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Services expanded – construction planning adapted in line with requirements – exchange with the business community

Fraunhofer Research Fab Battery Cells: Workshop affirms strong interest among the industrial sector

The project team at the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft and research partners in North Rhine-Westphalia are working hard to implement the concept, being promoted by the BMBF and the state, for an innovative and successful Research Fab Battery Cells at the Münster location. All in close collaboration with the battery competence centers throughout the country, addressing the landmark decision by the policymakers to get involved in the development of a Germany battery industry in a way that meets future needs. The aim is to help German businesses produce battery cells economically and ecologically.

Two consortium workshops with representatives from the relevant sector of industry are testimony to the huge amount of interest German industry is showing in the project and what it has to offer. With a huge uptake and a multitude of constructive comments, on February 10 a workshop of around 60 participants examined again the needs of industry in order to further reconcile them with the performance portfolio of the Research Fab Battery Cells. This has been and is being continuously examined and optimized – and clearly surpasses the originally planned configuration of the production systems. It also envisages the integration and availability of components earlier than originally planned. The user requirements and the system concept have been presented to the state, which is also the building owner, and to the federal government. All other project activities are also being tackled flat out, in close cooperation with local partners and in agreement with federal and state government.

Prof. Andreas Pinkwart, Minister of Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitalization and Energy of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia: “With the Research Fab Battery Cells, we are realizing a strictly application-oriented major research unit with international appeal in Münster. The aim is to generate a wave of innovations for products and production processes along the entire value creation chain for battery cells. The fact that we are set to achieve this faster and on a

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larger scale than first planned is down to all the scientists involved in Münster and Aachen, to the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, and to the dedicated production engineers at NRW.URBAN as well.”

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Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen, Minister for Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia: “The Research Fab Battery Cells is a key scientific project of the future for North Rhine-Westphalia and for Germany. The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft is working with strong research partners from North-Rhine Westphalia, the University of Münster, RWTH Aachen and the Jülich Research Center, to make sure the FFB is a resounding success. The close collaboration with other nationwide battery competence centers is crucial, as is the close link between research and industry.”

“The core goal of this ambitious project is to establish a Research Fab that is closely geared to the needs of industry, that offers maximum flexibility and that generates the best possible scientific benefits – the focus being on a Technology Readiness Level of greater than six”, explains Fraunhofer President Prof. Reimund Neugebauer. “In cooperation with the industrial sector, the third production line, originally intended as part of a later expansion, as well as a prototyping and testing line, are now to be realized at the very outset. The construction planning phase this required has been dynamically adjusted in parallel to meet these requirements.”

Optimized range of services and initial tenders for industry

Thomas Kolbusch, Vice President Coatema Coating Machinery GmbH: “The Research Fab Battery Cells in Münster is an important unit for the equipment industry, meeting the requirements of scaling from lab operation to industrial production. The Research Fab Battery Cells is a platform for innovations in the production of battery cells and for empowering the small business sector.”

Dr. Philipp Stössel, Process Engineer Battery Solutions, Bühler AG: “The Research Fab Battery Cells offers industry tremendous opportunities to further develop technologies and equipment technology, and to trial and qualify them under practical conditions.”

Dr. Stephan Witt, COO, Kampf Schneid- und Wickeltechnik GmbH & Co. KG: “The Research Fab Battery Cells has the potential to become an innovation center for industry by qualifying and further developing equipment technology for battery cell production under industrial conditions. Research conducted un-

der actual production conditions will open the door to increasing the productivity and sustainability of battery cell production with new sensors, networking and the potential for machine learning. For German and European industry especially, this is an important step towards securing competitiveness in this promising key market.”

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The first elements of tenders from the Research Fab Battery Cells for interested industrial companies have entered the initial phase. Several Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft institutes have worked with their project partners Münster Electrochemical Energy Technology (MEET) at the University of Münster in North-Rhine Westphalia, the Chair for Production Engineering of E-Mobility Components PEM at RWTH Aachen, as well as the Digital Hub Münster, to develop a number of different digital models. Thanks to these models, technical questions and product features for battery cell research can be simulated at an early stage.

Both the scheduled start date of 2022 and the step-by-step growth of the local infrastructure are being addressed by multi-stage construction phases. The latest top-up to the funding by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia is a clear indication that Germany, competing internationally with applied production research is laying the foundations for actively shaping key markets while creating the basis for new, sustainable jobs at the same time.