

## **Role of regional networking for market introduction of hydrogen and fuel cells**

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The aim of the Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Network North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is to establish hydrogen and fuel cell technology as a permanent component of the future energy supply, and at the same time exploiting economic opportunities for NRW. With a view to the challenges presented by the energy turnaround and climate protection, hydrogen and fuel cell technology is seen as a key technology in all segments of the energy and transport system. More than 450 members from industry and science are already actively engaged in the network and use its numerous services.

The general task of the Network is the initiation of co-operative projects. The focus has been shifting from research and development towards testing and market preparation. Due to the expansion of renewable power generation, hydrogen will play an ever growing role as a storage medium in the future energy supply. Projects including wind power based electrolysis, infrastructure of refueling stations and everyday testing of fuel cell vehicles are a current focus of the Network's activity. Emission free public transport with fuel cell buses is here of major importance in NRW. First public transport companies started or will shortly start the deployment of these vehicles. Furthermore, the network is active in the field of the stationary usage of fuel cells.

In order to intensify the exchange of information, the network uses experts groups. Currently the topics "H<sub>2</sub>-Systems" and "Power-to-Gas" as well as "Market Introduction" attract most interest. Major fuel cell companies such as Ballard, Hydrogenics, Plug Power, Solid Power have established bases in NRW. On an international NRW is actively involved in HyER – the Hydrogen, fuel cells and Electro-mobility in European Regions Partnership. In addition, NRW is a founding member of the recently introduced European (FCH JU) initiative on Hydrogen Region and Cities.