



PRESS RELEASE

E-mobility: Battery manufacturers must become more transparent

Berne/Lucerne, September 2, 2020. Batteries are at the beating heart of e-mobility. A [study](#) by Bread for all, Lenten Fund and ATE Swiss Association for transport and environment examines for the first time how the leading battery manufacturers are dealing with environmental and human rights issues. The problems concern, above all, the transparency of supply chains, the mining of raw materials, and battery recycling.

Today's electric cars store their energy in lithium-ion batteries. In order to gain an insight into how environmental and human rights issues are dealt with during their manufacture, *Bread for all*, *Lenten Fund* and *ATE* analysed the corporate policies of the six global leaders in the production of vehicle batteries. The Swiss company ABB was also included in the assessment. ABB does not produce car batteries. As part of its overall technology business, ABB assembles integrated energy storage systems for electric vehicles in public transport.

The South Korean manufacturer Samsung SDI came out on top in the overall rankings, but it was none other than the Chinese world leader CATL which came bottom – mainly because of a lack of transparency. That said, every one of the manufacturers showed serious deficiencies in terms of traceability at various stages of the supply chain. For instance, hardly any information was available about the mines from which the raw materials were sourced.

The need for enhanced due diligence

In addition, the companies restrict their due diligence checks to so-called conflict minerals and to cobalt from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is viewed as problematic because of the widespread use of child labour in its mines. Other raw materials, such as lithium and nickel, are largely disregarded despite the fact that their extraction also has extremely harmful social and environmental consequences.

The publishers of the [study](#) are therefore calling on battery manufacturers to exercise their duty of care along the entire length of the supply chain and with respect to all of the raw materials they use. Increased transparency regarding the origin of raw materials, working conditions in the mines, and the social and environmental impact on the mines' neighbourhood are of crucial importance. In addition, the companies should not merely identify problems which arise at any point in the supply chain, but also join forces with stakeholders from civil society in search for solutions.



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Encouraging recycling and reducing traffic

Lenten Fund, Bread for all, and ATE also believe that there are potential improvements to be made in the expansion of recycling. They call on politicians to support the necessary innovations and create incentives and regulations so that batteries can be used as long as possible and then be fully recycled. At present it is often cheaper to continue mining for new raw materials than to reuse them. Recycling must also contribute to reducing the CO₂ emissions generated by battery manufacturing. So far, only three of the companies investigated have been pursuing emissions targets in line with those set out in the Paris Agreement.

All things considered, the environmental footprint of electric vehicles is less harmful than that of vehicles powered by fossil fuels. However, if we are to limit our demand for raw materials, we will also have to reduce the number of vehicles circulating on our roads. This will require us to modify our mobility patterns, by increasing our use of public transport or through the promotion of carpooling, car sharing and cycling.

Factsheet on the study, graphic, and full version of the study available for download:

- www.breadforall.ch/media
- www.verkehrsclub.ch/batterie

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