# BUSINESS UNIT PERFECT CHARGING

# Interview

**An interview with Patrick Gojer and Andreas Prielinger, Heads of the Business Unit Perfect Charging at Fronius International**

**“Independence is our great strength”**

**Wels, 04/2020 – From digitisation and networking, to increasingly strict CO2 requirements, alternative drive technologies and renewable energy, there is really no shortage of issues currently influencing intralogistics. For operators of electric forklift trucks, battery charging technology is central to many of these challenges. In this interview, Patrick Gojer and Andreas Prielinger, Heads of the Business Unit Perfect Charging at Fronius International, discuss the current developments in intralogistics and the future of battery charging solutions.**

***Mr Gojer, Mr Prielinger, digitisation and networking are playing an increasingly important role in intralogistics. What contribution can battery charging solutions make in this area?***

**Prielinger: Digital and networked technologies offer enormous potential to optimise intralogistics as a whole. The sector is right at the start of a development which will fundamentally change internal material flow. Automated guided vehicles, for example, are increasingly replacing lift trucks and counterbalanced lift trucks. This is having a big impact on infrastructure, including for battery charging technology. In many places the scenario where a forklift driver drives their truck up to a charging station and connects the battery to a charger may well soon be a thing of the past.**

**Gojer: The battery charging technology itself is also benefiting from new digital technologies such as IoT, big data and digitisation because they offer many new possibilities: charging data and device statuses can be made transparent and also viewed and controlled remotely across locations. Plus, it is easier to maintain an overview of and implement improvements. With the Fronius networking solution Charge & Connect, the energy consumption for each charging process and the status of the chargers can all be displayed centrally. The alert function for the charger also automatically reports any charging problems to the person responsible for the forklift truck. This means that usage and availability can be managed efficiently and load spikes and CO2 emissions can be actively reduced. Our customers can therefore minimise risks, and simultaneously keep an eye on costs and improve their intralogistics performance.**

***New charging technologies bring new challenges. Installing charging stations outdoors is one of these issues. Why should a company do this?***

**Gojer: There are various reasons to do this, for example temporary capacity bottlenecks, such as in companies that are very dependent on seasonal business. A growing need for space in the warehouse may make it necessary to move the charging infrastructure outside. There are also situations where charging traction batteries in confined spaces is prohibited for reasons related to insurance or where there are strict requirements for the operation of lead acid and lithium-ion batteries. With the Fronius Energy Hub, we have developed a practical and flexible solution to these challenges. It is a mobile outdoor charging station in a container, which is supplied ready-for-use and can easily be set up anywhere. We customise the equipment to the specific requirements, so the customer gets precisely the infrastructure that they need to help them move their business forward.**

***What options do logistics managers have if they wish to take advantage of new developments and technologies with your existing charging technology?***

**Prielinger: In product development we have been focussing on upgrade options for some time, in order to allow our existing customers to take advantage of our new technologies as far as possible. If we take the example of digital networking, this is a standard feature of our new Selectiva 4.0 chargers, which we are launching this year. However, even users of older models from our Selectiva family can easily upgrade their devices for the digital age. They therefore do not have to replace their devices in order to benefit from the advantages of new technologies. New and improved charging characteristics and additional functions can also easily be installed at a later date using a software update. This makes Fronius charging technology a future-proof investment, which is ready for tomorrow’s technology today, because it is important to us that our customers can rely on our products in the long term.**

***In addition to energy efficiency, sustainability and CO2 emissions are particularly important subjects for logistics managers. What measures can they take to optimise their intralogistics in this area?***

**Gojer: The key is to not lose sight of the big picture. What are your company’s targets? Where do you want to make savings? The clearer a company’s vision, the better we can support them in achieving these targets when it comes to charging. Together we analyse the required application in detail and highlight potential areas for optimisation and possible savings. These may vary from user to user. An alternative drive concept, modern charging technology and also small changes in daily processes can have a big impact in this area.**

**In general, it is worth considering the entire system of forklift truck, battery and charger. As experts in charging technology, we can identify unnecessary power guzzlers and optimise processes. The more information we have about the requirements, dimensions and operation of a forklift truck fleet, the better we can support our customers during planning and design. The new Fronius networking solution Charge & Connect helps us enormously in terms of data transparency – but we also have numerous digital solutions in the pipeline for the future, which will definitely attract plenty of attention. But I do not want to disclose any more at present.**

***Green logistics and CO2 neutrality are terms that are talked about a lot in the sector. Approaches to solving these problems are still scarce. What can Fronius offer in this area?***

**Gojer: At Fronius, sustainability is not just a catchphrase. For years we have been developing solutions that are designed to be sustainable and offer added value for our customers today, yet also provide some answers and applications for the challenges of tomorrow and further into the future. Our aim is to bring smart and sustainable charging solutions to the market. Our expertise in solar energy helps us to develop sustainable charging solutions in combination with renewable energy sources. For many of our customers, electric forklift trucks account for up to a third of their total energy consumption. By combining high-efficiency charging technology and renewable energy sources such as photovoltaics, we can offer our customers a cost-efficient, holistic solution.**

**Our vision is to make intralogistics even more sustainable. CO2-neutral charging must not remain a dream. With us, customers can gradually move towards a CO2-neutral charging infrastructure and drastically reduce their CO2 emissions. Our digitisation solution helps us to achieve new levels of transparency, which in turn helps us implement improvements and reduce CO2 levels – a cycle that will gradually result in transparent and green intralogistics.**

***In order to remain competitive, companies are constantly striving to maximise potential savings and optimise processes accordingly. What will the future of charging technology look like? What technology is the right choice to remain successful in future?***

**Prielinger: To put it simply, the one which gives the user the greatest possible benefits in their individual situation. Companies are currently facing rising electricity prices and increasingly strict requirements for reducing their CO2 emissions. Maximising potential savings will therefore continue to remain crucial in the battle for the biggest competitive advantage in future. At the same time, in order to ensure smooth business operations, you need to maximise the efficiency and availability of your fleet – and I think there will be growing challenges in this area in the coming years as well. That said, the two do not need to be mutually exclusive, provided that all elements of intralogistics, including the battery charging technology, are perfectly aligned with one another. As a technology-independent partner, we believe this is where our greatest strength lies. We help companies to identify their potential to optimise their efficiency and highlight further saving options – always with the aim of achieving sustainable and cost-efficient intralogistics.**

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## *Meta description: The Heads of the Business Unit Perfect Charging discuss the current trends in intralogistics and the future of battery charging technology.*

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**Image captions:**

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**Image 1:** Andreas Prielinger (left) and Patrick Gojer, Heads of the Business Unit Perfect Charging at Fronius International GmbH.

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**Image 2:** Patrick Gojer: “Our vision is to make intralogistics even more sustainable.”

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**Image 3:** Andreas Prielinger: “Fronius charging technology is a future-proof investment, which is already prepared for tomorrow’s technology today.”

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**Fronius International GmbH**

Fronius International GmbH is an Austrian company with headquarters in Pettenbach and other sites in Wels, Thalheim, Steinhaus and Sattledt. With 4,760 employees worldwide, the company is active in the fields of welding technology, photovoltaics and battery charging technology. 92% of its products are exported through 30 international Fronius subsidiaries and sales partners/representatives in over 60 countries. With its innovative products and services and 1,253 granted patents, Fronius is the global innovation leader.

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