging process unnecessarily complicated. "It was important to us to offer an easy-to-use and open solution for everyone – regardless of whether they are regular customers or spontaneous users," says Thiele. "For this reason, no membership is required for charging, and our free app with voice control is also an optional feature. But it offers useful additional functions. For example, free charging stations can be reserved 15 minutes in advance." Anyone who does not use the Qwello app can pay at the charging point with all major debit, credit and roaming cards as well as via smartphone. No further authentication is necessary.

When designing its column, Qwello paid attention to ensuring its ease of use and high functionality. The in-house development features an integrated 11-kilowatt cable that is long enough at 6.5 metres and automatically reels back in after use. This way, the cable does not lie around on the ground and stays clean. For those in a hurry, there is also a 22-kilowatt connection to which a separate cable can be connected. The entire operation is designed to be intuitive. On the large display of the column, all instructions are symbol-based and therefore easy to understand internationally. To reduce search traffic in the city, Qwello has also addressed the typical problem of locating them. This is because charging points are often difficult to spot between trees and parked cars. At over 2.30 metres high, the slender Qwello column is clearly visible from a distance.

A status band at the top also provides information on availability. This is monitored by sensors and also transmitted to the Qwello app in real time. Vehicles that have not started charging are also detected. They are clearly identified in the status band as illegally parked. "Public charging points must not be misused as free parking spaces," says Thiele. "Our column therefore reports when it is blocked. And our price model also ensures that the charging points are actually used." Qwello passes on the

electricity costs one-to-one to the users and only applies an infrastructure usage fee. Pilot projects in Munich and Hamburg have shown that the concept works. In contrast to conventional tariffs, users vacated the charging points more quickly after a charging process. This means that 30% fewer charging points are needed to cover demand.

Requirements are different in every city

Maintaining the charging stations manufactured in Germany is also designed to be simple and quick. The regular service is carried out remotely, i.e. via remote maintenance. This lowers maintenance costs. If a problem does occur, the part underneath the cable drum is detached and replaced with a new module. The charging station is ready for use again after about 20 minutes. "Efficiency and straightforward service are important to us in all areas of our charging solution," says Thiele. "We have therefore had an integrated approach from the very beginning. We were not only interested in the design of the actual charging station, but also in good service design. To do this, we looked closely at what is important for electric car drivers, what cities need and how energy companies and car manufacturers can best be involved."

The requirements for expanding the charging infrastructure are different in every city. Qwello has therefore designed its business model to be flexible. The company sees itself as an innovation partner. Depending on requirements, Qwello not only supplies its charging station, but also takes care of financing, installation, service and maintenance, thereby operating as a "Charge Point Operator". In addition, Qwello can make the charging infrastructure accessible to end consumers as an "e-mobility provider". This includes payment processing, tariff structures, customer hotline and more. "Our mission is to support cities in building up their charging infrastructure in a sustainable way," emphasises Thiele. "From our modular service offering, they can take advantage of the modules that make the most sense for them. This flexibility sets us apart from most other providers. Everything is possible, from purchase and rental models to full service and joint ventures with local public utilities."

In Frankfurt am Main, for example, the company has just founded its own operating company to further expand the local charging infrastructure. In close coordination, the first charging points will be installed this year. Qwello plans to invest tens of millions in the installation of around 1,500 public AC charging points in the Main metropolis over the next two years. Further projects, for example in Stockholm, are being planned. Qwello is in close contact with several cities and municipalities across Europe and is part of a European Commission project to improve a user-friendly charging infrastructure throughout Europe.

About Qwello

Qwello GmbH was founded in Munich in 2017 with the vision of improving charging for users of electric cars in public and semi-public areas. Qwello has developed its own AC charging solution, including an app for this purpose. What sets the Qwello charging station apart is its high level of user-friendliness. It includes, for example, parking surveillance and more. Charging stations can be reserved via the app and the user is guided directly to the charging station via Google Maps, for example. Spontaneous users can easily pay with major debit, credit and roaming cards or via smartphone. No authentication, registration or membership is required. Qwello offers cities a comprehensive, modular service portfolio. This includes up to 100% self-financed charging station infrastructure along with the installation, operation and maintenance of the infrastructure. Qwello operates here in the roles of Charge Point Operator (CPO) and eMobility Service Provider (EMP).

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