

Great idea!

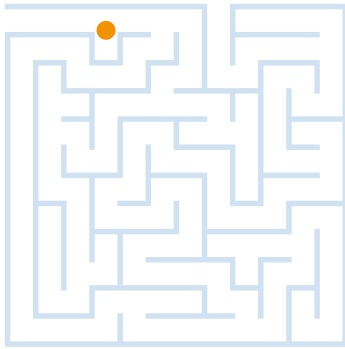
Why FVV's
Industrial Collective
Research works

» Letting collective intelligence find the solution is a great idea.«

MAX DECKER, MSc

studied mechanical engineering at Bingen University of Applied Sciences and at the Otto von Guericke University of Magdeburg, focusing on product development, design and calculation. He then worked as a technical consultant in emissions legislation and homologation at VDMA eV's Transport department, before switching within the VDMA Group to the Engines and Systems association, where his work focused on international emissions legislation for engines and mobile machinery, and on power-to-X technologies. He took on the role of project manager at FVV in 2019 and since then has supported research projects in the fields of materials science and recycling, including critical raw materials and additive manufacturing, and in zero-impact emissions including non-exhaust emissions such as brake dust and tyre wear. In November 2025, Max Decker was appointed Deputy Managing Director of FVV, a role in which he heads the research programme.

Max Decker has also been Managing Director of the German Research Society for Automation and Microelectronics eV (DFAM) since July 2022. Like FVV, DFAM is an industrial research association within the Mechanical Engineering Research Federation eV (FKM), VDMA's knowledge and collaboration platform for research and innovation and industrial collective research (IGF).



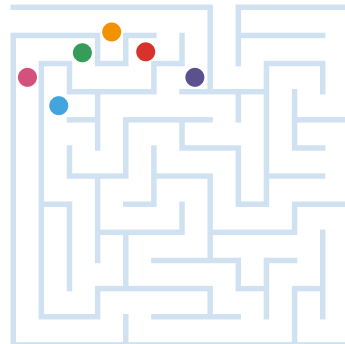
» *Industrial research associations are based on three pillars: **research, network and training**. At conferences, you meet people who are working on the same problem, which helps you to **see the bigger picture**. Because other scientists might approach problems in different ways, it opens up **new ways of looking at things**.* «

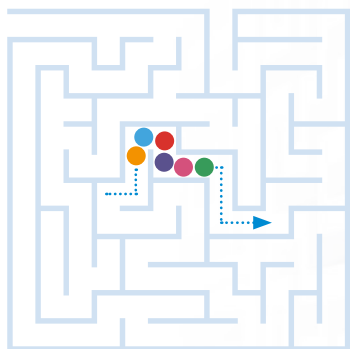
Mr Decker, you have been Deputy Managing Director of FVV since the end of last November and are in charge of the association's research programme. What challenges have you faced in your new role?

DECKER We are living in a fascinating time. New strategic issues are emerging, there is a great deal of restructuring, and people are looking for new solutions – all while a generational shift is underway. Everywhere I go, I see large numbers of members entering retirement or just leaving the workforce, including at institutes. The transition from the old to the new generation is proving to be a challenge at the moment, on top of the growing variety of topics. Younger people tend to spend more time in the digital world, and we need to look at whether our current ways of working and networking fit in with that, or whether we need to make some changes.

We are currently thinking about how we can make the FVV Transfer + Networking Event fit for the future, so that we remain attractive to the younger generation.

There is no denying that the economic situation is quite tense. Companies are now sending just one employee to the conference instead of five, and that one person has to be everywhere all at once. We want to show the members more clearly what the benefits of the event are.





Why should more members attend the conference?

DECKER One reason to attend the conference is that it offers access to a large network. Industrial research associations are based on three pillars: research, network and training. At conferences, you meet people who are working on the same problem, which helps you to see the bigger picture. Because other scientists might approach problems in different ways, it opens up new ways of looking at things. I've seen this happen many times. You're talking about a problem, and then a new point comes up that you hadn't thought of before – and the others realise they hadn't even considered it from that angle. The conferences bring the collective intelligence of FVV together. You get to know the people working on the various projects, can talk to the professors leading the institutes, make new contacts – and perhaps even find a good job that way. We provide a secure space within the compliance rules and, of course, in line with the requirements of pre-competitive research.

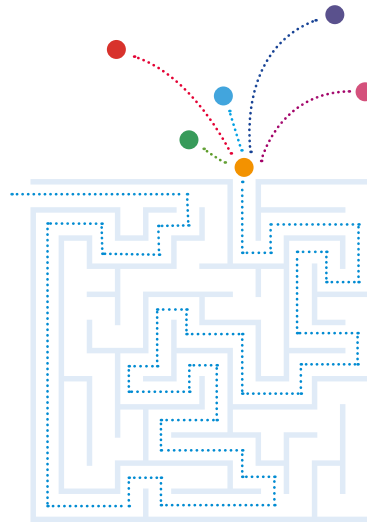
Is it true that many members still associate FVV mainly with automotive topics?

DECKER I think that those who still haven't noticed the structural changes of recent years are mainly people who've had little contact with FVV anyway. They remember the name from the old days and associate FVV mainly with internal combustion engines for cars. In fact, we have long had a much broader remit and are open to anything that members want to research in relation to powertrain and energy systems. We implement projects in numerous fields, such as energy conversion with fuel cells and electrolyzers. Our members are also conducting research into materials science and tribology topics, e-fuels and hydrogen combustion projects, to name but a few.

Which topics do you plan to expand going forward, and are you noticing a decrease in automotive topics?

DECKER In terms of the powertrain, our members include a lot of people from the automotive sector and we have many topics related to large engines, so I wouldn't say that there has been a decrease. Developers of small engines are somewhat less represented – there is potential there. The new expert groups, such as those for electric motors or electrolyzers, still need a bit more impetus and a few more projects. We are working on that.

The markets and industry are changing rapidly, and we currently have many drawers to fill with engineering solutions. When technology XY takes off, I can then open the corresponding drawer and have a solution ready to build on for my own development. This may cost money, but it means we are better prepared for future requirements.



The new topics come with a new generation of scientists. How do you plan to attract new members?

DECKER We have a lot of contact with universities and are constantly expanding our research network. I was recently in Graz at a meeting of the project user committee, and witnessed the following scene: A member of administrative staff at the institute was assigned to our project, but there were five other research associates in the lecture hall, listening to how an FVV project works. Those are five future engineers who know FVV and might later tell their company that they want to submit a project. Furthermore, the companies don't need to pay for a research project directly – a large part comes from public funding, rather than the company's budget. That makes FVV attractive, too.

Does FVV also attract members from other sectors?

DECKER Yes. The new Euro 7 emissions standard, for example, not only requires measurements on the exhaust, but also includes tyre and brake wear. In the emissions group, we suddenly have lots of new people from brake and tyre development – many new colleagues that we hadn't thought of before. We are delighted to see anyone who wants to get involved and implement projects. A lot of this development is through word of mouth, and sometimes companies are involved in a project as a guest, providing components or

carrying out calculations. This often then leads to full membership, so you can see that here, too, a lot happens through the network.

FVV has expanded its international presence. When it comes to new technologies in particular, are companies from the Far East a challenge for industry here?

DECKER We can learn a great deal from the way Japan or China approach certain topics, for example. If there is political will for something, things can be put into practice very quickly. Especially in Germany and the EU, there are so many regulations that slow processes down. If we could cut red tape and act more quickly, we would be able to respond better to our competitors.

China is a great example. There, a target is set, but the route to get there is left open. Letting collective intelligence find the solution is a great idea.

When there are so many ideas for new projects, it must be difficult to decide which to fund?

DECKER Our own equity is generally oversubscribed, but it is clear that the need for research far exceeds the equity available. When it comes to

public funding, our first port of call is the Industrial Collective Research programme set up by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, where topic-specific panels of experts decide on the quality of the research proposal. Although this is difficult, we still have a very high success rate there. Over years, we have analysed what makes a good, application-focused research project and are able to give the research and technology performers advice on what they need to address in their application. Having an outside view is important.

What makes collective research special for you?

DECKER In Industrial Collective Research, it is highly innovative, application-orientated companies that take the lead. This then benefits all members of a research network. Time and again, I am surprised by how well collaboration between research institutes, industry and funding bodies works. Because Industrial Collective Research is open to all technologies and topics, it provides plenty of opportunity for exchange, including

between different disciplines. This is crucial for identifying new developments early and putting them into practice.

What do you particularly enjoy about your »new« job?

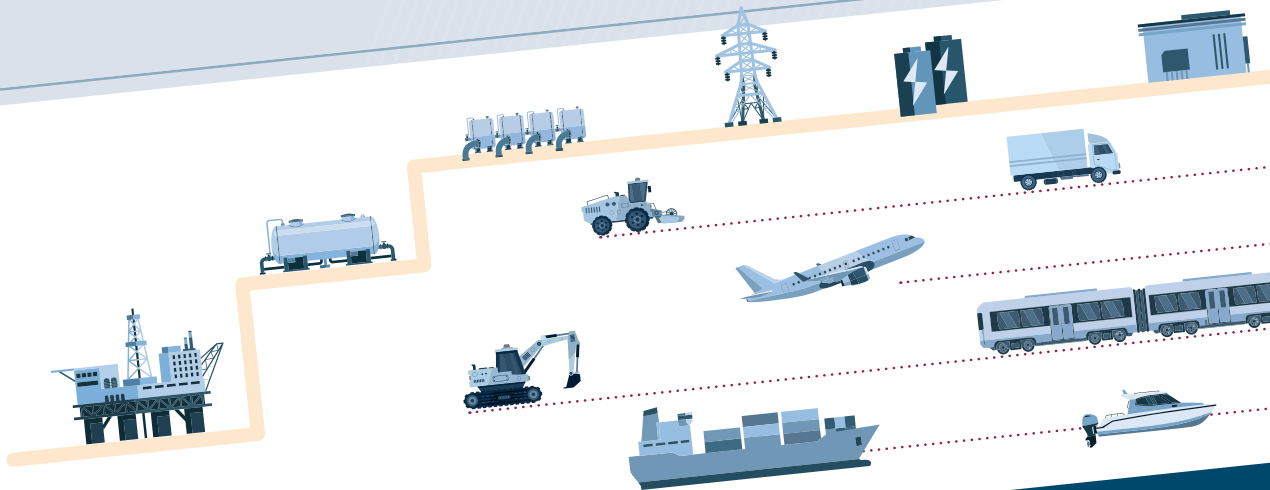
DECKER Because the research is pre-competitive, I find it fascinating to be there right at the beginning of a new idea and to see what it becomes. There are too many projects for me to get deeply involved in, but I get a sense of what is going on in technology. They say you learn something new every day. I learn a lot of new things every day! I love it. //



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The FVV Membership Roadshow is in the house

How does the FVV work? How do industry-driven research projects get off the ground? And how exactly can your staff get involved? With the **FVV Membership Roadshow**, we come directly to your company and give your teams a concise insight into our structures, working methods and research priorities.



The focus is on the general and individual benefits of your membership: access to pre-competitive research, a strong international network of experts, targeted knowledge transfer and the opportunity to play an active role in shaping innovation across the entire value chain.

Raise the visibility of the FVV and its offerings within your company: Invite the FVV Membership Roadshow to your organisation!

Arrange a meeting with
Martin Nitsche or the FVV
project management team
– online or on-site.



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