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## „You are in a good position by betting on electric mobility”

Walter Hatak



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**Interview with Jörg Salomon, Deutsche Post DHL Group**

In 2016, Deutsche Post DHL Group introduced its own electric car, the so-called StreetScooter. The company recently decided to double its capacities for the production of electric cars from 10.000 to 20.000 until 2018. This is due to strong demand. Jörg Salomon, Vice President in the business unit of E-Mobility of Deutsche Post DHL Group, is giving us insight into the reasons that have led his company to build its own electric car, and into its future plans.

**Mr. Salomon, if we had asked you five years ago whether Deutsche Post DHL Group would launch the production of electric cars, what would you have told us?**

**Salomon:** Since we had started developing the electric car “StreetScooter” by the end of 2011, I would have probably said: yes, because we urgently need electric cars in order to ensure climate-smart and quieter delivery of letters and packages for the long run. That we would have built the biggest e-fleet in the area of utility vehicles on our own just a few years down the line, is something that we were probably not expecting five years ago.

**What was it that ultimately made you decide in favour of producing your electric transporter in-house, and what specifications did you give yourself and your technicians?**

**Salomon:** We operate one of the biggest vehicle fleets in Germany, and we realised early on that our cars did not only have to be able to cope with the economic challenges and the hard stress of daily postal routine, but they also had to cut down on emissions. But this kind of vehicle was not available on the market. Therefore, we decided in 2011 to conceptualise and develop our own car. Together with the company StreetScooter, which we took over in 2014, we managed this feat in record-breaking time. After only three years, our tailor-made electric car was ready for market entry – fast and at low cost! Meanwhile, we already operate about 3.500 of these vehicles.



*Jörg Salomon, Vice President  
for electric mobility with  
Deutsche Post DHL Group*

**Did environmental or economic aspects inform your decision to gradually switch your fleet to electric motors?**

**Salomon:** Both aspects are equally important. On the one hand, our electric cars allow us to ensure climate-smart and quieter delivery, which is in our customers’ best interest. On the other hand, the total cost of ownership is comparable to conventional vehicles. And taking into account the discussion about banning diesel cars from entering inner cities, we think we are in a good position having bet on electric mobility.

**Where do you source your batteries, and what do you do with them once their power has fallen below operating levels?**

**Salomon:** The batteries for the StreetScooter are manufactured in Germany. Due to the robust cycle of the cells, we expect a life of at least eight years in postal service. Our battery management system ensures that the batteries are charged and used with a view to optimising the lifespan. After that, the batteries are usually not defective, they just do not have sufficient power levels for mobile use anymore. They can then be used as stationary storage device, for example as buffer for solar energy.



*Deutsche Post DHL StreetScooter,  
Source: dpdhl.com*

**How many orders for the electric transporter have you received so far from external companies, or do you largely produce for your own demand? What sort of development do you envisage for the coming years? Do you expect to spin off your electric car business unit?**

**Salomon:** Customer demand for our StreetScooter, for example from communities, trade businesses and also industrial companies is very high. While we do not want to name specific figures, we can confirm that due to this high external and internal demand, we will launch a new production facility in Düren in the second quarter of 2018. This will allow us to build up to 20,000 vehicles per year.

**Will the electric transporter be able to operate without a driver in the future? How do you as logistics group see the potential of autonomous driving?**

**Salomon:** The technological developments in autonomous logistics will provide us with many options in transport and in delivery. For example, we want to test to what extent autonomous cars can be used for the implementation of swap trailers<sup>[1]</sup> in our parcel centres so as to avoid accidents. We also want to step up the trials for StreetScooters that follow the deliverers on their tour and thus make their work easier.

<sup>[1]</sup> A swap trailer is a replaceable charge carrier, which can be separated from the carrier vehicle (e.g. lorry). Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swap\\_body](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swap_body), 14 November, 2017

Generally speaking, we want to use this technology to relieve and support our employees. Even though many scenarios cannot yet be implemented in public space for legal reasons, we basically want to be a crucial driver for any innovation in our sector so as to be able to accompany it with a view to all stakeholders and to guide it into a constructive direction. Regardless of technical improvements our employees will remain also in the future indispensable: technical devices can neither read, nor write, nor put letters into individual letter boxes.

**Another interesting topic of the future is the use of drones in the delivery of packages. How realistic do you see the use of drones in the coming five years? Will we see an own product by Deutsche Post in this area as well?**

**Salomon:** Since this is not my area of expertise, let me just say this: we were the first ones to hold a licence for autonomous, commercial, non-military parcelcopter flights back in 2013. Since then, we have continuously developed the technology and the area of use. We are convinced that we can create very concrete added value in logistics with our DHL parcelcopter. This can be medical aid in case of emergencies or the delivery to regions in geographically demanding terrain, such as an island or a mountainous region. With the parcelcopter, we can offer people in such regions access to a flexible and, above all fast, dispatch and reception of goods.

Of course, it is currently too soon to certainly assess the role of parcelcopters or other transport drones for the logistics industry in the future. There is still a lot of technical development work needed. Also, the relevant authorities have to agree on the regulatory integration of drones in the existing aviation convention.



*DHL packing station & Paketkopter 3.0,  
Source: dpdhl.com*

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## Walter Hatak

Senior Research Analyst, Erste Asset Management