Cement | Construction Minerals | Concrete Solutions | Road & Traffic

ANNIVERSARY EDITION 2025

KIRCHDORFER NEWS

For employees, customers and partners of the Kirchdorfer Group

START OF A NEW ERA

With Erich Frommwald's retirement and the celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of MABA Fertigteilindustrie, a new era begins.

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RECYCLING

Challenges, potential and development of the recycled concrete market

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INNOVATIONS

MABA Fertigteilindustrie delivers progress non-stop

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DIGITIZATION

DELTABLOC International sets the pace with its first smart barrier

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EDITORIAL

MILESTONES TO REMEMBER

We are delighted to present this special edition of Kirchdorfer News to our readers – primarily our active employees, but also our retirees, customers, partners and shareholders – not only to provide an up-to-date overview of our group of companies, but also to report in detail on a series of farewell and anniversary celebrations that represent important milestones in the history of our group.

From the gala evening in honour of our long-standing CEO Erich Frommwald to the traditional camaraderie evening and open day at the cement plant to the spectacular two-day event marking the 100th anniversary of MABA Fertigteilindustrie GmbH, May 2025 will probably go down in our collective memory as a month of coming together, joy at what has been achieved and enthusiasm for what lies ahead.

What lies ahead is, of course, a lot of work, the daily pursuit of improvement and the consistent effort to secure the next order. Even though there is little cause for celebration in the construction industry at present, last May's atmospheric company events showed that, as a well-equipped building materials group, we can look to the future with great pride and confidence despite all the challenges we face. With this in mind and with this outlook, we wish you an interesting, enjoyable and inspiring read!

Michael Wardian
Joao Paulo Pereira da Silva

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NEW ERA IN GROUP MANAGEMENT

The retirement of Erich Frommwald marks the end of an era at the Kirchdorfer Group. At the same time, in the 137th year since the founding of the Kirchdorfer cement plant, a new chapter is being opened in the company's long history, which is characterised not only by continuity across generations, but above all by constant innovation.

The final handover at the top of the Kirchdorfer Group could hardly have come at a more interesting time: fragile economic and fiscal conditions and a declining construction industry have caused heavy losses for many companies in the sector. 'However, the construction industry should have reached the bottom,' says Erich Frommwald in his farewell interview for Kirchdorfer News. The reason for his optimism is that a trend reversal is already visible in the granting of residential construction loans. It is therefore only a matter of time before the order situation picks up again accordingly.

This is not only good news for the industry, but also the best possible conditions for the new management of the Kirchdorfer Group: Michael Wardian (Managing Director since 1 January 2022) and Joao Paulo Pereira da Silva (Managing Director since 1 January 2025) have been jointly managing a group of companies since Erich Frommwald's departure. Thanks to its high level of diversification and broad product range, the group has weathered the past few years well. This puts the group in a solid position for the next growth spurt when the cards are reshuffled in a struggling industry and strategically sensible acquisition opportunities open up.

'Despite difficult challenges in many market segments last year, we were able to achieve an excellent result and, with our current structure and organisation, we are set for further growth in the range of 20-30%,' says the outgoing CEO.

The bar has been set high, but so is the potential, because the process of 'becoming a group' that Frommwald set in motion around 15 years ago is far from complete: Although the approximately 50 group companies increasingly share and utilise common group functions (from accounting and IT to corporate communications) and already operate jointly in some markets, the integration process is far from complete.

'I estimate that we are currently about halfway there on the integration path,' says Joao Paulo Pereira, while Michael Wardian (who has been heading the Precast Division since 2013 and is Group Managing Director since 2022), has already impressively demonstrated with the joint presentation of Kirchdorfer Concrete Solutions (KCS) that the integration is working: 'Greater cooperation in research and development, for example, is an area where further synergies can be leveraged across the Group in the future – from cross-divisional research into building materials to the development of innovative applications,' explains Michael Wardian. Digitalisation, sustainability and the realisation of the resulting market opportunities and product developments are among the priorities of the new Group Executive Board.

Michael Wardian and Joao Paulo Pereira paid tribute to Erich Frommwald's life's work at his farewell ceremony at the Kirchdorf cement plant (see report on page 9) and wished the retiring CEO all the best for his well-deserved retirement.

LEO+S: SAFE TOGETHER

PERSONNEL RESCUE EXERCISES

Good work is the result of strong team spirit among colleagues and everyone being able to rely on each other. In an emergency, this can even save lives. That is why personnel rescue is practised at the Kirchdorf cement plant.

Despite all safety precautions, training and vigilance, the risk of a serious accident at work can unfortunately never be completely ruled out. This makes it all the more important that the right response is made in the event of an accident and that life-saving rescue and first aid measures are carried out by colleagues before the emergency services arrive.

This was recently practised during a Saturday shift at the cement plant – unannounced and by surprise. Only the colleague who simulated the 'victim' was in on it. This revealed where potential stumbling blocks could arise in practice and how problems could be solved. The drill was also carried out with neighbouring fire brigades, who were also able to gain important insights. To be continued!

Rescue under the TL pipeline: A simulated workplace accident resulting from a sudden back spasm was staged without prior notice – the task also involved overcoming various technical obstacles, such as the pneumatic dry lines at the heart of the cement plant. Rescue techniques and first aid were also on the agenda for the exercise, which was carried out in cooperation with the Kirchdorf and Lauterbach fire brigades.

PROTECTION FROM SKIN CANCER

The skin is our largest organ – and it needs protection! Skin cancer is a serious but often preventable disease. By protecting yourself properly, adjusting your sun habits and watching out for changes, you can significantly reduce your risk, as Dr Apfalter, company doctor at the Kirchdorf cement plant, explains.

Skin cancer develops when skin cells multiply uncontrollably. This is usually caused by damage to the genetic material (DNA) caused by UV radiation. People who protect themselves properly can significantly reduce their risk.

What makes UV radiation particularly treacherous is that its harmful effects are not immediately visible. However, the skin never forgets – damage caused by sunburn can eventually become apparent years or even decades later! Another misconception is that UV radiation is low in the shade or when the sky is cloudy. This is not true; 80% of radiation penetrates clouds. Snow, sand and water reflect UV rays and can even increase exposure in some cases.

Sun protection done right

Sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, or better still 50, protects the skin from harmful radiation. Important: Reapply every two hours, especially after swimming or sweating! It is also recommended to avoid the midday sun – UV radiation is strongest between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Protective clothing such as a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses with UV protection and long-sleeved, loose-fitting clothing help to block the rays.

Many people believe that a visit to the solarium 'pre-tans' and protects the skin. This is a myth – artificial UV rays are just as harmful as the sun and significantly increase the risk of skin cancer. Children's skin is particularly sensitive and therefore needs extra protection.

The ABCDE rule for assessing moles!

(A) Asymmetry: Is the mole unevenly shaped rather than round or oval?
(B) Boundary: Does the birthmark have ragged or unclear edges?
(C) Color: Are there multiple shades of colour in a birthmark?
(D) Diameter: Is the mole larger than 5 mm?
(E) Evolution: Is the mole changing visibly in a short period of time?

OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEES

A GENERALIST AND **BUSY AS A BEE**

A multi-talented veteran of the Deltabloc family has been nominated by his colleagues for our series on outstanding employees with heart and brains: Paul Bittner is, so to speak, the guardian and master of Deltabloc International GmbH's treasure trove – its all-important expertise!

If there were a medal ranking for the characteristics that run like a thread through all the employee portraits in recent issues, it would be this: versatility, commitment and a broad smile.

Three trump cards that also apply perfectly to Paul Bittner. Multicultural diversity was instilled in him from an early age, and he has acquired professional diversity over the years. The son of a father from Wöllersdorf and a mother from Carinthia, he grew up in Klagenfurt and, after studying in Vienna, finally found his home in Wöllersdorf – both professionally and privately.

After a few years of training at Vienna's BOKU University (Department of Landscape, Water and Infrastructure), he worked in two engineering offices and a civil engineering company before finally applying for a job at MABA's railway sleeper plant in 2007 after seeing an advertisement. 'Oh, you speak Italian? Then we need you at Deltabloc!' it quickly became clear. At that time, the rollout of the licensing business was in full swing throughout Europe, and a communicative technician who was also married to an Italian woman was just the right person for the growing Italian business.

In addition to customer support and technical project management for Italy and several other countries, he was first assigned to the systematisation and expansion of technical documentation in 2009. At that time, Deltabloc International was still a relatively small company that deliberately cultivated its 'start-up culture'. Bittner still remembers the occasional night shift when he and the then department head Thomas Edl worked together like students to put together marketing brochures for the latest product developments.

After many years as a technical sales engineer (where, incidentally, he was able to initiate the development of the very first DB 120 S together with his long-standing customer in Sardinia), his talent for document management, know-how transfer and, last but not least, his knack for software and automation finally caught up with him officially, and in August 2018 he was entrusted with setting up and managing the Documentation & Education department.

This also brought with it the major and important challenge of systematising thousands of documents, brochures and technical drawings, as well as a whole treasure trove of information and expertise, and making them accessible in a customised form both internally and in a newly launched extranet for all customers and project partners. Since 2023, the department has been part of Product Management under the leadership of Marco Pollok.

At the same time, an additional important future topic has recently been added to his role as the 'driving force behind digitalisation': he is also enthusiastically supporting the company's ambitious sustainability agenda.

To balance out the large amount of knowledge and computer work in the office, the 50-year-old from Wöllersdorf also runs his own small beekeeping business. With eight bee colonies last year, Bittner is already considered an ambitious hobbyist, just shy of the professional category. Because just like at work, the same applies to beekeeping: Paul Bittner is always reliable and doesn't do things by halves.

Do you have a personal hero? Let us know:
leo@kirchdorfer.eu

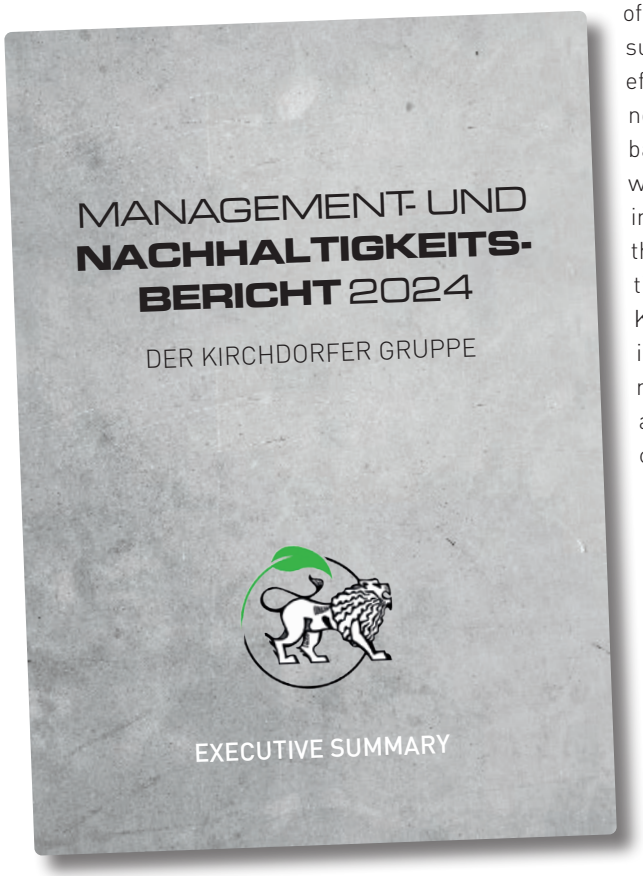
KIRCHDORFER GROUP

PROJECT GROUPS AND REPORTING ON **SUSTAINABILITY**

The Kirchdorfer Group's first sustainability report is not just a formal review of the sustainability agenda, but also heralds the 'normalisation phase' of the group-wide project. After years of development, the topic of sustainability is now firmly anchored in the various working groups.

With the publication of the 2024 sustainability report in accordance with the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), the Kirchdorfer sustainability project is entering a new phase.

Even though the reporting will initially only be carried out on a trial basis and on a voluntary basis until 2027, it nevertheless marks several milestones: 'The development of the reporting structure in compliance with the regulations is 80% aligned with the strategic topics of the Kirchdorfer Group that were defined in 2022 on the basis of a large-scale stakeholder survey and a double materiality analysis,' explains Andreas Hermann, Head of the newly created Sustainability Management department. In other words, the reporting requirements that will be mandatory in the future are largely in line with the company's goals – a classic win-win situation!



The initial setup and maintenance of the annual reporting is the result of a substantial group-wide effort: 'Over 60 key users fill the newly created group-wide database with the necessary values, which are then incorporated into the sustainability report in the form of tables and evaluations,' explains Kathrin Maska-Kronabether, whose tasks included organising the new reporting system and briefing and training colleagues on data collection.

In the coming years, the report's database will be gradually expanded and refined with additional values from upstream and downstream supply chains (keyword: 'Scope 3').

New working groups launched

After the first coordination and working groups on Kirchdorfer sustainability issues had already presented their results to the Group Executive Board after around a year of work and these had been evaluated, new working groups will be launched shortly.

Led by the respective in-house experts and comprising representatives from all four divisions, these working groups are now addressing the individual topics defined in the materiality analysis in ever greater detail and with increasing specificity. These include strategic sustainability issues such as CO_2 reduction, energy, recycling management, personnel development and retention, and occupational health and safety.

Some working groups are pursuing several sub-topics at once. For example, the 'Emissions Roadmap' working group, headed by Franz Buschmüller, is not only concerned with the central topic of CO_2-reduced cement and concrete, but also with areas such as procurement and logistics. The topic of circular economy is also of central importance, and we devote a comprehensive analysis to its challenges in this issue starting on page 16.

"Non-financial" reporting for 2024: Similar to the annual report, sustainability reporting based on precisely defined rules and guidelines will also be required in future. Although the rules are still being developed, the Group has already submitted a successful test report.

Foto: Vitera Productions

Ceremonial re-award of the Workplace Health Promotion Certificate: (from left) Gert Lang (FGÖ), Sabine Rumpl (Kirchdorfer Zementwerk Hofmann), Andreas Maier (BMSGPK), Karin Rumpelsberger (ÖGK).

AWARD FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AT THE CEMENT PLANT

The cement plant has always placed great importance on promoting the health and well-being of its employees. The company was first recognised for its exemplary workplace health promotion (BGF) in 2019.

This recognition was confirmed in 2022 and again in 2025, underlining the company's ongoing commitment to this important area.

As we get older, we become increasingly aware that health and well-being do not come automatically, but that we have to actively work for them – and do so continuously! However, this does not mean that everyone has to become a runner. There are numerous other ways to take care of your body, get enough exercise and increase your well-being. The most important thing is to do something!

Sabine Rumpl, who is responsible for workplace health promotion at the company, emphasises: 'Lack of exercise is less of an issue in a cement plant. The majority of our employees are actively involved in various areas of the plant. They therefore have different needs and preferences when it comes to a healthy workplace.'

Measures with long-term effects

By fulfilling specified quality criteria, it is ensured that the measures developed by the project teams at the time, such as informative lectures, more flexible working hours, bowling, bike leasing, yoga, subsidised health checks and much more, not only have short-term effects but also contributeto improving the health and well-being of employees in the long term.

KIRCHDORFER ZEMENTWERK HOFMANN GMBH

HANDOVER AT THE CEMENT PLANT

In January 2025, Joao Paulo Pereira da Silva took over as Managing Director of the Kirchdorf cement plant and Head of the Cement Division within the Group.

He succeeds Erich Frommwald, who stepped down from the management of the cement plant after more than 21 years to focus on handing over his responsibilities within the Group in the months leading up to his retirement in May.

Pereira (55), a trained mechanical engineer with an MBA, brings more than 25 years of international management experience in the cement industry to the table. His career includes management positions at Lafarge and Holcim, among others in Brazil, France and Austria.

"Our challenge will be to intelligently combine tradition and innovation. Vertical integration and sustainability are our key priorities," Pereira explained on taking up his new position. Born in Brazil, he has been with the Kirchdorfer Group since October 2022. During this time, he has already been closely involved in the further development of Kirchdorfer's sustainability strategy and the Road & Traffic division. He also heads the Construction Minerals division.

New journey for the rotary kiln

In February, the proven team player was able to lend a hand himself for the first time – together with two long-standing and experienced employees who were sending the furnace on its way once again before their retirement.

A total of 29,000 working hours were invested in the six-week maintenance and repair work, during which 230 tonnes of refractory material and 1,320 filter bags were replaced. In addition, numerous modernisation measures were carried out, including a new dosing system for substitute fuels, the replacement of screw conveyors and a new storage tank.

The keys to the kingdom: Joao Paulo Pereira took over as Managing Director on January 1st.

On February 28, 2025, the rotary kiln was sent on its new journey.

A strong team for a strong plant: from left to right **Alexander G. Bauer** (Head of Sales and Marketing), **Joachim Gruber** (Commercial Director & HR), **Joao Paulo Pereira** (Managing Director) und **Roland Kammerhuber** (Plant Manager).

Erich Stadler and **Franz Lueger** (together 84 years with the company) trained the new managing director on firing up the kiln.

GALA EVENING FOR ERICH FROMMWALD

EMOTIONAL FAREWELL

Erich Frommwald's retirement and the handover of his responsibilities to his successors took place gradually over several years. At a gala dinner with friends, colleagues and companions, the moment finally arrived and emotions ran high.

Erich Frommwald's closest colleagues attribute him with a 'superhuman memory for numbers'. However, the 180 guests at the gala dinner on 15 May were moved to discover that he is also a man of flesh and blood – and, above all, of heart. It was not only the fantastic Florian Boys' Choir that provided emotional highlights at the celebration in the elegant marquee on the cement works site, but also, of course, the many moving speeches, tributes and reminiscences.

After the musical warm-up and a round of talks with the chairwoman of the supervisory board and majority owner Eva Hofmann, State Governor Thomas Stelzer welcomed the guests. Incidentally, he did not come to Kirchdorf with words alone, but also with a high award from the state of Upper Austria. From the long line of companions, Margarete Machanek, Kommerzialrat Kurt Bernegger, Franz Gasselsberger (Oberbank AG) and other representatives from business and politics were invited onto the stage. The official laudatory speech was then given jointly by his successor as Group Managing Director, Michael Wardian, and Joachim Gruber (CFO and colleague from the very beginning).

Farewell speech with emotion and humour

After the main course, accompanied by atmospheric background music by Hans Peter Gratz, the moment had finally arrived: Erich Frommwald stood on the stage and faced his last challenge in Kirchdorf – to thank everyone present, say goodbye and, last but not least, look back on 31 years of service to the Group with figures and stories. And all this in good time before the desserts were served.

'I tried to keep my speech to 1-2 hours,' joked the outgoing CEO, before delivering a concise and humorous summary that covered everything from his appendicitis-induced choice of studies to his first full-time salary (18,000 ATS) and Max Machanek's bizarre job interview. The rest is history, of course: when Erich Frommwald took over the management of the young group ahead of schedule in 2004, around 30 companies generated annual sales of 127 million euros. After Frommwald quickly divested himself of numerous non-core investments in the early days, a new phase of expansion began, in which he more or less doubled the number of company investments and tripled the group's turnover.

'The hardest thing at the time was definitely telling my daughter Julia that I was suddenly no longer the boss of her beloved Jolly coloured pencils,' said Frommwald, recalling the pain of parting with the Graz-based stationery factory Brevillier-Urban. It was a shock that probably hit Maria-Christina Habsburg-Lothringen, Eva Hofmann's daughter, just as hard at the time.

From left: **Governor Thomas Stelzer** presented **Erich Frommwald** with a medal of honor for his services.

Instead of coloured pencils and plastic packaging, many new jewels from the neighbouring construction industry were added, and new growth was achieved through numerous acquisitions and investments in family-owned companies. Last but not least, Frommwald also began to give the entire group a corresponding structure and to manage the many companies in the so-called 'diversification' through an efficient division organisation.

What he is particularly proud of – as he made very clear at his farewell evening – is what he calls the 'excellent staffing levels': successful replacement of management positions from within the company's own ranks, a keen sense for the right managers and an institutional framework for promotion: 'Almost all of the first graduates of the Kirchdorfer Academy are still with the company, many of them in management,' Frommwald recalls.

The most senior and successful talent that Frommwald has consistently challenged and promoted over the years is, of course, Michael Wardian, who has been his partner on the Group's Executive Board since the beginning of 2022.

He also took a long time to select his second successor in the Group Executive Board and new Managing Director of the cement plant, Joao Paulo Pereira da Silva. Five years ago, he finally asked the Brazilian, whom he already knew from his time at cement plant co-owner Holcim: 'JP, a career without Kirchdorfer is no career!'

Joao Paulo Pereira and Michael Wardian will now lead the group into the future together, while Frommwald – in addition to his political role as energy spokesperson for the Upper Austrian economy and various supervisory board and advisory positions – will devote the remaining time to his so-called 'active retirement'.

'I've already got my golf licence,' he tells us. 'My wife got me into it, and it's more fun than I originally thought!'

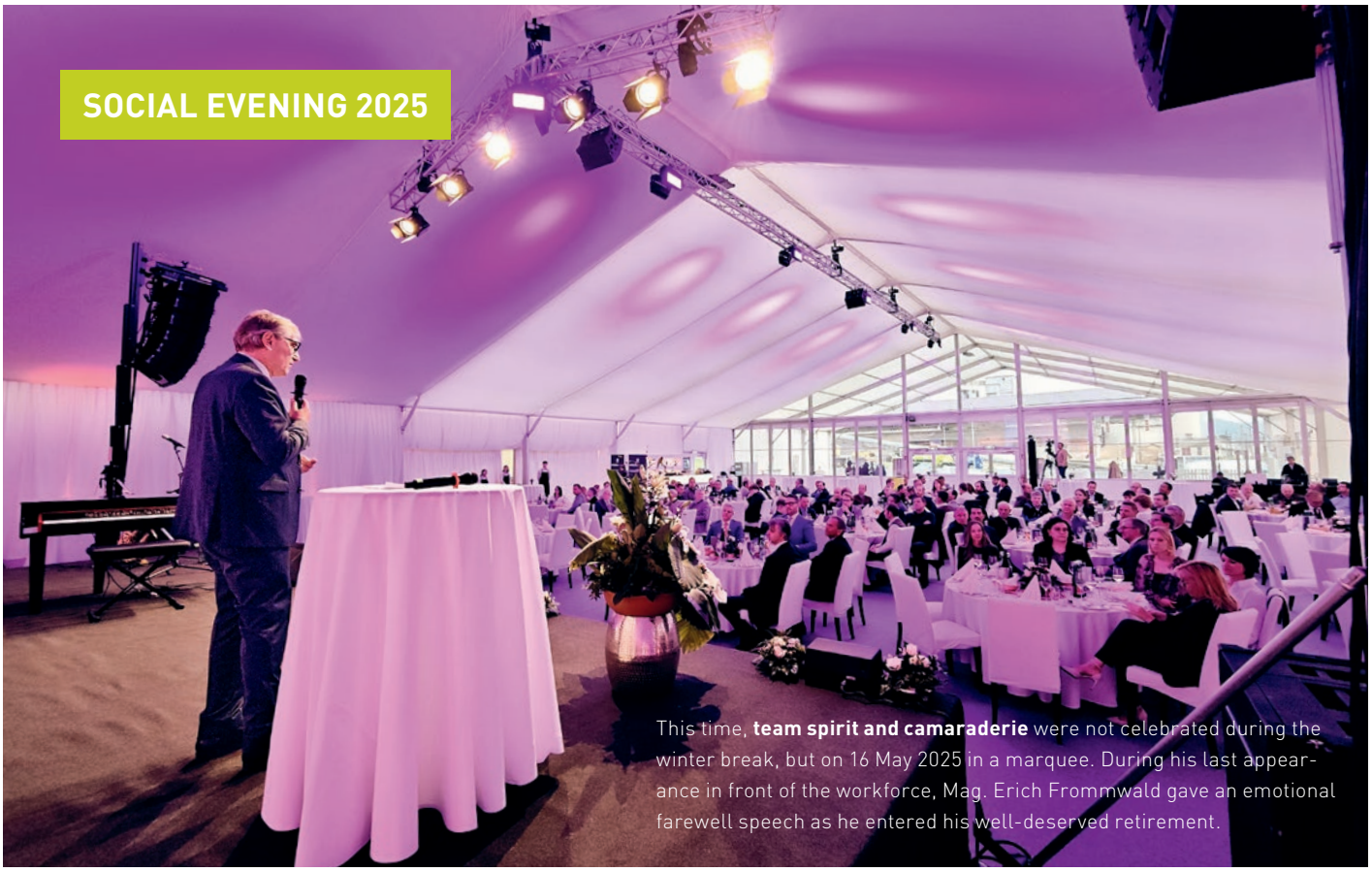
To ensure that Erich Frommwald, who is now equipped with golf clubs and hiking boots and dedicated to exploring the blank spots on the map, does not forget the cement plant entirely, his wife has commissioned an impressive painting of his beloved workplace.

'I'm just not allowed to hang it in the living room,' was the condition. We wish Erich Frommwald all the best and continued good health and strength.

Michael Wardian paid tribute to the life's work of Erich Frommwald in his laudatory speech.

Florian Boys' Choir in front of cement factory painting: The impressive artwork was projected onto the big screen during the gala event. Since 1 June 2025, it has been enriching the well-deserved retirement at Frommwald.

SOCIAL EVENING 2025



This time, **team spirit and camaraderie** were not celebrated during the winter break, but on 16 May 2025 in a marquee. During his last appearance in front of the workforce, Mag. Erich Frommwald gave an emotional farewell speech as he entered his well-deserved retirement.

As always, **awards and gifts** were the highlight of the camaraderie evening, with a series of milestone company anniversaries, additional training courses and vocational school certificates.

Joao Paulo Pereira (Managing Director of the Kirchdorfer Group and cement plant) tests the monolithic football table made of RAUTER exposed concrete, which Erich Frommwald received as a farewell gift. Plus a charming thank you to the ladies in the boss's office.

KIRCHDORFER ZEMENTWERK HOFMANN GMBH

POPULAR OPEN DAY AT THE CEMENT PLANT

At the end of the three-day event marathon, the cement plant opened its doors to the public on 17 May. Over 1,200 visitors did not want to miss this opportunity.

It is not often that local residents and interested visitors from the region have the opportunity to see inside the impressive cement plant, which has shaped the Kremstal valley for generations.

So it was no surprise that visitor numbers were record-breaking despite the less than ideal weather conditions.

The folk festival, which was held in a large marquee with three local brass bands playing for two hours each, attracted young and old to the festival grounds, which were equipped with a 70-metre-high crane, a colourful children's programme, information stands, food and drink, as well as many other attractions.

The highlight was undoubtedly the factory tours, which took place every 10 minutes throughout Saturday while production was in full swing. Around 800 visitors were divided into 50 groups and guided through the site, where they were able to see cement production 'live' from the rotary kiln to the cement mills and the packaging department to the modern control room. A big thank you to all the employees who conducted the tours!

A big thank you from the management team:
(from left) Managing Director Joao Paulo Pereira, CFO Joachim Gruber, Sales Manager Alexander G. Bauer and Plant Manager Roland Kammerhuber express their gratitude to event organiser Andrea Lehner and all employees and helpers.

The plant showed itself from its best side with factory tours, brass band music, an information stand and a children's corner. In addition to maintaining good relations with the local community, the aim is also to inspire a new generation to join the company!

KIRCHDORFER ZEMENTWERK HOFMANN GMBH

CEM II/C APPROVAL WITH TOP MARKS

The new CO_2-reduced CEM II/C cement type shines both on the construction site and in terms of sustainability.

The Kirchdorf cement plant may not be among the first to offer a two-component cement from class C (50-65% clinker content) on the Austrian market, but it is undoubtedly one of the best in its class. This is now official:

Thanks to its reduced clinker content and numerous investments and innovations in recent years (keywords: substitute raw materials and fuels, optimisation of grinding technology, etc.), the new CEM II/C-M(S-LL) 42.5 N cement type has achieved sensational EPD values – especially in the highly regarded CO_2 rating.

The total GWP (global warming potential) of only around 330 kg CO_2 equivalent per tonne of cement is around 15% below the already very good values of the current Kirchdorfer B-type cements.

Performance in practical tests

But is C cement, which has been approved for use in construction by the Austrian Institute of Construction Engineering (OIB) with a minimum clinker content of 50% and will initially be supplied and invoiced with a slightly higher clinker content during the transition phase, also suitable for practical use? Definitely, and not just in the laboratory.

In comprehensive practical tests, in which the new cement has already been used by several major customers on construction sites on a trial basis, virtually no difference to conventional universal cement could be detected.

This means that the ultimate goal has been achieved – namely, to keep the performance of CEM II/C stable and predictable despite the minimised clinker content. This ensures that any surprises will only be found in the Environmental Product Declaration, and not on the construction site.

Concrete technologist Jürgen Macht expects CEM II/C cement to gradually replace other types of cement over the coming years, especially once the relevant standard has been harmonised across the EU.

WIBAU RELAUNCH UNDER THE SIGN OF THE LION

KIRCHDORFER 'KIES UND BETON'

With the acquisition of two additional concrete plants in Upper Austria, Kirchdorfer Kies und Beton ('Gravel and concrete') is ready for further growth following its strategic realignment last year. The long-established company is now moving into the future under a new name and with the Kirchdorfer lion as its symbol.

The (former) WIBAU Kies und Beton GmbH, which has been gradually taken over by the Kirchdorfer Group over the past years and decades, is now back in full swing following a successful strategic realignment. With the acquisition of two additional ready-mixed concrete plants and a new company name and logo, the company is underlining its goal of becoming the leading supplier of ready-mixed concrete in Upper Austria.

With the acquisition of the plants in Weißkirchen and Stahlstraße in Linz, which were most recently operated by Holcim, and the takeover of their entire workforce, Kirchdorfer Kies und Beton is doubling its production capacity in the ready-mixed concrete sector.

Further growth targeted

While the existing gravel plants are being further optimised and have sufficient raw material reserves for the future, there are further ambitions in the ready-mixed concrete sector, as Alexander Bauer, co-managing director of Kirchdorfer Kies und Beton GmbH and sales manager at the cement plant, explains: 'With five concrete plants, we are now among the top four in Upper Austria. The market is competitive and the price war is intense, but we want to exploit the potential that arises in this still difficult industry environment and further expand our position,' explains Bauer. The sales areas are not limited to Upper Austria, as long as they are within the delivery radius of the Kirchdorfer cement plant.

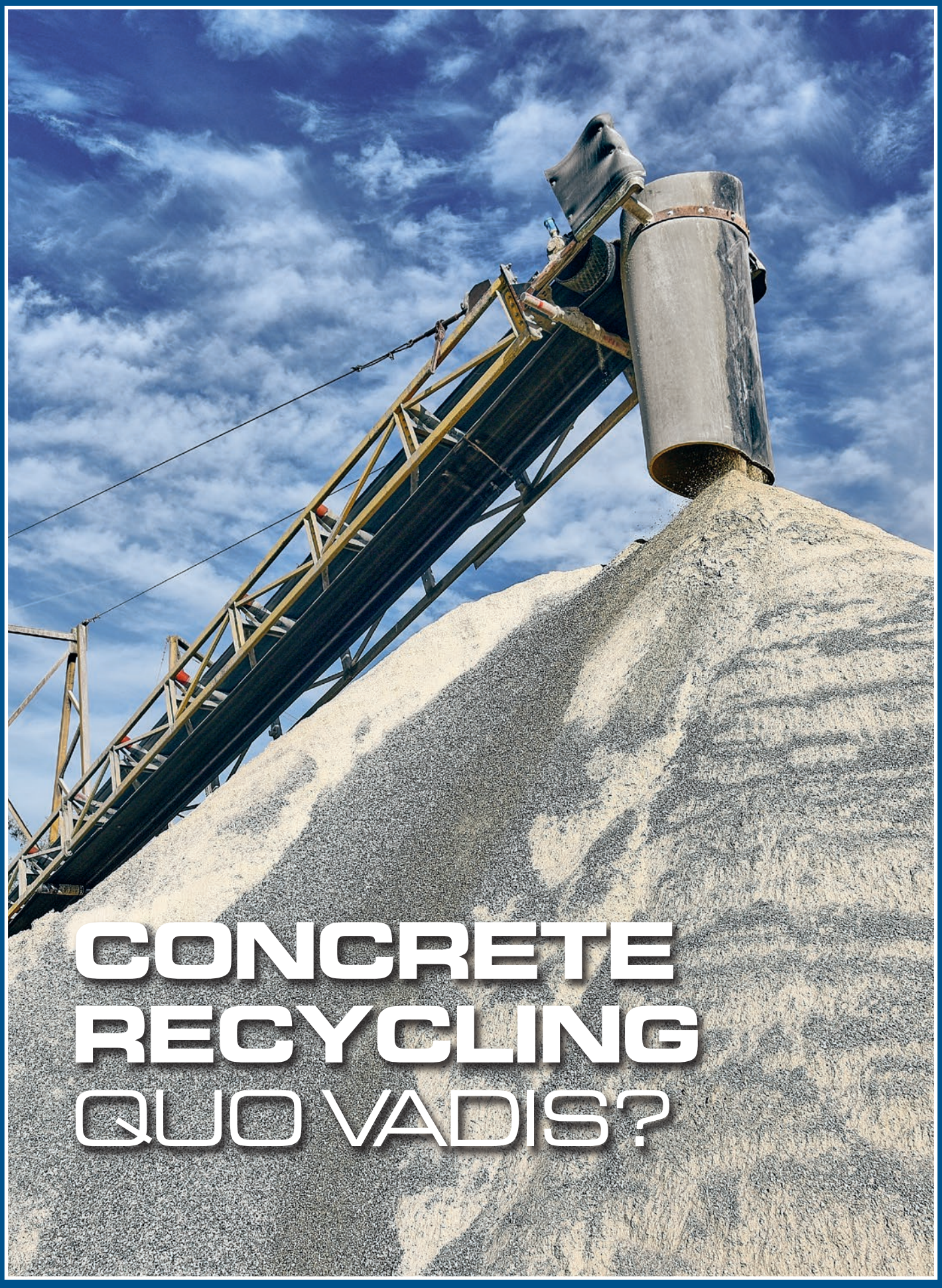
Restructuring a success

'The entire remaining team worked at full capacity during the transition phase last year and over the winter and did a really great job. The works council was also very cooperative. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all our colleagues for this,' says Bauer.

The main plant in Leonding is currently shut down due to the four-track expansion of the ÖBB Westbahn railway line. It will reopen in all its glory (under the Kirchdorf lion logo) in the summer. It will then be a widely visible sign that the company is once again ready to shake up the ready-mixed concrete market in Upper Austria and beyond!


Foto: © Holcim

New name, new look, new capacities: With the acquisition of the two Holcim concrete plants in Linz (left) and Weißkirchen, Kirchdorfer Kies und Beton now has twice the capacity of the former WIBAU ready-mixed concrete division.



CONCRETE RECYCLING QUO VADIS?

The Kirchdorfer precast plants are constantly introducing new products with a significant proportion of recycled concrete. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Group's raw materials plants are also intensively involved in the processing of recycled materials. However, two hurdles still need to be overcome before investment decisions can be made: geography and economics.

In theory, it would be so simple: the group's waste disposal company receives concrete demolition waste, a raw materials company produces recycled aggregates from it, and the precast plant processes the aggregates into sustainable precast concrete elements. The result: a perfect material cycle and the best possible use of all existing synergies within the group. In practice, however, the situation is somewhat more complex. This is partly due to the nature of the business and partly to the historical development of the Kirchdorfer Group.

The geographical challenge

When the individual companies were founded or acquired decades ago, the calculator took priority over the map. In the early days of Kirchdorfer's 'diversification', there was naturally no corporate thinking as a guiding principle, but rather many autonomous companies and locations. As a result, the individual supply areas of the different divisions currently overlap only in a few places. For example, in terms of transport, there is a world of difference between the raw materials plants in Upper Austria and the large MABA sites in eastern Austria – only in southern Bohemia are the individual raw materials plants, ready-mixed concrete plants and a large precast plant located in the same catchment area and also within the delivery radius of the Kirchdorfer cement plant.

However, Gerhard Kraus, the group's own recycling expert, is confident that this situation can be improved in the short or long term:

'With a little patience, appropriate investments and, above all, one or two partnerships, we will be able to drive forward the integration of the group in line with the circular economy and exploit even greater synergies than is already the case today.' As managing director of WIBAU Containerdienst GmbH and the construction waste recycling company UWT Umwelttechnik GmbH in Linz, and as head of the cross-divisional project group 'Secondary Raw Material Flows,' he has been intensively searching for potential capacities, sites and partners in the individual core areas of the group since last year.

The challenge of untangling this historically grown Gordian Knot is certainly feasible. However, the task is made proverbially difficult by the nature of the matter itself: while the geographical location is negotiable to a certain extent, the laws of nature are not. The more you turn the rock around – i.e. collect, transport, process and transport it again – the more expensive it becomes in the end.

The production of recycled aggregate multiplies the energy required – there is no way around this. But before we delve deeper into the economics and technology, there is another detail with major consequences that needs to be clarified.

The development of further material cycles is a key objective of our sustainability strategy.

Gerhard Kraus
Secondary Raw Material Flows Project Group

What is waste anyway?

In the beginning was the word, as we know, and the word is not really a thing or a description of a thing, but rather a concept: a mixture of objective reality and subjective perception. So what do we actually mean when we say 'recycle waste', and what is waste anyway? What is waste and what is not depends on what you need or what you want to get rid of. So what if your neighbour wants exactly what you don't need?

Imagine the following thought experiment: You are standing on a lonely gravel road in the middle of nowhere. To your left is a construction site where someone wants to dig a hole. To your right, another construction project is underway where someone wants to fill a hole. As an independent observer, the simplest solution is immediately obvious to you. The only problem is that both builders would immediately violate all kinds of laws, regulations and standards if they dug up the earth and rocks on one side and filled them in on the other.

In this situation, the excavated material is 'waste', while the fill material on the other side is building material. The only way this would be legal is if the neighbour on the left happened to be a licenced gravel pit. In that case, the material would not be waste, but a natural resource. But who has a gravel pit as a neighbour ...

The question of how to define waste has far-reaching consequences for the entire industry and is slowing down the increase in recycling rates. Fortunately, an important step has already been taken in Austria with the so-called 'end-of-waste' concept and the introduction of the new ÖNORM B 3141 standard 'Production of recycled building materials from excavated materials'. The next step, however, is to use this as a basis for enacting a corresponding end-of-waste regulation, as already exists for concrete granulate, asphalt rubble and masonry, for example.

Will the redefinition of waste bring about a turnaround?

According to information from the Austrian Building Materials Recycling Association (BRV), around 44 million tons of excavated material is currently generated as waste in Austria. This is deposited at hundreds of soil disposal sites at a cost—for example, at the Trindorf soil disposal site operated by the Kirchdorfer Group.

Some of these materials could be recycled as building materials and added to other material streams: "Much of the excavated material is

gravel, rock, or aggregates – if we manage to recycle just a quarter of all this soil waste, the recycling rate in construction would immediately double," says BRV Managing Director Tristan Tallafuss in a press release.

The availability of raw materials is a decisive factor for the further development of the circular economy. Incidentally, the supply of available concrete demolition waste is even scarcer: although almost all mineral construction waste (concrete, asphalt, masonry, etc.) in Austria is reused or recycled in one form or another, this only amounts to around a dozen million tons per year. The reason is obvious: mineral building materials are durable and buildings are simply not being demolished anymore.

Upcycling instead of downcycling

The majority of mineral demolition materials have long been used in road construction and civil engineering, e.g., for sub-base fill. However, since the material enters a "lower-value" cycle than the one it came from, this is referred to as "downcycling." Whether the lifeless stone is aware of its degradation is an open question – in any case, the social maxim is that, as far as possible, every stone in a concrete component should be reused in a new concrete component after its average life expectancy. Just as old glass bottles have long been recycled into new ones as a matter of course, or valuable scrap metal is melted down and reshaped.

> The additional costs for processing and the longer transport routes for the acquisition of the decentralized raw materials are not yet reflected in market prices.

Reinhard Pönisch
KCM division engineer

However, in order to implement the concept of upcycling in concrete recycling, a number of technical and economic details must be addressed in order to establish a functioning supply chain.

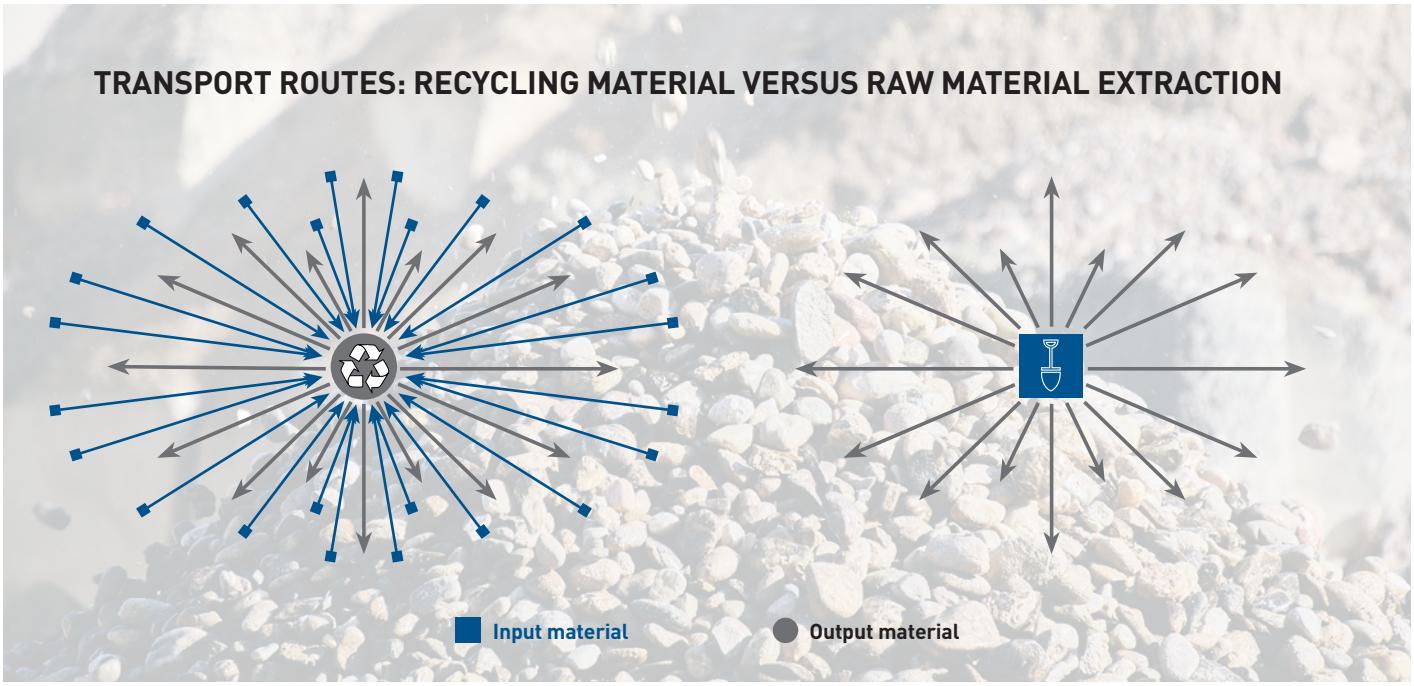
To resolve these and other issues, a high-caliber list of companies and institutions in Austria came together in 2023 to form a research project with the catchy name "UP!crete." Together with professors, assistants, and students from the Vienna University of Technology, the participating entrepreneurs and industry representatives are working to significantly increase the proportion of recyclable materials.

To date, only around half of the demolition material can be used as a new concrete aggregate, and this initially only applies to the coarser components—the sand content and finer particles are particularly challenging to process. Added to this is the challenge of finding sensible and economical alternatives for reusing the remaining material.

The state of the art in processing technology

'The smallest components of the source material to be recycled pose the greatest challenges. The proportion of fine, powdery particles cannot be separated using sieves, but requires complex hydrocyclone technology – and the corresponding investments can quickly run into millions,' points out KCM division engineer Reinhard Pönisch.

It is therefore not surprising that the coarser fractions are being substituted first. In the search for economically viable options for implementing concrete recycling at one of the Kirchdorfer Group's sites, the KCM division engineer has been working for some time on very detailed plans and flowcharts that, at first glance, could represent the complexity of a nuclear power plant. There are still more questions than answers. Nevertheless, the first permits for the storage of various secondary raw materials, such as demolition material, have already been initiated. The market is also developing slowly, even though there is a lot of hype surrounding the topic. (See also the relevant reports on pages 26 and 32!)



Market development

In 2023, a total of around 10 million cubic metres of ready-mixed concrete was delivered in Austria alone, containing approximately 20 million tonnes of concrete aggregates. This contrasts with four million tonnes of waste concrete recovered annually from demolition work, which represents a potential raw material base for recycled concrete. This means that a maximum of 10% of the annual demand for aggregates can currently be covered by recycled material.

The standards currently allow, in the best case, an admixture of up to 50% recycled material in concrete – a proportion that gradually tends towards zero the higher the performance class required for the respective application. So it will probably be a long time before recycled concrete finds its way into bridge structures. Even though the current standard is extremely conservative (when it was developed, there was no experience with recycled aggregates) and will probably be adapted over the years to reflect technical progress, one major subject of discussion remains – and that is money!

What does sustainability cost?

The 'upcycling' objective did not arise on the free market or on the basis of efficiency gains or cost advantages, but is, so to speak, a social or political requirement. As a result, concrete with recycled aggregates is currently significantly more expensive and will therefore initially be used to a limited extent, particularly in areas where someone is willing to bear the additional costs.

> We are committed to the circular economy for the long term and are continuously developing our potential within the given market conditions.
>
> **Joao Paulo Pereira da Silva**
> Managing Director, Kirchdorfer Group

Only in Switzerland, by the way, does this problem seem to have been solved and market participants have adapted to increased cost levels.

Which brings us to the conclusion of our analysis:

Kirchdorfer Group will definitely stay on top of these issues and continue to work towards being part of future recycling value-chains. And as far as the development of the industry in general is concerned, things will obviously take time. But let's not forget that Rome wasn't built in a day either.

The MABA factory in the 1970s

MABA — 100 YEARS

In 2025, MABA Fertigteilindustrie GmbH celebrates its 'first hundred years'. As Austria's leading manufacturer of prefabricated components with five locations, hundreds of products, good operating results and a dominant market position in numerous market segments, 'MABA', as it is commonly known, is ready for the next 100 years. The milestone anniversary was not only an occasion for extensive celebrations, but also an opportunity to explore the company's founding history, its consistency and the secrets behind its success.

Today's MABA Fertigteilindustrie GmbH began production in 1925 under the name **'Österreichische Maba-Unternehmung Bartels & Schlarbaum'** with its headquarters in Wöllersdorf, initially as a German-Austrian joint venture.

The founding fathers

Martin **Ba**rtels, the German namesake, had been operating a large electrical engineering factory for high-voltage equipment and transformer houses in Köstritz (Thuringia) under the name MABA since 1896. However, the actual founders of today's MABA were the Schlarbaum brothers, who ran a successful construction company in Hofmühlgasse in Vienna-Mariahilf.

Master builder Leopold Schlarbaum, the driving force behind the company's founding, was less interested in the electrical inner workings of transformer stations than in the construction of transformer housings – more precisely, in an innovative, industrially prefabricated construction of the housings using precast concrete elements. And so, in 1925, with five employees and an electrically powered concrete mixer, work finally began in Hall 28 of the former Wöllersdorf fireworks factory.

The early years

The construction of transformer houses was quickly supplemented by cable pull-through blocks, mast bases and reinforced concrete masts for overhead power lines and transmission stations. After the war years, during which production continued under the most difficult circumstances, the reconstruction of the entire infrastructure was on the agenda in Austria.

MABA was able to make a significant contribution to this with its assembly teams and the production of important components such as masts, concrete pipes and other civil engineering products, floor slabs and angle retaining walls.

The 1950s also saw the start of large-scale electrification of the railway network in Austria: after five years of development, the first delivery of reinforced concrete catenary masts took place in 1955, with tens of thousands being erected throughout Austria over the following decades. Many of these are still standing today. Some are now being dismantled, recycled and used in new poles (see also the article on page 32).

MABA also played a key role in the canalisation of Vienna in cooperation with its partner Purator. Today, the former MABA civil engineering portfolio lives on successfully in TIBA Austria GmbH.

In the 1960s, both track slabs for Vienna's public transport provider and huge pre-pressed pipes were added to MABA's growing portfolio. Even today, track slabs, cover slabs and large tubbing projects are still the strengths of this prefabricated component manufacturer specialising in large-scale production.

Takeover in 1984

After the death of master builder Schlarbaum in 1976, a difficult phase began, marked by years of inheritance disputes and a backlog of investments. At the ripe old age of 89, Schlarbaum left behind a successful company, but no designated successor.

While his entrepreneurial vision and creative energy would have been more than enough to sustain a company for generations, his family and heirs lacked the necessary cohesion, tradition and discipline. This situation was only resolved after eight years of stagnation by a family of entrepreneurs who possessed precisely those qualities.

After MABA was taken over by the group of companies associated with the Kirchdorf cement plant, 1984 saw not only the creation of a basis for further growth and additional business areas, but also the establishment of solid ownership structures and a corporate culture that would serve as a foundation for many generations to come.

Looking back on MABA's 100-year history, it is not only the incredible consistency and reliability of the products manufactured that are remarkable, but also the numerous spin-offs that were founded around MABA within the Kirchdorfer Group and led to success – from TIBA to TSF-A to DELTABLOC International – as well as a number of foreign sister companies and joint ventures.

In this anniversary year, we wish the employees and managers of MABA all the best and 'break a leg' for the next 100 years!

Anniversary folder in 'Time Magazine' style: Rather than the hundred most influential personalities of the year, the brochure published to mark the anniversary focuses on the most influential precast manufacturer of the last 100 years. If you are interested in a brief history of the company, you can also find it online at: www.maba.at

100 YEARS MABA FERTIGTEILINDUSTRIE GMBH

CELEBRATING WITH POLITICS AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

On May 22, MABA Fertigteilindustrie GmbH celebrated its 100th anniversary at its headquarters in Wöllersdorf-Steinabrückl. Over 200 guests from politics, business, and the Austrian construction industry offered their congratulations in person and listened attentively to the impressive history of the company.

After many exciting stories and anecdotes from the founding history and early days of MABA, there was hardly any time left to pay tribute to the impressive present—but this was gladly taken over by the numerous speakers from politics and the construction industry, who conveyed their words of praise for the reliable services of the long-established company both in person and via video recordings – from State Governor Johanna Mikl-Leitner and Deputy State Governor Udo Landbauer, who presented a heavy piece of rail from the Mariazellerbahn railway, to the mayors of Wiener Neustadt, Wöllersdorf-Steinabrückl and Sollenau, and the board members and CEOs of ÖBB, ASFINAG, Swietelsky and PORR.

At the end of the successful evening, during which guests were treated to exquisite food and drinks, there was a sweet birthday cake for the MABA management – exceptionally not made of concrete, but of delicious chocolate.

The crowning finale: Michael Wardian, Managing Director of the Kirchdorfer Group, and majority owner Eva Hofmann presented the festive cake to MABA Managing Directors Franz Buschmüller (2nd from left) and Christian Nageler (right).

With style and good cheer: festive dirndls, anniversary banners on the round building, and numerous guests and well-wishers both in the marquee and via video link. At the end, flowers were presented to the organisers of the successful event.

100 YEARS MABA FERTIGTEILINDUSTRIE GMBH

FAMILY EVENT FOR OUR EMPLOYEES

MABA Family Day: Friday, 23 May 2025 was all about the employees at the Wöllersdorf and Sollenau sites and their families. With delicious food, numerous attractions and activities for young and old, and lots of good cheer, the 100th anniversary was an unforgettable event.


Ich bin zu MIETEN
www.happy-fun.com


DOTTO

MABA FERTIGTEILINDUSTRIE GMBH

MABA INNOVATIONS IN FULL FLOW

The countless impressive product innovations of MABA's first hundred years are matched by almost as many innovations in production technology. These are far less visible, but all the more fundamental. Reason enough to take a look at a few new, current developments.

It was the Byzantine Emperor Leontos VI who recognised over 1,000 years ago that success in military campaigns depends not only on tactics and strategy, but also on logistics. The same applies to the precast industry: Good products are important, and a clever market strategy is often decisive, but without the right production technology, all of this is either impossible or at least unprofitable.

Fortunately, the Kirchdorf precast division is blessed with experts and technicians who work behind the scenes to make everything 'imaginable' possible in the first place and to rearrange and optimise everything for future productivity gains.

The challenge of recycled concrete

An important trend that would be impossible to master without years of experience, expertise and intensive study of the production possibilities is recycled concrete. More specifically, the addition of a certain proportion of aggregates from the recycling of broken concrete. Thanks to the outstanding production team led by Managing Director Franz Buschmüller, MABA is, as so often, one of the pioneers in this field: from noise barriers with a 30% recycled content (as reported previously) to catenary masts (see report on page 31), there are already many products available in CO_2- and resource-saving versions.

In March 2025, MABA Fertigteilindustrie immortalised itself on the premises of Austria's largest cement plant with a particularly spectacular showcase project: a red-coloured exposed concrete wall that forms a load-bearing part of the new Mannersdorf company fire station, located on the so-called 'red path'.

Of course, it is mainly experts who appreciate not only the aesthetic qualities of the impressive architecture and the beautiful wall, but also the challenge of producing a finely structured and highly reinforced exposed concrete wall made of cement with reduced clinker content and maximised recycled aggregate. Conclusion: CEM II/C-M (S-F) 42.5 N cement ('ECOPlanet RC') with recycled aggregate and MABA expertise results in a sustainable showcase wall that has also attracted well-deserved attention in the media.

Precision from heavy concrete

The production challenges involved in manufacturing load weights for ÖBB catenary masts have recently been significantly reduced – at least for the employees working at the MABA site in Gerasdorf.

This is because the products, which were previously manufactured more or less by hand at another site, are now being produced semi-automatically on a small, sophisticated and highly specialised production line. The aim of the investment in production technology is not only to achieve higher productivity, but also greater consistency in the manufacture of these load weights, which are produced to strict requirements. The power supply to the trains is ensured by the installation of special fittings on the catenary masts, which can compensate for changes in the length of the contact wire (e.g. due to temperature differences). The necessary and uniform tension of the chain drive to which the contact wire is attached is ensured by load weights, which must be manufactured with a correspondingly low tolerance (30 ±0.5 kg).

The constant process flow guaranteed by the new system and a newly developed recipe enable automatic filling within the tight tolerances. The plant consists mainly of silo units with a premixing system for big bags, a dossier and weighing unit, a mixing system with discharge hopper and screw conveyor, a vibrating table with weighing unit and a curing line with turning device.

Production of load weights

In the production process, metal granulate and cement are fed fully automated into a feed hopper by a weighing unit and emptied into the cone mixer via the hall crane, where they are first premixed in dry form. The finished mixture is then emptied directly into a concrete discharge container.

The resulting heavy concrete is discharged into a fixed plastic mould stabilised by a support sleeve, which has been equipped with the necessary fittings beforehand. Filling is carried out using weighing cells to ensure that the required unit weight of 30 kg is achieved reliably within the tolerances.

After filling, the mould is removed, smoothed and transferred to the curing line via a checkweighing device. The checkweighing device is used for quality control and the data obtained is stored in the system for traceability.

After curing, the load weights are then stored on pallets according to a layout specified by ÖBB and are thus available at any time for retrieval from an existing framework agreement. The system, which was designed and implemented in collaboration with three companies, is designed for a capacity of 100 pieces per shift.

New semi-automated production line for load weights: The special heavy concrete parts, manufactured to precise specifications and with low tolerances, ensure that the tension in the catenary wire enables a safe and stable power supply to the ÖBB railcars.

EARTHQUAKE RESISTANCE WITH PREFABRICATED WALLS

THE COMEBACK OF A **CLASSIC**

Fully prefabricated components, which have been at the heart of the 'MABA residential construction system' for decades, offer a number of advantages. Only earthquake safety has been questioned among experts since the introduction of European standards (EUROCODE).

Be it in terms of resource conservation, rapid construction progress or optimised building processes, multi-storey residential construction with slim precast concrete parts is the undisputed gold standard. Particularly due to earthquake certification however, semi-prefabricated components with continuous reinforcement across the joints and high reinforcement ratios have increasingly been used in recent decades.

A research project at the Vienna University of Technology has now proven that, in many cases, standard-compliant earthquake safety can also be achieved with fully prefabricated walls set only in a mortar bed, thus requiring significantly less concrete and reinforcing steel than semi-prefabricated elements or in-situ concrete.

Until the 1990s, thousands of buildings were constructed in Vienna using precast walls that were simply placed in a mortar bed on the construction site or connected to each other via a shear joint. Over time, however, and with the development of standards, the earthquake safety of multi-storey buildings was increasingly called into question. This was not due to a lack of safety, but rather the results of simplified verification tests.

A question of correct calculation

In order to assess the earthquake safety of structures, complex calculation and testing methods are required that realistically represent the dynamic, non-linear and plastic behaviour of the overall system. Calculations that have not yet found their way into the engineering practice of structural engineers in Austria.

In order to provide structural engineers with a basis for project-specific earthquake verification and to prove in principle that 5- to 6-storey buildings with prefabricated walls set in mortar beds are earthquake-proof in areas with low to medium seismicity (i.e. in Austria) are earthquake-proof, the two largest suppliers, MABA Fertigteilindustrie GmbH and MISCHEK Systembau GmbH, have jointly carried out a research project at the Vienna University of Technology.

With the publication of the results, no questions remain unanswered and an essential prerequisite has been created for the efficient and resource-saving construction system to become established again in large-scale projects in the future.

The classic prefabricated wall (shown in the image made from Ziegelit) was incorrectly deemed insufficiently earthquake-proof. New calculations have now corrected this misconception. A corresponding scientific publication by TU Wien, with the collaboration of MABA structural engineering expert Martin Schramböck, is now available to structural engineers for standard-compliant verification.

KATZENBERGER FERTIGTEILINDUSTRIE GMBH

RETURN TO OLD STRENGTHS

Long-time readers of the Kirchdorfer News will remember the series of record years for Katzenberger Precast Industry during the construction of the Brenner Base Tunnel. After a brief pause, the Italian-Austrian project of the century is now back on track!

It was only a few years ago that Katzenberger's managing director Stefan Kizlink and his team impressively improved the balance sheets and capacity utilization of the Katzenberger prefabricated parts plant in Wiesing (Tyrol) with a major Brenner order, which was only the beginning. Unfortunately, however, the awarding of contracts for the major international project then took a somewhat unpredictable turn...

Cover plates for the Brenner Base Tunnel

Five years later, the Brenner is back on the production schedule with the "H53" construction lot and the 5,000 cover plates required for it. The precast plant, which the Kirchdorfer Group operates together with its partner Fröschl, will thus have a solid basic capacity utilization over the next three years. Incidentally, our colleagues in Tyrol have held their own in the Brenner's interim years with considerable success and a number of other attractive projects. These include impressive landscaping noise barriers and various tubbing export projects to Switzerland.

"However, market prices have fallen quite significantly in the meantime," sales manager Alexander Schönherr points out: Unfortunately, the specific reason for this lies in a business area in which Katzenberger is not even active.

After many of the regional competitors have been under severe pressure for years due to the difficult order situation in the building construction sector, some of them have now entered Katzenberger Fertigteilindustrie's traditional business area, thereby having a lasting negative impact on the price level for prefabricated component projects.

Fortunately, however, Katzenberger does not live from tunnel projects alone – although a particularly spectacular project recently caused quite a stir and also provides the perfect backdrop for the dynamic team photo (see cover picture).

Precast tunnel segments for hydropower

The production of bottom ring segments with integrated connection reinforcement for pumped storage power plants for Verbund AG was a very welcome order that once again impressively demonstrated the tunnel expertise of Kirchdorfer Concrete Solutions. Following the expansion of the Limberg III storage facility in Kaprun (Zell am See) last year, a follow-up order is already in production this year for the expansion of another power plant at the Kitzsteinhorn. And in between (and far more than just filling in the gaps), plant manager Peter Hilger (far right in the title picture) and his team have, among other things, the challenging, multi-coloured noise barriers with landscaping architecture (A12/Zirl) in their order books. And for the first time, noise protection with photovoltaic attachments – as a counterbalance to hydropower, so to speak.

In a nutshell: Katzenberger is back to its old strength!

BEHIND THE SCENES AT KCS

THE GOOD SOULS IN THE **BACKOFFICE**

This article aims to highlight the important work carried out by employees who traditionally don't get the praise or visibility they deserve. But it is the internal sales departments that make new orders or quotations actually happen. To this end, we asked five colleagues – representing the five strategic business areas – about their work.

Four female colleagues and one male colleague kindly agreed to give us an insight into their work in the precast plants of Kirchdorfer Concrete Solutions. After five interesting conversations, we gained two insights: every workplace is unique and in some places the phone rings more or less non-stop. Communication is short, concise and to the point: 'The truck needs to be unloaded faster. We still have eight deliveries to complete before the weekend. Thank you!' (Beep beep ...) (Ringing ...) 'Hello? Yes, please. I've already passed that on. I'll be in touch. Everything OK?' (Beep beep ...) – and so on and so forth. However, we were able to pick up a few interesting details and learn a lot about the challenges of working in the back office. Let's start in Sollenau ...

Ingrid Spenger – all-rounder, veteran, interface
Ingrid Spenger has been with MABA for 29 years and has been working in the turnout sleeper production facility at TSF-A in Sollenau for eight years. Under the motto 'small organisation = big responsibilities', she does pretty much everything you can imagine in an office job, except draw plans: from order creation to invoicing and transport logistics, she is the living interface between the warehouse, work preparation, production and delivery. This also requires several trips to the other end of the property every day to ensure that the right sets of thresholds with the right numbers are loaded. Her colleague, who acts as backup when needed, also has to be able to do everything.

Manuela Ofner – a go-getter who likes to make things happen
Manuela Ofner also works in the railway business, but in Wöllersdorf, where she has the additional task of working on tunnel projects. She is currently facing a particular challenge with the logistics for the U2 tunnel lining contract in Vienna: the temporary storage facility at Matzleinsdorfer Platz only has enough space for a few days' worth of tunnel lining rings, and if she doesn't put pressure on the transporters before weekends and public holidays, for example, the tunnel boring machine comes to a standstill. Originally from the automotive engineering and cost accounting sectors, she loves working with colleagues and customers to get things done at the end of the day. The working environment in the back office at Bahn und Tunnel, where everyone pitches in, is just right for her, as she is fully involved in order placement, customer relations and framework agreements.

Martin Freitag – young negotiator for customer requirements
Martin Freitag is on duty from Monday to Friday at TIBA's headquarters in Lebring. The internal sales team at the market leader in civil

Ingrid Spenger (railway) supervises the dispatch of the turnout sleeper sets on site every day.

Manuela Ofner (Tunnel) is also a "go-getter" – from order placement to logistics.

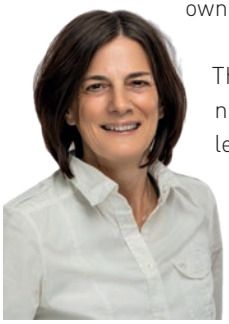
Martin Freitag (civil engineering) is often on site in production at the plants in order to talk to his colleagues in person and implement various customer requests.

engineering products is large and the product range is diverse. '70% of orders and purchase orders are mostly routine, 20% require a little coordination and consultation, while the remaining 10% are really complex,' explains Martin Freitag. The complex challenges are his particular strength, as his area of expertise is environmental technology, where gigantic containers often play a role.

Close cooperation, intensive coordination and careful communication with colleagues in the factory are crucial in the production of these containers. Ultimately, the customer is king and there is no such thing as 'mission impossible'. In addition to his challenging job, the young Carinthian is completing a part-time bachelor's degree in Graz, for which he is currently studying hard. We're keeping our fingers crossed for his final exam!

Regina Streiter – all-rounder with a penchant for technology

The young-at-heart Tyrolean has been working in the back office of Katzenberger Fertigteilindustrie in Wiesing for six years now. Her youthful enthusiasm is clearly due to the fact that she has had an extremely varied career: from marketing in a fashion company to work preparation at Elektra Bregenz to running her own installation company with her husband. She even got involved in building her own house – reading plans is no problem for her.



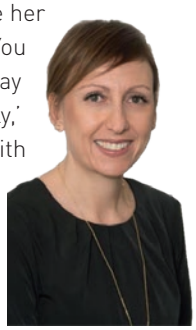
That's why she particularly enjoys the technical environment and working with her colleagues in production. From costing to credit management and from her backup role in scheduling to quotation and order entry, evaluation and invoicing, she is delighted that hardly a day goes by at the Wiesing plant that is the same as the one before.

Regina Streiter (Road)

Margit Hofer – SAP expert and back office professional

Margit Hofer has been working in commercial office administration at MABA Fertigteilindustrie for a total of 16 years – first for a short time in Sollenau, then in Wöllersdorf.

When the strategic business unit organisation was established a few years ago, she ended up in building construction. In a large organisation such as MABA, the individual specialist areas in the office are separated in terms of personnel, so Margit Hofer is completely at home in the commercial department: quotation preparation, order creation, invoicing, credit notes, returns processing, credit enquiries and the like. Unsurprisingly, the indispensable SAP system is her second virtual home, so to speak, and her in-depth knowledge and broad experience make her particularly popular among her colleagues: 'You don't always have to contact support straight away – many questions can be answered immediately,' the expert tells us. This makes her, along with all the other colleagues presented here, the perfect example of the great commitment and expertise in the internal sales department of the various KCS companies.



Margit Hofer (Building construction)

KCS KARRIEREN

PHILIPP DULLER

SALES MANAGER TIBA AUSTRIA

In October 2024, Philipp Duller was appointed authorised signatory and new Sales Manager at TIBA Austria GmbH. The 28-year-old Carinthian joined TIBA's internal sales team in southern Styria in 2017, just a few months after completing his school-leaving exams. After only a short time, he decided to commit fully to the job and not pursue a degree in Vienna. Thanks to his dedication and passion for the job, TIBA's managing director and former sales manager Norbert Schuster quickly recognised his potential and encouraged and challenged him accordingly. He completed his studies in Vienna while working full-time and will soon graduate with a master's degree in marketing and sales management from the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna. Philipp Duller lives with his girlfriend in Graz.

ING. MICHAL KOŘÍNEK

MANAGING DIRECTOR MABA PREFA

Michal Kořínek, a long-standing top manager in the road construction industry, joined the management team at MABA Prefa in 2025. After working for SKANSKA and Eurovia, Kořínek spent the last 15 years as regional manager of the COLAS CZ Group, where he was most recently responsible for the implementation of the southern bypass in Budweis – a €28 million project for which he and his team received a prestigious award.

'Over the next 15 years, I would also like to transform MABA Prefa into a healthy, well-positioned and competitive company and successfully develop its profile and reputation on the Czech market,' explains Kořínek. In his new role, working alongside Radek Svacek with a particular focus on sales, he not only wants to further develop MABA Prefa's existing product portfolio, but also increasingly focus on business segments such as noise barriers, bridge elements and other road construction products.

KIRCHDORFER CONCRETE SOLUTIONS

IMPRESSIVE **PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS** ACROSS AUSTRIA

The various plants in the Kirchdorfer precast division have started the year with an impressive portfolio of interesting reference projects. Whether for railway infrastructure, industrial construction, building construction, civil engineering or special precast elements, KCS products are in demand practically everywhere in the country.

A special highlight was celebrated in the spring in the presence of ÖBB Infrastruktur AG board member Judith Engel and Kirchdorfer Group managing director Michael Wardian: the use of Austria's first recycled catenary mast and the demonstration of a forward-looking example of sustainable recycling management.

This is because 50-year-old MABA catenary poles from the area around Wiener Neustadt were dismantled to produce the new reinforced concrete catenary poles with a 30% recycled content. The broken concrete components were processed accordingly and returned to the main plant in Wöllersdorf to be used as part of the concrete aggregate for the production of the new poles, thus entering a new life cycle – a prime example of sustainable resource utilisation and technical excellence.

This is because Wöllersdorf developed its own recipes for the production of recycled concrete, and the results were tested in a prescribed mast bending test, in which the mast tip is pulled 140 cm in one direction.

Judith Engel, Member of the Management Board of ÖBB-Infrastruktur AG, emphasises: 'Our goal is to further strengthen rail as an attractive, modern and environmentally friendly mode of transport and to equip it for the future. This pilot project gives our old building material a new lease of life and returns it to the cycle of the new railway. This makes one thing clear: climate protection is not just a word for us, we live it.' The electrification of the line will enable environmentally friendly electric trains powered by 100% green electricity to run in the Traisental valley instead of the previous diesel-powered passenger trains.

Fotos: © ÖBB / Darrer

Electrification of the Traisentalbahn railway: As part of the modernisation of the local railway line, up to 1,200 reinforced concrete overhead line poles made from 30% recycled aggregate will be used.

High-level press conference: Judith Engel, Member of the Management Board of ÖBB-Infrastruktur AG, and Kirchdorfer Managing Director Michael Wardian presented the first recycled catenary mast together with the project team.

A MABA MAKEOVER FOR THE SKI WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STATION IN SALZBURG

Well ahead of the FIS Ski World Championships in Saalbach-Hinterglemm from February 4 to 16, the winner in the "best railway station equipment" category had long been decided:

MABA Fertigteilindustrie impressively beat the competition with brand new noise barriers, base plates, platform edges, and catenary masts.

LIDL NON-FOOD LOGISTICS HUB FOR 13 COUNTRIES

RAUTER & TIBA AT LIDL LOGISTICS CENTER IN THE GRAZ-WUNDSCHUH CARGO TERMINAL

The Lidl Foundation's huge logistics hub is supplied daily by an entire train (known as the 'Panther Shuttle') from the Slovenian Adriatic port of Koper, where most of the non-food goods from Asia arrive. From the 50,000 m² hall – built with columns, beams and wall panels from RAUTER – the goods are distributed across half of Europe to 13 countries.

TIBA Austria GmbH was also involved in this gigantic project with its entire product range: environmental technology, drainage technology, traffic engineering and sewer technology.

LARGEST SINGLE ORDER IN THE HISTORY OF TIBA AUSTRIA GMBH

Although the company is still young, the record order in the 20th year of the civil engineering market leader in Austria is all the more impressive: On behalf of ARGE S10 BL02 (Gebr. Haider + Porr + Habau), ASFINAG invested a total of around 5,000 tonnes (or 2 million euros) in TIBA sewer technology for the expansion of the S 10 Mühlviertler Schnellstraße from Freistadt to Rainbach.

Incidentally, the expansion on a new route, which is scheduled to run until 2027, is a Europe-wide best practice example of sustainable construction – from comprehensive life cycle assessment to photovoltaics and ecological compensation measures.

WINDSCREEN FOR ST. PÖLTEN

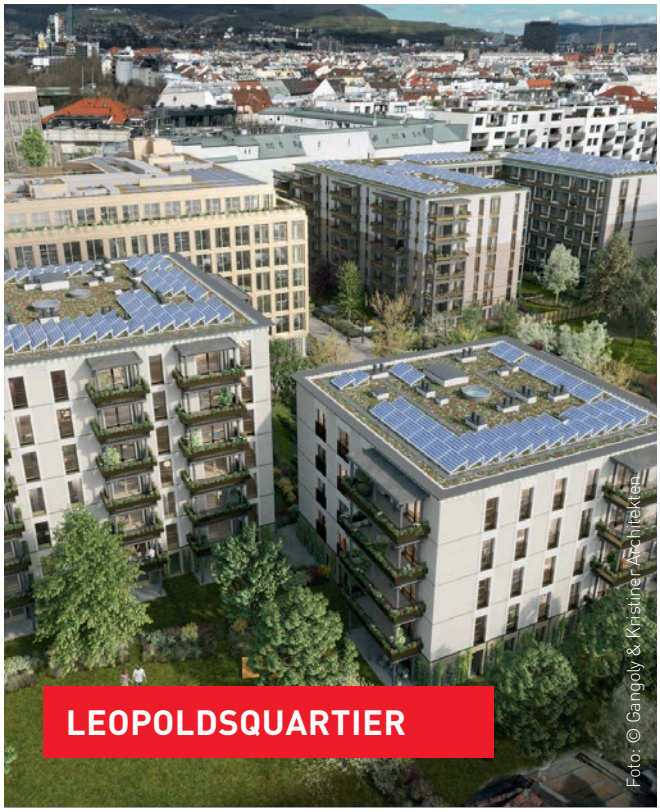
A BREATHING OASIS OF CONCRETE AND BRICK ENRICHES THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

A fascinating work of art stands on Europaplatz in St. Pölten, which is much more than just an aesthetic enhancement to the cityscape. The 'Windfänger' (wind catcher), a creation by the artist collective 'Breathe Earth Collective', embodies the perfect symbiosis of art, engineering and ecological awareness – naturally with special custom-made parts from our concrete artists at RAUTER.

GRÜNBLICK

ANOTHER GORGEOUS TOWER

Not the first and certainly not the last residential tower in Vienna with the obligatory balcony railings from RAUTER.



LEOPOLDSQUARTIER

Foto: © Gangoly & Kristiner Architekten

WOOD COMPOSITE CEILING

Almost 3,000 m² of XC© Living ceilings are among the highlights of a new residential district built by PORR in Vienna.

MINERAL BUILDING MATERIALS IN **FIRE AND WATER DISASTERS**

When it comes to the advantages and disadvantages of building materials in the event of a disaster, the arguments put forward in practice are not always fair. The European Association of Precast Concrete Manufacturers (BIBM) now wants to put the discussion in the right perspective and promote fire safety.

Mineral building materials – above all reinforced concrete structures made from precast concrete elements – offer the best protection in the event of fire and flooding. This applies both to the occupants and to the building itself.

As pleasant, attractive and 'green' as wood is as a building material, for example, when it comes to fire or water damage, the risks are not always discussed fairly. Based on fire safety tests in which the source of the fire is directed exclusively at a single component, fire behaviour is often inferred that does not exist in practice.

Without taking into account the speed of propagation and the fire behaviour of the entire structure, the test results often give a false sense of security.

This is all the more worrying given that the potential sources of ignition – and thus the risk of fire – are increasing in our age of technical devices with ever more powerful batteries.

"Measuring the fire risk of individual components provides little information about the actual effects in the event of a fire. If, on the other hand, we analyse which buildings survived the large-scale fires in California at the beginning of the year unscathed or with only minor damage, it is clear that structures made of mineral building materials perform much better," explains Alexander Barnaš, Managing Director of MMK Holzbetonverbund GmbH.

Concrete slows down the spread of fire

"There is a reason why modern cities no longer burn down uncontrollably, as was regularly the case just over a century ago.

The chances of survival are also much higher in a building made of mineral building materials, because the typical cause of death is not burning, but smoke development, which leads to suffocation. This risk is also much lower in a concrete building," says Barnaš.

A European fire safety strategy

In order to analyse the safety advantages of buildings made of precast reinforced concrete elements more precisely from a scientific point of view and to draw conclusions for the general improvement of fire safety in buildings, the European Association of Precast Concrete Manufacturers recently published a strategy paper calling on politicians and the various standards committees to raise fire safety regulations to a higher level.

Mineral building materials are of central importance in this regard – they minimise the spread of fires, offer greater protection for occupants and, unlike other building materials, can in many cases be restored after fires and extinguishing work, as well as after flood damage, for example.

And in practical terms, this can mean a world of difference in the event of a real-life desaster. As many of the concrete houses in Los Angeles have shown ...

Meaningful insight into the 'Palisades Fire Damage Map': The damage caused by the fires around Los Angeles has been documented with photos for each individual property and classified on a map, which is available online. The two properties in Topanga Beach near Malibu, for example, are right next to each other. The property built with mineral building materials and enclosed by a wall is almost completely intact, while only the brickwork and chimneys remain of the neighbouring house.

Miren Klemar: The young Slovenian is working enthusiastically on the ongoing development of the new Traffic and Accident Monitoring (TAM) system for Kirchdorfer's Road & Traffic division.

THE **SMART BARRIER** IS ALREADY A REALITY

The development of smart restraint systems that record and monitor traffic has long been a top priority at DELTABLOC. Now, a young IT developer has joined the team as another driving force behind this initiative.

After completing his computer science degree in Ljubljana, Klemen Klemar joined the Slovenian DELTABLOC branch about two years ago.

At least some of the time he spends there researching, because he has been travelling a lot lately – to trade fairs, other country representatives and licence partners, as well as to the scene of the (traffic) action. As a DELTABLOC TAM developer, he is responsible for a crucial future project that is already a reality, live and online.

In-house development with acoustic sensing

'We even rented a snow plough in the middle of summer to train our system on the acoustic footprint of all possible vehicles. This included nerve-racking series of braking and acceleration tests in flowing traffic with Thomas Edl at the wheel,' says Klemen with a broad grin.

Years ago, while still a student, he listened with great interest to an inspiring lecture by Thomas Edl, who came up with the basic idea for the system. When the company was finally looking for a software developer who knew something about vehicles and was also handy with a screwdriver, Klemen Klemar, who spends his spare time drifting across half of Europe, was naturally the ideal candidate.

Promising technology

The TAM system is now so advanced that it can use fibre optic cables, which act as acoustic sensors, to record every single vehicle, even those of different categories, with their respective speeds and braking behaviour in real time. And that is just the beginning, because with artificial intelligence and machine learning, further development will progress rapidly.

TAM already provides road operators with detailed information on all traffic volumes (including accidents and congestion behaviour), which is displayed online in the DELTABLOC EXTRANET and can be evaluated visually on a live map. This means that the first TAM customers in Latvia already know exactly when the snow plough last cleared the road.

Theory, test track, practice: Klemen Klemar gives lectures at conferences, drives forward the development of hardware and software on the in-house test track and has already installed the TAM system himself at licensing partner Tilts SIA in Riga (Latvia) together with Thomas Edl and the DELTABLOC team.

DELTABLOC INTERNATIONAL

DOING BUSINESS AROUND THE GLOBE: **INDIA, MEXICO, SWITZERLAND**

DELTABLOC© technology has been spreading around the world for a quarter of a century. The expansion strategy is refined year after year and varies according to local conditions and markets. Generally speaking, no two countries are alike, and there are worlds of difference between the individual continents ...

The continuous expansion of DELTABLOC® around the world (we are currently active in over 50 countries) is essentially happening in two ways: Either through high-level contacts established over long periods of time and with corresponding frequent flyer programmes by the international licensing team, or through the establishment of local project companies with the 'midwife' Werner Fink, the 'entrepreneurial financial expert' and start-up specialist at DELTABLOC.

The latter option is, so to speak, standard operating procedure on the old continent: as one of the founding fathers of internationalisation with DELTABLOC subsidiaries, Werner Fink has already set up many a European sales representative office. This was also the case last year in Switzerland, where a long-standing employee of a former licensee now heads the latest foreign subsidiary.

Swiss market follows European model

Switzerland is not a new market for DELTABLOC, as it has been served by a licensee for many years, but now it will be served directly by a newly established sales office. 'The most important thing in markets like Switzerland is good, long-standing contacts and a corresponding reputation in the market,' explains Roland Dommen. The fact that he can now continue to serve the market directly for the DELTABLOC family from his own office is a win-win situation for all sides. In contrast to his wide-ranging activities at the former licensee, his job is now clearly focused on traffic safety and noise protection. What's more, his experienced neighbour DELTABLOC Germany supports him in sales strategy, market development and the implementation of even large projects – just like a big brother.

'With potential access to DELTABLOC Germany's huge pool of rental elements and their know-how, I will also have new opportunities in Switzerland in the future to develop and serve the market,' explains the 52-year-old native of Buochs. And with three major projects already underway, the Swiss team is set to expand soon. Thanks to the healthy order book, which began to fill up even before the national subsidiary was founded, there is hardly any time left to process new enquiries.

Mexico: A new start with a new vision

The search for a partner in Mexico began almost 15 years ago for Georg Ferner, the flying ambassador of DELTABLOC International. A partner was found relatively quickly at the time, who was also financially strong and had a lot of contacts in politics. Only the contract negotiations dragged on forever. 'Have you read the contract yet?' – 'No, but tomorrow!' Ferner recalls the recurring conversations at

New branch in Switzerland: Roland Dommen is the National Sales Manager of the new DELTABLOC Group branch in Buochs on Lake Lucerne.

the time. But 'tomorrow' never came for months on end, because 'mañana' is a flexible term in Mexico. Finally, a small 4 km project got off the ground. Unfortunately, however, the expected large orders are still in the project phase more than a decade later, while Ferner's focus shifted more to the large markets in South America.

In 2024, he made a new start and found what could be the ideal partner in Puebla in central Mexico: a small (by Mexican standards) family-owned construction company that had already installed a range of different restraint systems throughout Mexico (some of them using mobile production setups). And it is precisely the 'different' nature of the systems they installed, that the new partner company hopes to remedy by working with DELTABLOC:

'They have the problem that every client wants their own system with their own requirements, as there are no standardised systems or requirements in Mexico. Our new partners don't want to make a quick buck, they want to build a solid long-term market position with standardized products. I am very confident that with the new start in Mexico, we have now found a partner with the right vision, which also fits in with our own philosophy,' explains Ferner.

Mountain biking with a view of Popocatépetl: Dipl.-Ing. Georg Ferner's new start in Mexico begins with finding the right partner with the right vision for the future!

The long road to India

Olivier Keutgen's South Asia strategy could not be more different from Ferner's experiences in Central America: the freelance and well-travelled DELTABLOC consultant from Belgium has been working closely with political decision-makers, standards committees and, last but not least, large national corporations for many years. In the world's largest democracy, decision-making processes are long and thorough, and the potential of this subcontinent with its 1.4 billion inhabitants is naturally enormous.

However, nothing happens in India without personal contacts, so the pandemic set Keutgen's strategy back by three years. Post-Covid, and with excellent support from the Austrian Chamber of Commerce's foreign trade organisation and the Austrian Embassy in Delhi, he finally managed to make a breakthrough at the highest level: 'A minister is a superstar in India,' explains Keutgen. 'With the transport minister's business card in your pocket, all kinds of doors suddenly open and a pilot project is already within reach.'

A parallel campaign eventually led the Belgian to the private sector in the state of Maharashtra – India's economic powerhouse with 120 million inhabitants. There, he successfully established contact with one of the large family-owned mega-corporations, which has its own road construction division. And unlike in Mexico, contracts are scrutinised for months and, after a year of negotiations with countless departments, a solid partnership has now been signed. The Indian delegation has already paid a state visit to DELTABLOC's headquarters in Wöllersdorf, and the first concrete barriers have already been installed on the Pune-Mumbai expressway!

The Indian delegation on a state visit to Wöllersdorf: With a large corporation as a partner, work is now underway in South Asia. Right: Prior to the partnership in Mumbai and independently of it, Olivier Keutgen met with the national transport minister at a conference in Innsbruck, arranged by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce.

Move to the new headquarters in Wöllersdorf in 2021, side by side:
from left to right: Wolfgang Ganster (Managing Director, DELTABLOC International), Werner Fink (Commercial Director & HR), Thomas Edl (CEO, Kirchdorfer Road & Traffic), Ingo Stoffels (Managing Director, DELTABLOC Germany).

MILESTONES FROM **25 YEARS OF DELTABLOC INTERNATIONAL**

What began 25 years ago as a small start-up company marketing DELTABLOC® product licences internationally is now the world's only full-service provider of vehicle restraint systems. And so much more...

The international success story of the revolutionary concrete guide walls developed by MABA Fertigteilindustrie in the early 1990s actually began shortly after their launch in Austria with a first licensee (BKN) in Germany. Then things moved quickly, with a few decisions that, in retrospect, clearly fall into the 'historic' category:

In 2005, Thomas Edl, a young civil engineer, master builder, structural engineer and doctor of wood and glass research, joined the company as a technician and product developer. In 2006, the first two branches were established in Germany and France. And when a change in management was imminent, Erich Frommwald offered the young civil engineer the position of managing director. And the rest is history, so to speak...

Start-up culture par excellence

"When Mr Frommwald unexpectedly offered me the position of managing director, I first had to ask for some time to think about it. I had no idea what a managing director actually had to do or be capable of doing," recalls Thomas Edl, now head of the Kirchdorf Road & Traffic

division, thinking back to his early days.

What he had to do back then was pretty much everything imaginable: developing products, producing technical drawings, planning and calculating projects, putting together marketing brochures and, last but not least, looking for new licensing partners. The unexpected management position was just the icing on the cake. But Thomas Edl had a powerful team at his side from the very beginning in his colleagues Werner Fink, Wolfgang Ganster and Ingo Stoffels.

"Mr. Frommwald had placed a lot of trust in me and, looking back, I have to admit that he gave me a lot of freedom from day one. But of course he also put me under a lot of pressure...,' says Edl. The strategy paid off: new licensees were acquired all over the world, new subsidiaries were founded, and Ingo Stoffels also went from strength to strength in Germany and neighbouring countries.

In 2010, it was finally time to change the word "Europe" in the company name to 'International". From the Middle East to Australia and from South Africa to Latin America, the system, which consisted of an ever-growing range of products, began to establish itself. 'Back then, I travelled halfway around the world for years like a missionary to preach the gospel of EN 1317. And it worked. We shaped the market and the industry in many ways, and we continue to do so today,' sums up Thomas Edl.

Under the watchful eye of the Austrian President, Thomas Edl ceremoniously signed a cooperation agreement with a state-affiliated licensing partner from Qatar in 2011.

Grand opening of the new DELTABLOC Germany headquarters near Regensburg in 2013. As a model company and pioneer of numerous European sales agencies, host Ingo Stoffels (far right in the picture) has been instrumental in DELTABLOC's international success since the 1990s.

The former developer, who remains the driving force behind innovation in the division, is particularly proud of the fact that DELTABLOC is the only company in the world to develop and offer a complete range of concrete and steel products in its sector. It has conducted over 400 crash tests and has 170 highly motivated employees who are committed to DELTABLOC's vision.

At the end of our anniversary interview, we ask Thomas Edl what he considers to be the most important milestones and achievements.

"We can be very proud of 25 financial years, all of which have been good and often outstanding. Even when we were hit particularly hard by the Covid pandemic – we had no domestic market and were unable to operate internationally. Added to this was the great uncertainty among public road operators, who cancelled or postponed virtually all major projects for years.

Now, in 2025, we are practically back on track for growth. We have never been as well positioned as we are today. I think we are currently in the strongest position we have ever been in!" Edl states for the record.

Home of Road Safety

A major milestone for Thomas Edl was definitely the move to the new headquarters in Wöllersdorf in September 2021. The cramped conditions in the old office in Sollenau were no longer acceptable and were hampering further development.

With the new headquarters, which master builder Edl designed down to the last detail himself during the pandemic and often built with his own hands, the 'Home of Road Safety' with its international flair now fulfils its purpose: this is where customers, experts and authorities from all over the world meet the DELTABLOC family and come and go as they please, as Edl explains:

'Without a corporate headquarters tailored precisely to the needs of our employees, our current path to success would simply not be possible. And the best is yet to come – the major progress we are making on our Road to Green and the exciting digitalisation (keyword: 'smart barriers', see page 39) will ensure that we can maintain and expand our lead in the industry in the future.'

RESEARCH SPIRIT AND FASCINATION

FAMILY TRIP WITH A CEMENT PLANT TOUR

A very special outing demonstrated the inquiring minds of our youngest generation in a particularly enjoyable way: like the approximately 800 other interested visitors from the surrounding area, the Janssen family from Salzburg lined up to take part in one of the more than 50 factory tours offered as part of the open day at the Kirchdorf cement plant. The only difference was that Mr Janssen is one of the owners of the Kirchdorf Group...

While Managing Director Joao Paulo Pereira da Silva helped the children get properly kitted out, Plant Manager Roland Kammerhuber insisted on giving the tour himself. The plant manager's extensive knowledge was certainly in high demand, as Florian (8), Benjamin (7) and little Leah (4) were completely enthralled by what they saw, explored and observed.

The many stones and raw materials used in cement production particularly aroused the curiosity of the two sons. After closely studying the components and complex machinery of the cement laboratory, listening to the humming of the 45-metre-long rotary kiln and the screeching of the cement mill, the visitors were finally treated to the sight of the speedy machine that packs the cement into bags, which left them amazed. The educational family outing was rounded off with a visit to the various children's attractions in front of the marquee.

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KirchdorferNews@kirchdorfer.eu

KIRCHDORFER GROUP

MEDIA HOLDER AND PUBLISHER Kirchdorfer Group Services GmbH, Kirchdorfer Platz 1, A-2752 Wöllersdorf · **PHONE** +43 5 7715 100 0 · **EMAIL** welcome@kirchdorfer.eu, www.kirchdorfer.eu · **EDITORIAL BOARD** Kirchdorfer Gruppe · **CONTACT** Ingrid Schriefl · **PHONE** +43 5 7715 101 437 · **MAIL** Ingrid.Schriefl@kirchdorfer.eu · **TEXT & DESIGN** Christoph Rieger, A-8141 Premstätten · **PHOTOS** as stated, otherwise: Archiv Kirchdorfer Gruppe · **COVER** Christoph Rieger, June 2025.