

Follow-up Report: 47th International Vienna Motor Symposium 2026

“A holistic, systemic perspective is crucial”

A thousand international guests, 100 presentations and 50 exhibitors gathered at the world’s most prestigious powertrain technology conference

Vienna, 7 May 2026. The 47th International Vienna Motor Symposium (22–24 April 2026) brought the full breadth of powertrain technology into focus. Among the highlights was the European premiere of China SAE’s “Roadmap 3.0.” What follows is a snapshot drawn from across the 100 presentations, delivered and debated primarily at the Vienna Hofburg, with some sessions held online.

“The Vienna Motor Symposium has been shaping the transformation of our industry for decades,” observed the Head of Technical Development for e-Drive at **Mercedes-Benz** — and to illustrate his point, he arrived with proof. He had driven the new generation of the Mercedes-Benz EQS, the brand’s electric flagship, directly from Stuttgart to Vienna: a journey of approximately 620 kilometers, at the end of which the high-voltage battery still had 21 percent battery charge remaining — enough, he noted, to make the return trip with just a single charging stop.

This compelling demonstration of progress was a highlight of the event that brought together the automotive world’s leading figures in Vienna for the 47th time with a critical focus: The future of mobility, and with it the entire spectrum of propulsion technologies.

A holistic approach, not a single solution

The idea that this delivering this future will boil down to a single technology may reflect the preferences of certain representatives at the European Commission, but it does not reflect market realities — nor the findings of global R&D aimed at phasing out fossil fuels and meaningfully reducing transport CO₂ emissions.

“The big picture — from cradle to grave in terms of energy and propulsion — is what matters most,” said Professor **Bernhard Geringer**, President of the organising *Austrian Society of Automotive Engineers (ÖVK)*, and host for the annual symposium.

European Premiere: China SAE's Roadmap 3.0

Against the magnificent backdrop of three halls in Vienna's Hofburg Palace, around 1,000 industry professionals and media representatives from across the world gathered for a wealth of sessions. The opening day was marked by a European premiere: Professor **Xiangyang Xu** of Beihang University and Fellow of the Chinese Society of Automotive Engineers (**China SAE**) presented the details of Roadmap 3.0, a strategic plan, which charts the direction of China's automotive industry through to 2040.

Great Wall Motors and **Li Auto** showcased new products for on- and off-road use. **Stephan Neugebauer** of **BMW AG** — who also chairs the *European Road Transport Research Advisory Council (ERTRAC)* — made the case for comprehensive technology neutrality, a view echoed by **Lukas Walter** of Graz-based **AVL List GmbH**, who contrasted 'one-size-fits-all approaches' with the need for market-specific solutions.

Madame **Ruiping Wang**, Senior Vice President of **Geely Auto**, offered a candid look at the production and development activities of one of China's leading manufacturers. "We need every single solution on the path to carbon neutrality," she said. Wang reported that she has backing from both the Chinese government and China SAE.

Room to grow: 45% BEV share by 2035

The official opening day began with an overview of the global automotive landscape. Univ.- Professor **Stefan Pischinger** — Chair of Thermodynamics of Mobile Energy Conversion Systems at RWTH Aachen University and Chairman of the FEV shareholders' meeting — mapped the current state of play across the world's largest markets, examining political and regulatory frameworks and highlighted the potential of various powertrain concepts, from internal combustion engines and electric drive units (EDUs) to e-fuels. Pischinger projected that battery electric vehicles (BEVs) could account for 45 percent of global sales by 2035, although this figure is based on the most favourable market conditions for BEV adoption, for example, in Europe.

Competing in Europe

Niklas Klingenberg, Member of the Executive Board of **TRATON SE** — whose portfolio includes Scania, MAN, International Motors and VW Truck & Bus — provided insights into the commercial vehicle giant's strategy and organisation, concluding: "We need to work harder to remain competitive in Europe."

Donghee Han, Executive Vice President Electrified Propulsion Dev. Tech. Unit R&D Division, **Hyundai Motor Group**, traced the South Korean automaker's impressive rise and the philosophy of its founder: "Have you even tried it?" — a motto, he said, that continues to inspire the group's engineers, particularly in the field of BEVs.

Premiere: An Internal Combustion Engine at 48% Efficiency

Beyond Europe, internal combustion engines are far from obsolete. China's own Roadmap 2040 anticipates that roughly a third of all new vehicle registrations will still be electrified vehicles with combustion engines. The efficiency gains now being achieved would have seemed unthinkable only a few years ago and prove that development in this area is far from over. Leading the way is Graz-based **AVL**, which presented an engine achieving 48 percent thermal efficiency. **Bosch** and **Champion**, meanwhile, offered insights into pre-chamber ignition variants for petrol engines.

Advances in Battery and Electric Drive Technology

The symposium also devoted considerable attention to progress in battery and electric drive technology. **Porsche** presented a direct oil-cooling system enabling the rear-axle electric motor of the new Cayenne Electric Turbo to deliver not only exceptional peak power, but also exceptionally high continuous output.

BMW, **Chery**, **VW** and **AVL List**, among others, shared developments in highly efficient electric drive systems, while **Volkswagen** and **Toyota** presented new hybrid systems — both plug-in and non-plug-in.

The Rise of Range-Extended Electric Vehicles

Reports from China highlighted the surging popularity of range-extended electric vehicles (REEVs): an increasing number of manufacturers are entering this segment, and over 1.2 million units were sold in China last year alone. In this regard, **Horse Powertrain** explained the unique features of a new gasoline engine platform designed specifically for use in range-extender vehicles.

A Comeback for the In-Wheel Motor?

New engine developments were also emerging, with displacements ranging from 1.5 to 6.6 litres across four-cylinder, six-cylinder boxer, V8 and V12 configurations. **Audi AG** shared the potential of a high-torque, efficient V6 diesel paired with a hybrid powertrain; **Mercedes** reported on inline six-cylinder diesels and highly competitive V8s for the premium segment. **Porsche** and **Lamborghini** were in distinguished company: the Stuttgart manufacturer presented the 911 Turbo S, while the delegation from Sant'Agata Bolognese described the evolution from the Temerario supercar to its track-focused GT3 variant. **Mahle** took the audience on a virtual journey culminating in a 6.6-litre V12 with a hybrid module — the powertrain behind **Zenvo's** new hypercar, producing up to 1,876 horsepower. **Alpine** CEO **Philippe Krief** made a compelling case that the wheel-hub motor, first used over 120 years ago, could be on the verge of a revival.

Hydrogen: Still a Central Question

Presentations on developments in hydrogen were particularly compelling. Whether through direct combustion — currently a subject of intense interest — or in fuel cell applications, hydrogen is expected to play a meaningful role in propulsion systems. Professor **Helmut Eichlseder** of Graz University of Technology and Vice-Chairman of the ÖVK also placed hydrogen in a broader context of resilience and opportunity for Austria as an industrial location: “We must be at the forefront of research and development.”

The Supplier Industry Under Pressure

Among the most moving moments of the symposium came during the closing plenary, when **Matthias Zink** — CEO of **Schaeffler Powertrain & Chassis** and Chairman of the European supplier association **CLEPA** — spoke emotionally about the difficulty of making factual, holistic arguments heard in EU legislative and political circles, where debate is too often conducted in dogmatic terms.

Volkswagen Launches Battery Production

A significant presentation came from **Frank Blome**, CEO of **PowerCo SE** — the Volkswagen Group's battery subsidiary — who outlined the current state of European battery cell production. Serial production of the so-called “standard cell” began in Salzgitter, Germany, in December 2025, and will feature for the first time in the new ID. Polo. Additional factories are currently under construction in Valencia and Canada. Blome set out both the challenges and the opportunities this landmark project represents for Volkswagen and for Europe.

Time Running Out for Europe as ‘the cradle of technology’

While planning takes the centre stage for China and the United States concentrates on funding, Europe is led by regulation. As several senior speakers made clear, this approach alone will not be sufficient to meet the challenges ahead. Much is at stake — and the time during which Europe retains its significance as an industrial hub and the cradle of technological excellence is running out.

Next International Motor Symposium: Vienna, April 2027

The 48th International Vienna Motor Symposium will take place from 21 to 23 April 2027 and we hope that by then, that there will be significant progress to report.

Brief information on the International Vienna Motor Symposium:

The International Vienna Motor Symposium, initiated by Prof. Dr Hans Peter Lenz, was held for the first time in 1979 and has been organised by the Austrian Society of Automotive Engineers (ÖVK) since 1985. Professor Bernhard Geringer has headed the association since 2017. The ÖVK was founded in 1985 and has 750 full members. Its aim is to promote the meaningful application of automotive technology. Through scientific events, the ÖVK aims to increase and promote the knowledge level of experts in the automotive industry and associated target groups.

Further information: <https://wiener-motorensymposium.at/> and <https://oevk.at/>

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