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ELEKTRONIK INFORMATIONSTECHNIK

80/2009

October 7, 2009

PRESSE

VDE Forum Netztechnik/Netzbetrieb (FNN) (Network technology / Network operation forum) specifies communication module for smart metering

“With its recommendation for specification of the multi-utility communication (MUC) controller, the VDE Forum Netztechnik/Netzbetrieb has achieved a decisive milestone en route to standardising smart metering systems”, explains Dipl.-Ing. Heike Kerber from the VDE Forum Netztechnik/Netzbetrieb (FNN). The MUC controller communicates with all standard IT systems for remote metering as well as household consumer meters for electricity, gas, water and district heating and is an essential prerequisite for realising a smart metering system. Users, manufacturers, associations and institutions are currently collaborating in the FNN on realising a modular and manufacturer-independent concept. “This concept comprises electronic meters and a communication module, the MUC controller”, continues Kerber. Modular means that metering technology and fast-paced wide-area communication are realised in separate devices. Additional requirements such as in-house communication can be added as supplementary modules. The advantages are obvious: metering technology and fast-paced communication technology can be installed or exchanged separately. The customer only pays for the hardware for services actually availed of.

Manufacturer-independent standardisation ensures that modules of various suppliers can be used, combined or individually replaced. A prerequisite for this are specified interfaces and communication standards. Conventional standards such as TCP/IP are used and the so-called wireless M-Bus only recently described in the form of the Open Metering Specification (OMS) is used for primary communication between the meter and the MUC controller.

Following national implementation of the EU Energy Efficiency Directive (EDL) by the Energy Economy Law (EnWG) and the Measuring Instrumentals Directive (MessZV), the issue of “Smart Metering“ has gained in significance. Accordingly, as of 1 January 2010 metering equipment must be installed in new buildings and in the course of larger renovation

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measures in accordance with § 21b EnWG which reflect the actual energy consumption and usage time for the user of the connection. This is realised by the electronic basic meter (EDL21 meter) within the framework of the modular concept. In accordance with § 40 EnWG and by 30 December 2010 at the latest, electricity consumers are to be offered additional load-variable tariffs or tariffs which are dependent on the time of day representing an incentive to save energy or control energy consumption. This is possible by supplementing the basic meter with the MUC controller (EDL40 system). Specifications for the corresponding EDL functions are currently being agreed in the FNN, whereby the exact marginal conditions are also being clarified which the new meters will be required to comply with from a data protection perspective. The aim is to find solutions which are as inexpensive and easy to realise as possible. These new electronic household meters which are also capable of saving, displaying and transferring via standardised interfaces consumption data in addition to meter readings will replace conventional Ferraris meters from 2010 on.

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