

voestalpine constructs new plant for laser-welded blanks in Linz

The voestalpine Group remains committed to Austria as a location, despite its internationalization strategy, and is investing EUR 25 million into extending production capacity for laser-welded blanks in Linz. Today marked the ground-breaking ceremony for the second voestalpine Europlatinen GmbH plant which will produce high-quality blanks for constructing automotive body parts. Production is scheduled to commence in mid-2016. In implementing its strategic goals the voestalpine Group is consistently driving growth in the customer segment Mobility.

Efforts to reduce weight in automotive construction have resulted in a continued increase in demand for lightweight components over the past years. With its laser-welded blanks in high-strength steels, voestalpine Europlatinen GmbH, a voestalpine Group subsidiary in the Metal Forming Division, is also profiting from this development. Now EUR 25 million is being invested in constructing a second plant with around 8,000 m² of production space. "Extending our capacity to produce high-quality automotive components is in line with our long-term Group strategy of continuing to grow in the key segment Mobility. We already generate 47% of Group revenue in this segment, around two-thirds of which in the automotive sector alone," explains Wolfgang Eder, Chairman of the Management Board of voestalpine AG.

"Order levels speak for themselves – voestalpine Europlatinen GmbH already has fixed production contracts extending into the middle of the coming decade. By constructing the second plant we will increase output volumes and allow technological enhancements to existing production," says Peter Schwab, Member of the Management Board of voestalpine AG and Head of the Metal Forming Division, explaining the background to the investment. The new plant also makes it possible to produce stamped parts in aluminum and aluminum/aluminum blanks for the first time. Customers include all renowned European automotive manufacturers in the premium segment. By producing an extra five million laser-welded blanks, voestalpine Europlatinen GmbH revenue is set to rise from its current level of EUR 100 million to EUR 140 million in the next three years. Staff numbers will rise even faster, from today's level of 200 to around 270 by the business year 2016/17.

Laser-welded blanks for less weight and greater safety

Laser-welded blanks are used in all parts of the vehicle requiring higher levels of safety and less weight. Automotive manufacturers process them further into weight and function-optimized stamped parts for car body construction. Laser-welded blanks were originally used mainly for large parts, such as side panels, doors, and hatches. Today more innovation solutions are required. That's why blank formats are decreasing in size and taking over the structure of the vehicle. In response to this trend voestalpine Europlatinen GmbH, which already looks back on 18 successful years in its segment, began operating a new and unrivalled laser welding line at the start of 2015. The line welds very small parts in less than two seconds per piece, making it the fastest of its kind in the world.

Adding value to the region

The construction of the new plant is a clear commitment to Linz, a location which offers benefits including highly-qualified employees and logistical advantages. "The combination of highest quality steels, produced here on site, with the appropriate high-tech production technology is unique," says Schwab. As the largest Group division and based in Linz, the Steel Division also profits from the investment. With its headquarters in Linz, voestalpine has a staff of 11,500 employees in Upper Austria and generated a total revenue of around EUR 4 billion here during the business year 2014/15. The Group has invested around EUR 3.3 billion in this Austrian province in the last ten years alone.

Metal Forming Division

The Metal Forming Division of the voestalpine Group achieved a total sales volume during 2014/15 of 2.3 billion and an operating result (EBITDA) of around 331 million euros. The division employs roughly 10,500 staff members and does business with almost all European car manufacturers. Within the Group, it constitutes the center of competence for highly refined sections, tubes and precision steel strip products and ready-to-install components made of pressed, stamped, and roll-formed parts. Its combination of material expertise and processing competence is unparalleled throughout the industry, and its global presence makes the division the preferred partner to customers who are looking for innovativeness and quality.

The voestalpine Group

The voestalpine Group is a steel-based technology and capital goods group that operates worldwide. With around 500 Group companies and locations in more than 50 countries and on all five continents, the Group has been listed on the Vienna Stock Exchange since 1995. With its top-quality products, the Group is one of the leading partners to the automotive and consumer goods industries in Europe and to the oil and gas industries worldwide. The voestalpine Group is also the world market leader in turnout technology, special rails, tool steel, and special sections. In the business year 2014/15, the voestalpine Group reported revenue of EUR 11.2 billion and an operating result (EBITDA) of EUR 1.5 billion; it had around 47,500 employees worldwide.

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