

voestalpine with new record research budget of EUR 184 million in the business year 2019/20

Permanent innovation is essential if voestalpine is to succeed in international and technologically sophisticated markets. The technology group has continuously expanded its research budget over the past decade, raising it by a total of 70 percent. Its current budget of EUR 184 million makes voestalpine one of Austria's most research-intensive companies. Development focuses on the drive to digitalize the entire value chain, as well as on innovations for the mobility industry and CO₂ reductions in steel production. voestalpine employs more than 700 researchers at 70 Group companies around the world and has secured over 3,000 proprietary patents.

As a result of its intensive research and development activities over the past years, voestalpine has established itself as a leading technology supplier to the automotive, railway infrastructure, aerospace, energy, toolmaking, and consumer goods industries. "The current research budget of 184 million euros, representing an increase of around 8 percent over the previous year, once again highlights the priority placed on innovation at the voestalpine Group. Even in economically challenging times, we will continue to consistently invest in developing new products and processes, because we can only safeguard our position as a global player in the most sophisticated product segments through specialization and quality," says Herbert Eibensteiner, Chairman of the Management Board of voestalpine AG. Around 100 national and international partners, including universities, universities of applied science, research institutes, and competence centers, constitute the voestalpine scientific network. The Group also intensively engages in development of partnerships with its key customers.

Smart products and e-mobility

"Deploying artificial intelligence continually opens up new technological options both on the production and product side. For that reason, from this year onwards an internal Group research project will focus on developing digital products, i.e., embedding sensors and actuators into individual components in order to create digitally networked systems," explains Franz Androsch, Head of Research & Development at the voestalpine Group. One prominent example of a digital product is voestalpine's fully-digital turnouts which report maintenance requirements to rail network operators in real time. Another product currently under development is a smart vineyard pole which reports weather and environmental data to winegrowers via an app on a permanent basis. voestalpine has already successfully positioned itself in the growing electromobility market through its innovations. Following the market launch of rotor components for highly efficient e-motors, so-called lamination stacks, the company is currently working on a modular battery cases for electric vehicles.

Digitalization, 3D printing, and decarbonization in focus

At process level, research activities are focused on increasingly networking production facilities, in order to enable end-to-end data collection, from arrival of the raw materials right through to delivery of the finished part. A further focus lies in additive manufacturing (3D printing) in which highly complex metal parts are constructed, layer by layer, based on computer models. voestalpine already operates five research centers around the world which explore this pioneering technology. Furthermore, in view of global climate targets, the Group is intensively working on potential scenarios for CO₂-reduced steel production. In a variety of projects, technologies are being developed to move away from the coke- and coal-based blast furnace route, via hybrid solutions, through to the use of green hydrogen.

The voestalpine Group

In its business segments, voestalpine is a globally leading technology group with a unique combination of materials and processing expertise. voestalpine, which operates globally, has around 500 Group companies and locations in more than 50 countries on all five continents. It has been listed on the Vienna Stock Exchange since 1995. With its top-quality products and system solutions using steel and other metals, it is a leading partner of the automotive and consumer goods industries as well as of the aerospace and oil & gas industries. voestalpine is also the world market leader in complete railway systems as well as in tool steel and special sections. In the business year 2018/19, the Group generated revenue of EUR 13.6 billion, with an operating result (EBITDA) of EUR 1.6 billion; it had just under 52,000 employees worldwide.

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