

Press Release

Hanover, 20th May 2011

National Wind Energy Research Association ForWind and Fraunhofer IWES: Unique cooperation nationwide / start of research initiative “Wind Energy 2020”

Hanover. ForWind, the Center for Wind Energy Research of the Universities of Oldenburg, Hanover and Bremen, and the Fraunhofer Institute for Wind Energy and Energy System Technology (IWES) have joined forces to form the “National Wind Energy Research Association”. This was announced today by ForWind Managing Director Dr. Stephan Barth and Prof. Dr.-Ing. Andreas Reuter, head of the Fraunhofer IWES, on the occasion of the “Leibniz Dialog on the Future” in connection with the topic of “How does wind get into the grid?” at the University of Hanover.

“Combining joint research competencies enables optimal exploitation of synergies as well as effective and efficient development of solutions for difficult problems,” explains Dr. Barth. More than 430 employees at 35 institutions and research institutes work together in the new association. The available research infrastructure allows them to conduct basic and application-oriented investigations. Examples include a supercomputer for flow simulations, the world’s biggest wave flume and a unique test facility for rotor blades that have a length of up to 90 m. “These are ideal requirements for a research association that is unique in the field of wind energy in Germany,” says Prof. Reuter. Through this association ForWind and IWES cover nearly the entire spectrum of wind energy technology – from energy meteorology and rotor blades to the power train, from the nacelle and supporting structure all the way to the subsoil.

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“In the past years ForWind and Fraunhofer IWES have established themselves in the wind energy sector as experts sought after by industry, science, politics and society. It was therefore only logical to team up and form the ‘National Wind Energy Research Association’,” adds Prof. Reuter. “By combining our research activities, we are in a

position to keep pace with the international research associations that set the tone in Denmark and the US. As a consequence, research reaches a level corresponding to the technological leadership of the German wind energy industry.”

The close cooperation between ForWind and Fraunhofer IWES is underpinned by the Fraunhofer project groups in Oldenburg and Hanover as well as via the offshore site investigations of the University of Bremen. Aside from that, the RAVE (Research at Alpha Ventus) research initiative is primarily responsible for networking the ForWind-IWES research association. In addition, ForWind and IWES are working jointly on subprojects of two European networks, the “Joint Programme on Wind Energy” of the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA) as well as the “Wind Energy Technology Platform”, and they are project managers in the “Implementing Agreement for Cooperation in the Research, Development and Deployment of Wind Energy Systems” of the International Energy Agency (IEA).

A current project of the “National Wind Energy Research Association” involves the “WindPowerCluster” application in the contest “Spitzenclusterwettbewerb” of the Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which ForWind and IWES are jointly organizing with the Wind Energy Agency WAB. In the past two years ForWind, IWES and WAB have interlaced over 300 research institutions and wind energy enterprises in the northwest region of Germany into a complex business and research network. The application as “WindPowerCluster” reflects the uniqueness of this network. The cluster is the only wind energy project in the “Spitzenclusterwettbewerb”. “The fusion of ForWind and IWES to form the ‘National Wind Energy Research Association’ is a gain for the entire northwest region and illustrates the exceptional position of this region in the wind energy sector,” Ronny Meyer, Managing Director of the offshore industry association WAB, is delighted to say.

The first joint program of the “National Wind Energy Research Association” is the “Wind Energy 2020” research

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initiative. Its purpose is to implement the goal of the federal government to generate 35 percent of the electricity needs using renewable energy sources by 2020. Wind energy constitutes the supporting pillar of this project. As a consequence, the wind energy sector in Germany faces tremendous challenges. For instance, wind energy has to be sensibly integrated into a sustainable energy supply concept. The technology must be reliable and competitive at the international level, and the new wind farms have to be constructed and operated in an environmentally sound manner and in a consensus with the residents concerned. Successfully meeting these challenges will boost the technological edge of the German wind energy sector and offer significant market potential both in Germany and in terms of export.

“Wind energy 2020” therefore networks research with the German wind energy industry and provides answers to technical and economic research questions of multidisciplinary scope. Several multi-year projects will be developed and implemented together with the sector in order to expand wind energy use on a cost-efficient, sustainable and long-term basis and continuously improve the competitiveness of wind energy with respect to conventional power stations. One of the focal points of the research initiative is optimal exploitation of wind as a resource and of the available areas during the implementation of offshore wind farms having a capacity of several gigawatts. This also encompasses innovative load- and noise-reduced rotor blades, optimization of supporting structures for lower-cost offshore wind energy facilities as well as development of rugged generator and power train systems supporting the grid.

“The ‘National Wind Energy Research Association’ will make every effort in its work to augment research in the wind energy sector and establish Germany as one of the major countries for wind energy,” state Barth and Reuter.

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