Issue No. 07-08/2021 (554)

StainlessSteelFocus

oryx commodity review

Technological transition creates additional demand - Is there a new commodity super-cycle?

Oil & Gas

Sverdrup Steel: a specialist in Duplex grades for oil and gas, and more…

Raw materials

Global molybdenum production and use rises year on year in Q1 2021

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METALS & PLASTICS

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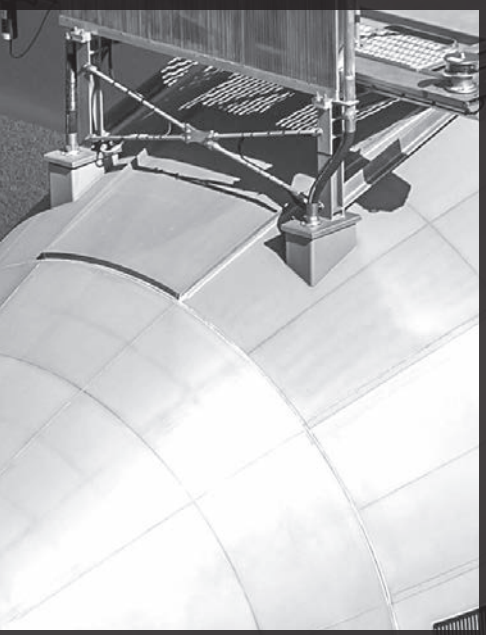

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Oh what a year!

It is customary as the year comes to a close, or at the beginning of a new year, to look back over the past months, and assess the outlook for the coming months. While not wishing to "jump the gun", there has been so much happening that we thought it a good idea to get started on this already. Not least in the sincere hope that we shall soon be experiencing better times.

To say that the past many months have been characterised by turmoil, confusion, disagreement, and in some cases despair, would not be an overstatement. The Brexit debacle rolled on and on, with the views often unchanged - the UK is better off outside the EU, or exiting the EU could be a disaster. As it happens, it has become clear, we believe, that it is self-evident that being outside the single market would necessarily affect trade. The disputes and acrimony are not over yet. It was self-evident also that if there was to be no border between the Irish Republic (an EU member) and Northern Ireland (not an EU member, part of the UK), then there had to be some kind of arrangement to reconcile the irreconcilable.

To some extent, the Brexit saga has been replaced by widespread flooding in Germany, the low countries, China, and heat waves and fires in Australia, China, Turkey, and elsewhere - the result, according to some, of the dire impact of global warming, which others think is a fallacy.

The turmoil has been overshadowed by the severe personal and economic impact of the global Covid 19 pandemic, which, although its very existence continues to be denied by some, does seem to have led to a death toll and an impact on economic activity somewhat larger than the annual bout of "flu".

To get back to our industry, what is certain is that the pandemic has caused serious disruption to some very important major events, and we have ourselves been impacted. Stainless 2021, which is held in cooperation with our parent company Verlag FocusRostfrei, and which was due to be held September 15-16, 2021, had to be postponed due mainly to the uncertainty associated with the resumption of international travel to such an extent that the usual international participation of exhibitors and visitors would not be possible. The next Stainless trade fair will take place in 2022, with the exact date being set with regard to other events held in Europe.

Similarly, the organisers of SPE Offshore Europe, which was also due to be held in September, have been obliged to postpone the live event to February 1-4, 2022. A virtual conference will, however, go ahead, September 7-10, 2021.

A number of events did go ahead as planned in 2021, and Messe Düsseldorf has been reporting good support from the various industries concerned for recent, and upcoming trade fairs which did have to be postponed due to the pandemic. The 'Russian Metal Fair Quartet', comprising wire Russia, Tube Russia, Metallurgy Russia and Litmash Russia were held at the Expocentre exhibition centre from June 8-10, 2021, with about 200 companies from 11 countries participating. Metallurgy Russia and Litmash Russia will again be held together in Moscow from June 7-9, 2022; wire Russia will be held in the summer of 2023. The wire and Tube events to be held in Düsseldorf, on the other hand, had to be postponed. wire 2022 and Tube 2022 will now be held May 9-13, 2022. Messe Düsseldorf India has also decided to move wire India, Tube India, Metec India and India Essen Cutting & Welding to November 23-25, 2022. Messe Düsseldorf is also already reporting good registration status for Valve World Expo 2022. The event will take place November 29 to December 1, 2022.

Ugitech, meanwhile, will be showcasing its latest additive manufacturing products at the postponed 3D Print Congress & Exhibition (7th edition), which is now scheduled to take place in Lyon, April 5-7, 2022.

To conclude, we can perhaps echo the sentiment of the Mach 2022 organisers, an event which is being held at the NEC Birmingham UK April 4-8, 2022. The postponement of live trade shows has caused severe disruption to the normal flow of events, "but as we now look to the future with renewed confidence, attention can once again turn to our live events programme". Covid 19 restrictions are being eased, hopes are high that the world can slowly start to regain some sense of normality.

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The need to listen, learn and understand

Cevisa opts for the webinar solution

The past months made it clear that the restrictions due to the pandemic wouldn't end anytime soon. Any salesperson who relied on the hope that the situation would soon improve had a rough landing. On the customer side, there were also behaviours that I can't just describe as enjoying shopping. In times of crisis, material things are replaced by supposed security. Here, Spain's Cevisa presents its view of the current situation.

Sellers define themselves by their sales success. But this didn't happen as usual. The tried and tested strategies didn't seem to work any longer. Alternatives were sought. The customer's response as a benchmark suffered from a lack of personal contact.

Sales people switched between three states:

Fear and denial

Fear that everything will change or, optionally, to deny that something has changed. You just have to do more of the same. "Customers don't want to buy". Guilty parties are searched for. Many executives are familiar with it and call it the form of the day or mood. The customer, the location or the wallet are to blame. There seems to be no way out. "It'll be fine again." Old methods are tried again and again. Until salespeople realize that customers aren't listening.

Learn and understand

The crisis is an opportunity to learn and understand. Now there is a strong impetus from outside. Many sellers can now question their methods. What else can I do? Support your sales force now to question their own methods.

Just putting the sale online is not the best option. Everyone knows the difference between click and purchase rates. You need to learn how to get and keep attention online first. Now is the time for it.

Grow and adapt

Treating yourself and others with empathy is the great strength of sales people. Growing with this situation and developing your own strategies can lead to success. To help others and at the same time to concentrate on your own future, a sales director as a trainer can now offer perfect support.

Listen to the customer

Customers are caught in the same crisis. They also alternate between fear, learning, and growth several times a day with the crisis. In normal day-to-day business, it is difficult to follow new impulses. In a crisis, resources are immobilized in a special way. Customers also fear that everything will change and particularly fear for the continuity of their own job in the existing uncertainty about the future. It is currently not possible to optimize anything at all.

Customers learn how important suppliers can be. A long-term relationship is more important than a quick fix for Corona. With personal services in particular, what counts now is who values their providers

and who breaks off the relationship due to a lack of awareness of fairness. Customers now learn who wants to listen to them, who asks what is needed, who is committed. Even if no purchase decision can be made now.

Try to understand the customer's needs. Selling is human and an emotional relationship is part of it. Find out about the current situation. Two or three questions are enough. The advantage: enquiries are not synonymous with decisions, so a NO from the customer is unlikely.

Support your sellers

If fear prevails, offer community or your shoulder. If learning is important, offer consulting and training. When talent is discovered, use it to make a change.

Find out where your employee is now. In times of depression, many sales trainers remain silent because there doesn't seem to be a visible solution. Trust the potential of your sales people. The crisis is an opportunity to ask, "What is your best hope for our cooperation?" Be there when the sale regains hope and activates its own potential. Refrain from a dramatic analysis of the situation, which you cannot change anyway.

What do we do at Cevisa?

Due to trade fair cancellations in 2020 and 2021, Castellanos y Echevarria - Vitoria, SA launched a series of webinars on its innovations and user videos on the machines in March.

The webinars offer customers and interested parties the opportunity to receive specific and complete information about the respective novelty of the product and to clarify doubts directly with the team of experts. The webinars are planned as an alternative to the intensive and valuable consultations that normally take place on the exhibition stands.

We want to keep the dialogue alive, convey our industry knowledge, be as close as possible to our customers and train our partners. Although we also miss personal contact, we want to confidently bind the potential buyer and let them know that we are there and what we can do to meet their needs. Together we can bring together industry experts to discuss issues and events that impact the steel community and together find solutions. ■

Speeding forward in production and online

New 10kW fiber laser cutter for Stainless UK

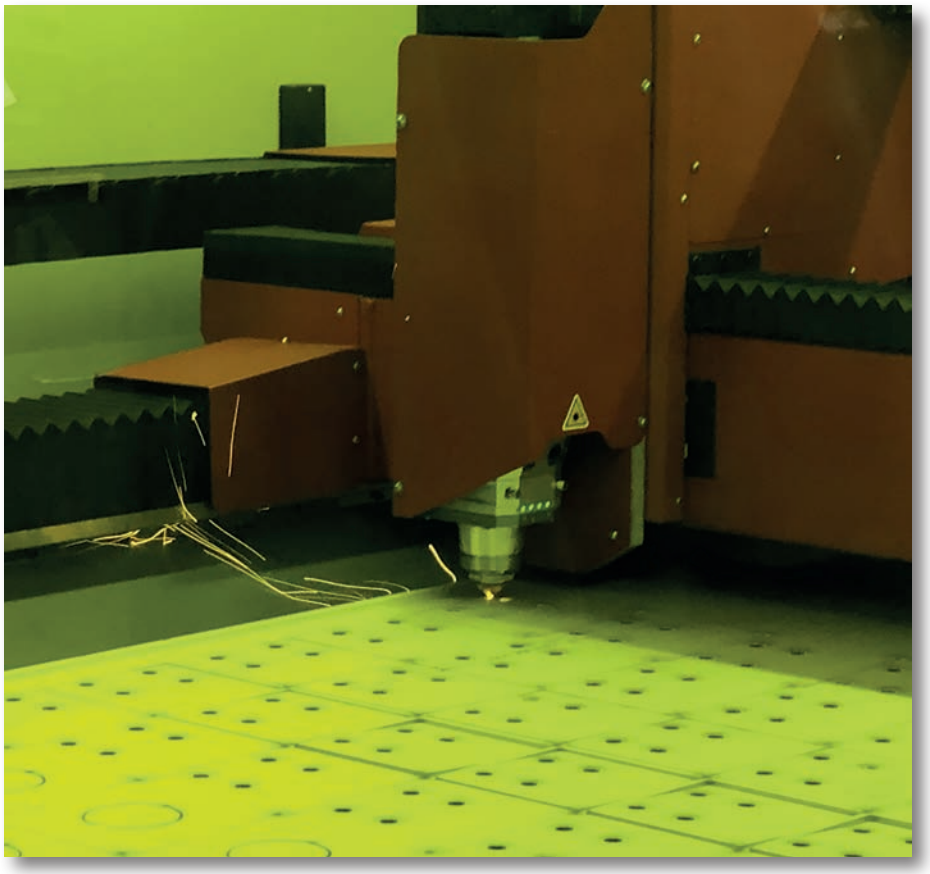
Stainless UK has become one of the first companies in the UK to install an Esprit 10kW fiber laser cutting machine. The company has also revamped its website to match the new changes in production.

The new 10kW state-of-the-art cutting machine will sit alongside its existing 6kW laser cutter and will not only support the company's team with reduced fabrication time, but will also expand the services available to customers.

The new 10kW fiber laser cutting CNC machine adds:

- rapid vector speeds of 325 metres/min.
- cutting steel plate up to 30mm

- precision holes and cutting down to 2.5mm

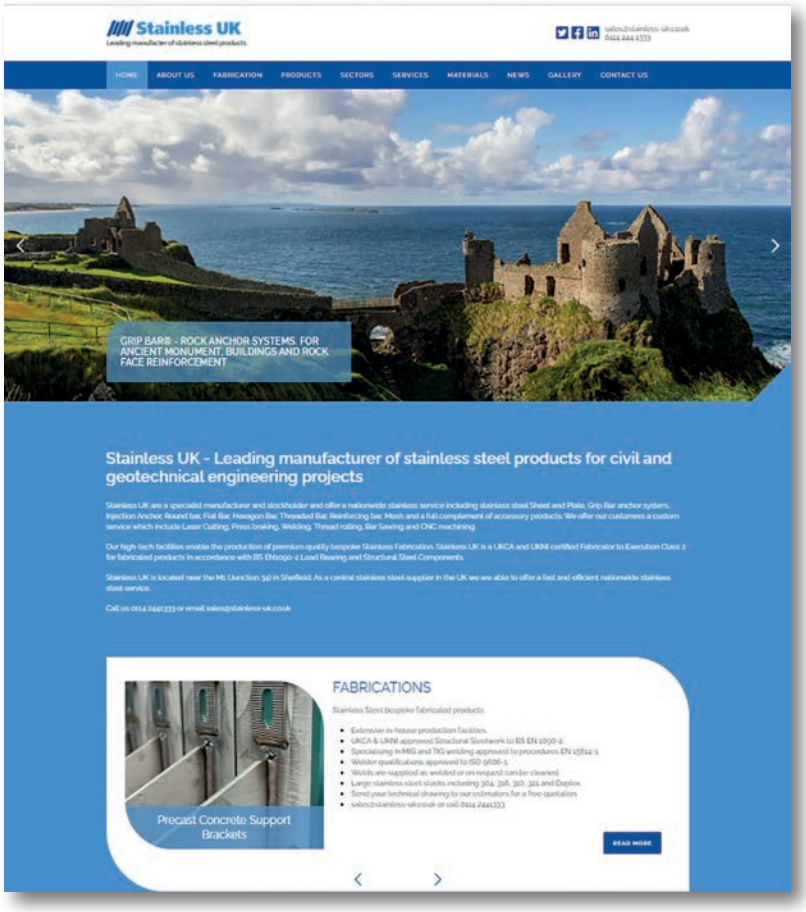


New website launched

To match the new changes in production, Stainless UK has decided to make changes online to its website www.stainless-uk.co.uk The site should feel familiar, but the company wanted to make it easier to navigate and show clearly what services and products it has available to offer.

To help do this the company has added:

- a fabrication page detailing its service, credentials and showing examples of its work



- a section for all its machinery and services
- all certification and quality procedures
- the stainless steel grades held in stock
- an updated gallery showing more of the products made. ■

Helping companies adapt to the changes in the working environment

Lantek responds to the evolution of the sheet metal industry in 2020

Shane Langston, solutions sales manager at Lantek UK examines how Covid has changed the sheet metal business.

The immediate impact of Covid was the need for staff to work from home if possible, which meant that tasks like programming the cutting machines and preparing quotations needed to be quickly made operational from home offices. About 40% of our customers had an immediate need for this capability as soon as lockdown started.

Shane Langston, solutions sales manager for Lantek

Because of the work that Lantek had already done on remote access in the operation of its Lantek Expert software we were able to implement floating licences for our software the same day as we received a request from the customer. We managed to do this without the need to visit the customer's site using remote access software to set up the applications and ensure that they were working correctly.

The sudden change in the working environment caused manufacturers in the sheet metal industry to re-evaluate their business structures and strategy. The disruption to normal working practices raised questions about whether new and more efficient procedures could be implemented which would have a long-term benefit for the business. Once the initial problems of home working had been resolved, managers had more time to look into these questions.

Initial difficulties with home working revolved around losing the day-to-day interaction and conversations that take place in an office environment. Working from home effectively stopped this so it was more difficult to coordinate activities and manage teams. Similarly, quote preparation was more difficult especially as speed and accuracy of quoting is so important for getting new business. There is plenty of evidence from our users that the speed with which an accurate quotation can be delivered to a customer has a direct correlation with the likelihood of getting the business. The solutions in Lantek's MES Manager and Quoting modules are designed to resolve this enabling the team to know when a job has been completed and accurately find costs from their remote environment.

Many of our customers realised the importance of taking the next steps forward with Lantek MES and Integra towards a smart factory and plans which were on a five-year time frame for implementation have now moved forward to within the next 12 months. The important market driver for this is the current volatility of material prices. Material shortages caused by the pandemic have made it difficult to predict metal prices and manufacturers are often faced with very short validity for prices from their suppliers, leading to a fast-moving marketplace. MES can solve this with rapid price updates which would otherwise have to be tracked manually in a spreadsheet - a time consuming and error prone process.

More manufacturers are also looking at traceability and ISO 9000 for their products as part of their strategy to improve their businesses. With Lantek, companies can create a unique identification for each part, tracking the processes and machines used in making it, right back to the material batch it came from. This capability is a key differentiator for manufacturers and gives them access to customers and markets which would otherwise be barred to them.

As part of Lantek's Integra software, quotations, CRM, stock control and manufacturing control all provide live information about sales, the status of manufacturing, the source of material, its availability and its price - essential information not only for production efficiency and profitability but also for traceability. By moving along the path to smart manufacture companies will get far more control of business KPIs ensuring that existing equipment is used optimally, processes are controlled accurately, parts are high quality and delivered on time and that profitability is accurately known.

Lantek Factory

Making fundamental changes to how the business is run can seem daunting. However, working with Lantek makes it possible for even the smallest companies to benefit from getting started with smart manufacturing. The steps in its installation can be taken individually and, in any order, making it affordable and easier for the company to successfully implement each change and see results before they move to the next phase. Importantly, Lantek is a leading specialist in the sheet metal industry and develops all the software itself so it is designed to be integrated and work seamlessly, taking the risk out of a partnership with us. ■

Mary Stevens Hospice benefits from 'Wired for Good'

AWI celebrates 75 years in business

UK specialist producer of high performance nickel alloys AWI is celebrating a big birthday in style by targeting international expansion and a £1m investment drive. Meanwhile, Mary Stevens Hospice has become the first beneficiary of the company's recently launched 'Wired for Good' campaign.

Alloy Wire International (AWI) is celebrating 75 years of manufacturing in 2021 and has plans in place to take sales past pre Covid-19 levels to £12m by the end of the year.

The company, which employs 30 people at manufacturing sites in the West Midlands and Yorkshire, is also looking to mark the milestone year by launching 'Wired for Good', a campaign that will see it boost its work supporting local charities and, importantly, committing to becoming carbon neutral.

This means all manufacturing, deliveries and even employee commuting emissions will need to be offset and the firm has partnered with a number of specialist organisations to achieve this, with the focus on woodland creation, solar/wind and sustainability projects.

Mark Venables, managing director of AWI, commented: "75 years in business is a major achievement and the last twelve months have certainly been some of the most challenging yet, with our staff going above and beyond to support the global fightback against the pandemic.

"Despite the challenges, sales have held up well and demand across 15 key market sectors has

surged since January 2021 and this bodes well for our big anniversary year."

He continued: "We've got some really big plans for our birthday celebrations, including a £1m investment in new wet drawing machines and increasing our stockholding to 220 tonnes, the latter meaning we are able to offer our unrivalled two-week industry lead times.

"We also wanted to do something different that makes a positive social difference. With sustainability on many people's agenda, we felt the time was right to become 'carbon neutral', a significant commitment when you consider we produce wire and export to over 65 countries.

"'Wired for Good' will govern all of our 75th activities and we're looking forward to announcing more positive projects in the coming weeks."

"2021 is going to be an important time for the business, with R&D activities helping to find new applications for our material", explained Tom Mander, who was recently named as MD designate as part of a number of key appointments to the senior management team.

"One example is the rise in demand for our wire being used in Wire Arc Additive Manufacturing (WAAM), which is also referred to as 3D Metal Printing. WAAM works by melting the wire using an electric arc as the heat source and, unlike the 3D printing powder process, can be used to produce larger components in large quantities."

He concluded: "We have discovered so many new applications for our material over the last seven decades and, by ensuring we have the largest production capacity in our 75-year history, we are in a perfect position to find even more going forward."

(from left to right) Tom Mander (Alloy Wire International), Amanda Bowen, Ruth Longville (both Mary Stevens Hospice) and Paul Chatterley (Alloy Wire International)

£7,500 boost for Mary Stevens Hospice

Meanwhile, AWI has announced its first nominated charity as part of its 'Wired for Good' campaign. The company will be backing the crucial work of Mary Stevens Hospice over the next twelve months. It has agreed to donate £7,500 to mark its 75th year in business and the money will help the organisation continue to provide a safe and compassionate environment for patients with incurable or life-limiting illnesses.

As part of the agreement, AWI will be the headline sponsor for the charity's 30th Anniversary Ball and a sponsor of the exhibition football match that will form part of the Hospice Summer Fayre due to be held in September 2021.

Members of staff will also take part in other fundraising activities, including the Santa Jog, over the course of the year.

"We are very passionate about our Black Country roots and wanted to support charities that make a real difference to the lives of local people", explained Mander.

"Mary Stevens Hospice immediately came to mind as we have been supporting it for over 15 years and recognise the outstanding care and support it provides to individuals and their families at what is the most difficult times of their lives."

He continued: “The team all agreed to make it our first ‘Wired for Good’ charity and the £7,500 donation takes our total backing to the Hospice to more than £26,000. In addition to the funding, we’ll also be trying to raise the profile of the organisation by getting involved in activities when we can.”

Mary Stevens Hospice is celebrating its own big birthday in 2021, with the charity three decades old. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, it continued to deliver care and switched a lot of its face-to-face services to virtual catch-ups, including counselling, spiritual therapy and support with bereavement.

The Hospice was also instrumental in supporting those in the community facing new and challenging situations due to the pandemic with the creation of its Advice Hub, which provided advice and support over the telephone to anyone who needed it, signposting them to additional services in the process.

Ruth Longville, Business Partnership Fundraiser, was delighted to have AWI on board. “We are keen to get back as quickly as possible to providing our full range of services and we are looking forward to returning to face-to-face events whilst still continuing with the virtual events that have been so successful during the last eighteen months.

“Support from local companies, like Alloy Wire International, has been so important during the pandemic with an increase in donations or by finding other ways to support us during the pandemic.”

She continued: “Our clinical team have faced the challenges of the pandemic and adapted to working in different ways. The level of care and the support to our community - when they have needed us - has remained consistent and as vital as ever.”

AWI - round, flat and profile wire

Alloy Wire International, which manufactures round, flat and profile wire for more than 5,000 customers, was founded in 1946 by John Stockdale in an old ambulance station in Old Hill in the Black Country.

The company’s founding principles of ‘manufacturing quality, delivering reliability’ has stood the test of time and still remains a crucial part of how it deals with its global client base, spanning automotive, aerospace, medical, nuclear and oil and gas.

Today, the firm is employee-owned with most of the staff owning shares in the business, a decision made by existing chairman Bill Graham and the current senior management team.

This inclusive culture has been crucial in helping AWI more than double turnover from £5m to £11m in the last thirteen years. ■

2021 StainlessSteelFocus FEATURE PLAN

☐	December/ January	Feature	Stainless Steel Long Products Nickel Alloys Lean Duplex Deadline: December 14, 2020
☐	February	Feature	Architecture, Building & Construction Seamless & Welded Tubes Deadline: January 18, 2021
☐	March	Feature	The BREXIT issue, the new opportunities facing Europe Handling & Logistics, Stainless Steel Scrap Deadline: February 15, 2021
☐	April	Feature	New Material Developments, new grades, additives Chemical, Petrochemical, Offshore, Energy & Environment Focus on Turkey Deadline: March 15, 2021
☐	May	Feature	Focus on India, Power Generation Deadline: April 19, 2021
☐	June	Feature	Aerospace Focus on China & the Far East Focus on Germany Deadline: May 17, 2021
☐	July/August	Feature	Offshore Europe Exhibition preview *(September 7th-10th, Aberdeen, Scotland)* Oil & Gas, Duplex & Super Duplex Deadline: June 21, 2021
☐	September	Feature	Titanium USA preview *(October 3rd-6th)* Cutting, Welding, Finishing & Polishing Deadline: August 16, 2021
☐	October	Feature	Stainless Steel Flat Products Automotive, Railway & Transport Blechexpo Exhibition preview *(October 26th-29th, Stuttgart, Germany)* Made in Steel Exhibition preview *(October 5th-7th, Milano, Italy)* Deadline: September 20, 2021
☐	November	Feature	Focus on Italy Maastricht Exhibition Issue Nuclear Power Deadline: October 18, 2021

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Metroll, Australia, increases its fleet

Combilift's 60,000th truck delivered

The Irish manufacturer Combilift recently marked a further milestone when its 60,000th unit came off the production line at the company headquarters in Monaghan and was shipped to the other side of the world. The customer taking delivery of this special forklift is Metroll, a leading Australian manufacturer and supplier of steel building products including roofing, cladding, rainwater, structural and fencing.

Combilift's 60,000th truck makers

Metroll has branches across the country, and the new Combi-CB3000 will be a further addition to its fleet of 13 Combilifts that are operating throughout the Metroll Group, with another 10 already on order. These range from 3-tonne multidirectional units to a highly customised 10-tonne model.

Combilift number 60,000 will be working at the site in Toowoomba and has been fitted with features such as 4.9 metre triplex mast with a 3,050 mm spreader to safely and easily manage the long loads that are typically handled by Metroll.

According to Metroll operations manager Vic Josephs: "Like


The 60,000th truck on the production line

most businesses we are very busy and we're also growing at a significant rate, so space has become a premium resource. With this unit we can utilise our space more efficiently whilst at the same time operating safely. Safety is of paramount importance. This forklift allows our machinery to get into tighter spaces and for us to space our racks more closely together to maximise factory floor space."

Combilift CEO and co-founder Martin McVicar commented: "This is a great achievement for Combilift, particularly as almost every truck we manufacture is a one-off, designed for specific and individual requirements. There are very few other companies, if any, that can offer this level of customisation whilst manufacturing in such volume. The first half of this year has been by far the best in our 23-year history for the number of orders we have received - not just for Combi-CB models but across our complete product range."

Chris Littlewood, country manager of Combilift Australia said: "The Combi-CB 3t model is the most popular unit in the Australian market and accounted for 50% of the machines we sold in the year ending March 2021. So we are particularly pleased that it is one of our customers in this country that has been able to receive this landmark machine."

Following the successful collaboration with Metroll in Australia, Combilift now also supplies its trucks to the company's Californian based operations too. "We have often found that a recommendation from one country leads to sites elsewhere adopting the same material handling processes with our products," said McVicar. "So we'd like to congratulate Metroll on taking delivery of our 60,000th truck, and thank them for their continued support over the years." ■

The latest truck delivered to Metroll, Australia

The new Combi-CB3000 in operation at Metroll

Reduces net debt with proceeds of directed share issue

New appointments at Outokumpu

Outokumpu has appointed Tamara Weinert as president of Business Area Americas with immediate effect. She has been the acting president of Business Area Americas and a member of the Outokumpu Leadership Team since October 2020.
Prior to her current position, Weinert worked in multiple senior positions in finance, sales and investor relations at Outokumpu. Before joining the company, she acquired long experience in leading positions in European energy sector companies. Ms. Weinert has an MBA degree in finance and M.Sc. degree in protected landscape management.

Tamara Weinert, president, Business Area Americas

Olli-Matti Saksi, the previous president of Business Area Americas, has decided to step down from the position and will continue his career outside the company.
Heikki Malinen, president and CEO of Outokumpu said: "I'm delighted for the appointment of Tamara Weinert as I have learned to know her as a highly commercially-minded and execution-oriented professional who has been successfully implementing the turnaround of the business area. At the same time, she is an insightful and engaging leader who will systematically develop the business area to reach its full potential.
"I also want to thank Olli-Matti Saksi for developing a strong foundation for the turnaround of our Business Area Americas and wish him the best of success in the future."
Weinert said: "I'm honoured and very excited to continue the work with our committed personnel and my team in the Americas. We have a favourable market outlook, good position in a healthy market and a strategy to drive profitable growth of the business area. I look forward to the work ahead."
Outokumpu's Business Areas are Europe (62% of net sales in 2020), Americas (21%), Long products (7%), Ferrochrome (3%) and other operations (7%). Outokumpu is the number two in the American stainless steel market. The company wants to strengthen its commercial footprint in the USA and in Mexico and grow especially in automotive, appliances and pipe & tube segments.

Another recent appointment is that of Päivi Allenius as vice president - group communications as of June 7, 2021. She will report to Johann Steiner, chief human resources officer, who commented: "We are pleased to welcome Päivi Allenius to head Outokumpu's global communications and media relations. She has a vast experience in corporate, strategy and change communications with global reach. I am confident that through Päivi's experience and expertise, we can further enhance communicating the Outokumpu story and strategy to our stakeholders across the globe."
Allenius will be responsible for Outokumpu's communications globally and be based at the company headquarters in Helsinki, Finland.
Before joining Outokumpu, she headed group communications and marketing at FCG Finnish Consulting Group as well as external communications and stakeholder relations at Tieto.

Meanwhile, Outokumpu has reduced net debt with the proceeds of the directed share issue. The company has prepaid loans from financial institutions by

Euro210m with the proceeds of the directed share issue, completed on May 10, 2021. Deleveraging and strengthening the balance sheet are key targets of the company strategy launched in November 2020. On March 31, 2021, Outokumpu's annual general meeting authorised the board of directors to decide upon a directed share issue.


Päivi Allenius, vice president - group communications

CFO Pia Aaltonen-Forsell said: "We completed the directed share issue to strengthen our balance sheet and to reduce our net debt. Reducing net debt, prepaying one of the more expensive loans and strengthening our credit rating significantly decrease Outokumpu's financial costs. This benefits all our shareholders.

"Our determined work to reduce net debt strengthens our position in the financial market. It became clear immediately after the directed share issue, when the rating company Moody's decided to improve Outokumpu's ratings as well as the outlook of the ratings. With the new equity and improved credit rating, we will be able to decrease Outokumpu's interest costs on an annual run-rate by Euro18m".

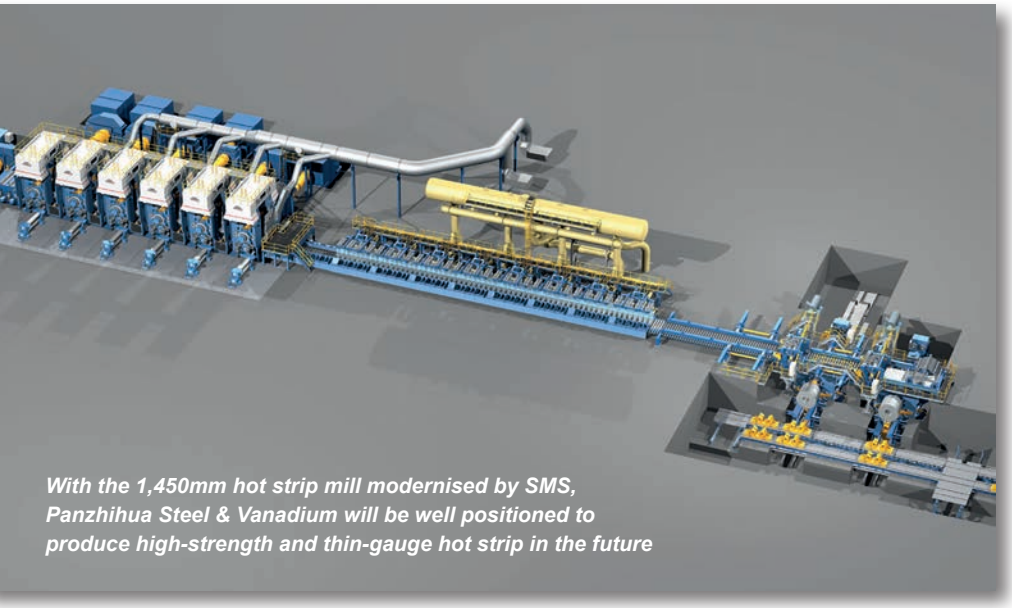
At the end of the first quarter 2021, Outokumpu's net debt was Euro1,073m and gearing 44%. The net debt to adjusted EBITDA ratio was 3.3. With the proceeds of the directed share issue, had the directed share issue been completed in the first quarter, Outokumpu's first quarter net debt would have decreased to Euro868m, gearing to 33% and the net debt to EBITDA ratio would have been 2.7.

In the first phase of its strategy during 2021-2022, Outokumpu's interim target has been to improve the net debt to EBITDA ratio to below 3.0. Going forward, Outokumpu continues to deleverage its balance sheet. ■

Positive outlook for 2021 after challenging business year

Panzhihua Steel & Vanadium uses SMS modernisation expertise

Panzhihua Steel & Vanadium Co Ltd, China, has awarded SMS group the order for an extensive modernisation of its 1,450mm hot strip mill (HSM) in Panzhihua, Sichuan Province. cludes the finishing mill, a laminar cooling system and a downcoiler group, which will all be completely renewed. SMS will supply the engineering and the main components.



With the 1,450mm hot strip mill modernised by SMS, Panzhihua Steel & Vanadium will be well positioned to produce high-strength and thin-gauge hot strip in the future

With this comprehensive revamping of the mill, in operation since 1996, Panzhihua intends to significantly improve plant availability, increase production capacity, and expand the production range to include thin-gauge strip. The annual production capacity will be raised from 2.4m tons currently to at least 3m tons. The revamping will further enhance the flexibility of the HSM with regard to the product mix, which includes carbon steels as well as silicon steels and titanium strip.

The SMS group project scope in-

A new seven-stand finishing mill will be erected behind the existing finishing mill. The new mill stands will be equipped with hydraulic screwdown systems, hydraulic loopers and CVC®plus shifting and bending systems (Continuously Variable Crown). In addition, the X-Pact® Profile, Contour and Flatness Process model (PCFC) will be installed. This will enable the customer to roll high-grade materials in compliance with the most exacting demands on the geometric strip dimensions and tolerances.

The design of the laminar cooling line will provide very high flexibility in terms of cooling rates and cooling patterns enabling Panzhihua to produce highly demanding modern steel grades and be prepared for future demands. Flow meters for process control will assure high repeatability of operation to meet the highest quality standards.

Also the coiler area consisting of two downcoilers will be completely replaced, including the related side guiding systems.

The modernisation activities for the complete mill will be carried out during only two shutdowns. Thanks to the special SMS modernisation know-how, the necessary downtimes can be significantly reduced, with major activities being carried out in parallel to the running production.

During the first shutdown, which is scheduled for September 2021, the laminar cooling line will be replaced and a roller table bridge installed behind the existing finishing mill. With this roller table bridge installed, it will be possible to perform the foundation work for the new finishing line while the plant is in operation.

During the second shutdown in July 2022, the new finishing mill will be installed directly behind the existing mill together with the new coiler area. At the same time, the existing mill will be dismantled and

the entry equipment relocated. The first hot strip is scheduled to be rolled in October 2022.

With this revamp - which entails the renewal of all quality-relevant equipment - Panzhihua Steel & Vanadium will expand its product mix to include thin-gauge and high-strength hot strip, while increasing the availability of the mill and, as a result, its production capacity.

Meanwhile, SMS group particularly felt the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in its business with new plants. In the 2020 business year, order intake fell by around 40% compared to the previous year to Euro1,885m. The service business, which is included in this figure, proved considerably more stable, decreasing by only 10% to Euro665m. Order backlog declined to Euro3,028m. This means that orders remain at a high level, though they no longer ensure full capacity utilisation in all product areas. At Euro2,745m, sales were 6.5% down on the previous year.

Even though the instrument of short-time working was used at a very early stage, the 2020 result was impacted by the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and by provisions for the restructuring measures in Germany. As a result, SMS closed the business year with a clear loss: the pre-tax result stood at Euro-165m.

Net liquidity, on the other hand, was bolstered by around 4% to Euro863m. Investments more than doubled compared to the previous year, totalling Euro83m.

Restructuring to secure competitiveness on the global market

For the coming years, SMS expects its core business of metallurgical plant construction to see stable development, though remaining short of its pre-pandemic level. To strengthen the competitiveness of the German sites and adjust the cost structure to the lower level of capacity utilisation, personnel costs will have to be cut by approximately another Euro100m. Talks with the trade union IG Metall have already commenced.

Pooling of decarbonisation competence

The global steel and non-ferrous metals industry is facing a great transformation challenge. Due to the ambitious environmental and climate targets that have been set in all key steel regions of the world, steel producers are coming under growing pressure to innovate and invest.

The complete acquisition of Paul Wurth SA by SMS in April 2021 has led to all research and development activities in metallurgy and hydrogen technology being brought together under one roof.

SMS group is now in a position to offer the entire range of technologies relevant to the decarbonisation of metallurgical processes.

SMS group CEO Burkhard Dahmen said: “With our wide range of ‘bridge’ technologies developed for the decarbonisation of the industry, we can support our customers in every phase of the transformation to climate-neutral steel production. This applies to both existing plants and the development of new ones.”

Growth in the service and Digitalization business

Besides decarbonisation, the Digitalization, Automation and Technical Service businesses remain the key drivers of new orders. There is a growing trend toward integrated service packages, for example in the form of performance-based agreements. In addition, the 2020 business year saw an expansion of the service business via strategic buyouts: the acquisition of Vetta Tecnologia SA now enables SMS to offer its customers energy management solutions for the highly complex production chains in the metals industry.

Positive outlook: turnaround in the current business year

Many customers are currently reviving projects that had been put on hold and investing in new plant technology. SMS group’s regional focus, which assures greater proximity to markets, has already been bearing fruit.

For the current business year, SMS expects order intake to rise clearly and sales to return to the level of 2019. For the next three years, SMS forecasts a significant recovery in its business, driven in particular by digitalization projects, the further expansion of the service business and the market launch of the joint ventures Primobius (battery recycling) and BOXBAY (port logistics).

Dahmen said: “We see that we have chosen the right growth strategy and that it will continue to be successful as we emerge from the pandemic. We are determined to return to our path of profitable growth in the current business year.” ■

J. Brett Harvey named Lead Independent Director

CEO Robert S. Wetherbee becomes ATI Board Chair

Allegheny Technologies Inc announced that at the conclusion of its 2021 annual meeting, Robert S. Wetherbee became Board Chair in addition to his role as CEO and president. His appointment is concurrent with the retirement of Diane C. Creel, who was ATI's Lead Independent Director from 2011-2019, when she became Board Chair. Her retirement coincides with the end of her most recent term, consistent with ATI's mandatory director retirement age policies.

J. Brett Harvey

Recognising the fundamental importance of independent Board oversight, the Board named current Board member J. Brett Harvey Lead Independent Director. In this role, he will provide oversight to ensure the continued independent and efficient operation of the Board and, as necessary, serve as a liaison between the independent members of the Board and ATI's management.

In announcing Wetherbee's new role, Creel said: "Combining the roles of CEO and Chair promotes unified leadership and direction for the company, allowing a clear, sharp focus on the efficient implementation of ATI's strategies to increase shareholder value. In the two years since Bob became CEO, he has seamlessly assumed leadership of ATI, building his leadership team, driving strong results, developing a long-term strategic vision, confronting the challenges brought on by the pandemic," said Creel. "The Board is confident in ATI's future under his leadership."

"I am both honoured and humbled by the confidence placed in me and look forward to continuing to lead ATI as we accelerate efforts to drive significant shareholder value," said Wetherbee. "I thank Diane for her outstanding leadership and service to ATI's Board over many years. With our core strengths in materials science and advanced process technologies and our relentless, innovative people, ATI is well-positioned to solve the world's challenges."

Wetherbee was appointed president and CEO of ATI on January 1, 2019. He previously served as executive vice president of ATI's Flat Rolled Products business and led the ATI Tungsten Materials business prior to its sale in 2013.

Harvey has served as a director of ATI since 2007. He previously served as chairman and CEO of CONSOL Energy Inc and chairman of CNX Gas Corporation, a subsidiary of CONSOL. ■

Robert S. Wetherbee

New entity to be called Ameriforge

Maass Global divests American flange operations to AFG Holdings

The Maass Global Group, a global leading manufacturer of specialty flanges, has divested its US, Canadian and Mexican flange related operations to AFG Holdings, Inc.

The shareholders of the Maass Global Group, Alexander and Patrick Maass, remain invested in the newly combined operations through minority interests and Alex Maass will lead the new platform and management of the combined operations as president.

The newly formed entity will be called Ameriforge LLC. Alex Maass commented: “This is a tremendous opportunity for our North American businesses to further expand as we have done with our own operations over the last 40 years in the territory. The combination of our leading position in alloy, stainless steel and high nickel alloy flanges with AFGlobal’s leading position in carbon and high yield flanges creates an unparalleled ability to provide existing and potential customers with premium flanges and complementary products over a uniquely broad spectrum of material grades and dimensions. This applies to the upstream, midstream and downstream markets”.

Patrick Maass added: “Our European business and other businesses outside North America will not be significantly impacted by this transaction. Our operations inside and outside of North America have always had a high degree of independence from each other. I am very pleased to be able to continue to lead our European and other operations outside North America, as I have in the past with great dedication. Our European, Middle East and Southeast Asian operations will also provide sales channels for the newly formed US enterprise Ameriforge LLC, enabling an enlarged product portfolio to be offered to our valued customer base, especially in the carbon steel and the high yield sectors. The European led operations have always shown a strong performance and will continue to do so in the future.”

A third-generation family company

The Maass Global Group is a third-generation family company, headquartered in Essen, Germany and Houston, Texas, focused on alloy, stainless steel and high nickel alloy flange production and complementary products. It dates back over 70 years. The Group has operations and production facilities in Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, India, Dubai, Singapore and Shanghai, in addition to those in North America. ■

Dr. David Graf appointed to lead SAO business segment

Carpenter Technology looks ahead to continuing improvement

Carpenter Technology Corp announced financial results for the fiscal third quarter ended March 31, 2021 reporting a net loss of $40.5m, or $0.84 loss per diluted share. Excluding special items, adjusted loss per diluted share was $0.54 for the quarter.

“Our third quarter results were in line with our expectations as we continue to weather near-term volume headwinds, as we had anticipated,” said Tony R. Thene, president and CEO of the company. “While current conditions remain challenging, we have recently completed multiple contract extensions in the medical, transportation, and aerospace and defence end-use markets. We remain in close engagement with our customers and during the quarter began to see initial signs of recovery in some areas of our aerospace and defence end-use market. In addition, we continued to capitalise on solid demand in the transportation end-use market and we benefited from signs of improving demand conditions in our medical end-use market. We finished the quarter in a strong financial position with total liquidity of $538.8m, including $244.2m of cash on hand.

“Looking ahead, we believe end-use market conditions will continue to improve as we move through calendar year 2021. The long-term outlook across our end-use markets remains strong and we are well positioned in each with critical material solutions to address our customers' complex needs. We have deepened our customer relationships and continue to believe we will emerge from the pandemic a stronger company. Our core business is centred on delivering mission-critical material solutions and has been for over 130 years. Our investments in additive manufacturing and electrification capabilities further strengthen our sustainable long-term growth profile.”

Net sales for the third quarter of fiscal year 2021 were $351.9m compared with $585.4m in the third quarter of fiscal year 2020, a decrease of $233.5m (negative 40%), on 39% lower volume. Net sales excluding surcharge were $298.1m, a decrease of $196.9m (negative 40%) from the same period a year ago.

Operating loss was $40.0m compared to operating income of $58.7m in the prior year period. Adjusted operating loss excluding special items was $29.7m in the recent third quarter. Special items excluded from adjusted operating loss in the current quarter include restructuring and asset impairment charges, including inventory write-downs, of $7.6m related to ongoing actions to reduce cost and narrow focus for the additive business and $2.7m of costs associated with COVID-19, principally consisting of direct incremental operating costs including outside services to execute enhanced cleaning protocols, additional personal protective equipment, isolation pay for production employees potentially exposed to COVID-19 and various operating supplies necessary to maintain the operations while keeping employees safe against possible exposure in the company’s facilities.

Other expense, net was $8.3m in the quarter, compared to $3.9m in the third quarter of fiscal year 2020. The current quarter’s results include an $8.9m non-cash settlement accounting charge associated with the company’s largest qualified pension plan.

Cash provided from operating activities in the third quarter of fiscal year 2021 was $3.8m, compared to $72.3m in the same quarter last year. Free cash flow in the quarter was negative $24.5m, compared to positive $13.0m in the same quarter last year. The decrease in operating cash flow primarily reflects the impact of lower earnings relative to the same quarter a year ago. This was partially offset by lower capital expenditures of $18.6m in the quarter compared to $49.7m in the same quarter last year.

Total liquidity, including cash and available credit facility borrowings, was $538.8m at the end of the third quarter of fiscal year 2021, consisting of $244.2m of cash and $294.6m of available borrowings under the company's recently amended and extended secured credit facility.

Meanwhile, Carpenter has announced that Dr. David Graf has been appointed to lead its Specialty Alloys Operations (SAO) business segment as vice president and group president – SAO, effective July 1, 2021.

"David's demonstrated leadership, strong business acumen and deep technical knowledge will play a pivotal role in ensuring SAO and Carpenter Technology continually deliver as the preferred solutions provider to our customers," said Thene.

Since joining Carpenter Technology in 2018 as chief technology officer (CTO), Dr. Graf has been instrumental in driving improvements in multiple disciplines. As CTO, he increased the focus of the Research & Development (R&D) organisation on strategic alignment with commercial targets, resulting in higher value, customer-driven R&D investments, as well as accelerated innovation. He also oversaw the company's intellectual property portfolio and developed and executed a strategy to increase the quality and quantity of the company's patent filings. Dr. Graf partnered with the commercial team to launch the company's electrification centre of expertise at the Reading, PA facility, hiring top talent and driving capital investments. In addition, in 2020, he assumed leadership of the Carpenter additive business where he led activities to restructure, reorganise and streamline the business activities.

Prior to joining Carpenter Technology, Dr. Graf worked for W.R. Grace for eight years, where he served as global R&D director; as well as general manager Americas and vice president of marketing for the specialty catalysts division. Prior to that, he worked for The Dow Chemical Company for 12 years in a variety of R&D leadership roles. ■

Same dates, same quality, new location

PacRim Stainless 2021: Australia's only dedicated stainless conference

PacRim Stainless 2021 was due to be held at QT Gold Coast. However, the hotel announced a refurbishment to its conference space during our event dates. As a result, ASSDA has moved its event to a new venue in Brisbane, Hotel X, on the same dates from 20-21 October 2021.

Hotel X, the organisers say, is a boutique hotel located in the heart of Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. Less than a 10-minute walk from Howard Smith Wharves, James Street and the best restaurants and bars in town, Hotel X literally marks the spot.

PacRim Stainless 2021 is the premier annual event bringing together Australia's stainless steel industry in an exclusive networking environment.

The conference provides a broad range of national and international speakers and delegates, plus a variety of social opportunities to network, share knowledge and enjoy the conference destination. This year's theme is A New Era for Australian Manufacturing, and speaker sessions will discuss:

- Strategies to build industry resilience and drive local manufacture and production
- Industry digitalisation and the future of manufacturing technology
- Seizing market opportunities to grow the use of stainless steel
- Raw materials and economic outlooks, including perspectives on global and local stainless steel market direction.

Despite the challenges the pandemic presents, ASSDA, it says, is committed to providing a forum for education, connection and discussion of the opportunities and challenges for the stainless steel industry and market growth in Australia.

The conference will be held as a hybrid event, and while delegates are welcome to join in person, a virtual experience will be offered for delegates who cannot attend due to border and travel restrictions (conference sessions only, excludes social and networking events). ■

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Optimisation of logistics process

Consultancy in risk management and commodity prices

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FACs granted by Chinese mills

New US order for Kocks

Nucor Steel Nebraska has placed an order with Friedrich Kocks GmbH & Co KG, Hilden, Germany, for the supply of a Reducing and Sizing Block (RSB®) 370++/8. Meanwhile, Jiang-su Yonggang Group Co, Ltd, Henan Jiyuan I&S, and Nanjing Iron & Steel Co Ltd have all recently granted Final Acceptance Certificates to Kocks for the mills supplied.

Nucor Steel Nebraska is a division of Nucor Steel Corp, which is the largest steel producer in the United States. The company is in Norfolk, Nebraska and has two mills at the Nebraska site. The engineered bar mill in Nebraska was built by Nucor in 1972 and was the company's second mini mill at the time. The mill will be modernized as part of this project.

The Kocks 3-roll RSB® 370++/8 will be used as an intermediate mill, providing presections for finishing rolling on the existing RSB® 370/5 operating since 2005.

The new Kocks 3-roll block will simplify operation and flexibility of the rolling mill, and increase productivity and safety.

"The upgrades we are making to our engineered bar mill in Nebraska are part of our efforts to continue to grow the number of tons we sell to the automotive market", said Leon Topalian, president & CEO of Nucor Corp. "This investment is part of our greater commercial strategy to align our product mix with current and future demand of our customers and will reinforce Nucor as a leader in engineered bar and rod". Commissioning is scheduled for fall 2022.

Kocks RSB, Yonggang, China

FACs granted

Meanwhile, Jiangsu Yonggang Group Co, Ltd has granted the Final Acceptance Certificate to Kocks for the 100th Kocks 3-roll RSB®. The Chinese company issued the FAC to Friedrich Kocks GmbH & Co KG on the successful commissioning of the 3-roll Reducing & Sizing Block (RSB®) 370++/4 in 5.0 design.

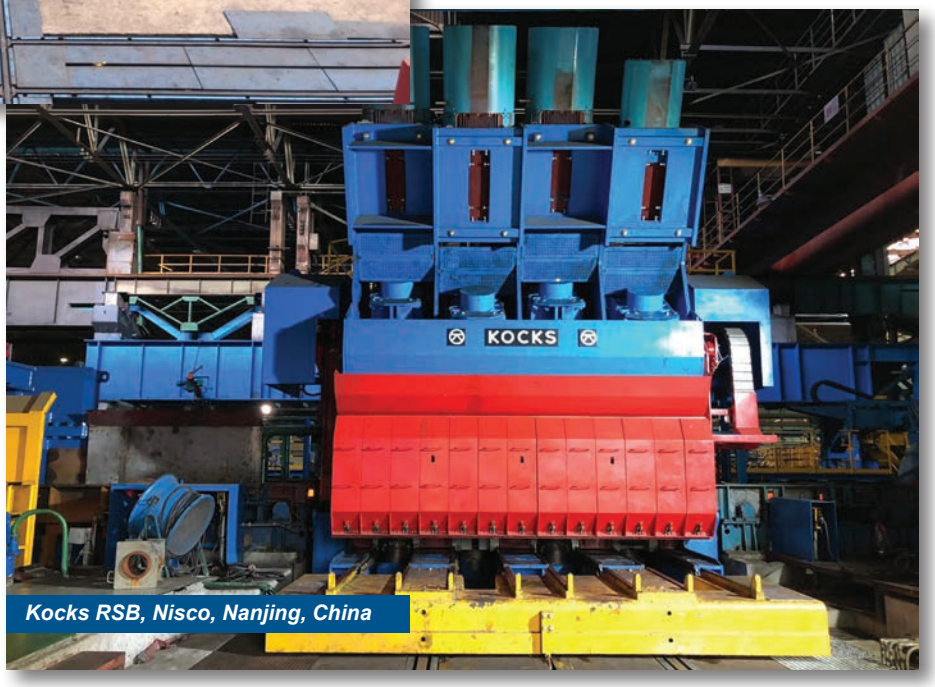
Kocks RSB, Yonggang, China

The RSB® 5.0 is the heart of the new 700,000 tpy SBQ rolling mill and enables Yonggang to produce high-quality bars within a dimen-

sional range of 16.0-100.0mm dia for customers in demanding key industries such as the machinery manufacturing, automotive, shipbuilding, and wind power industry.
"We feel much honoured to be the 100th customer of the Kocks 3-roll Reducing & Sizing Block", said Zheng Yuyang, plant director of Yonggang. "Jiangsu Yonggang Group decided to order a Kocks 3-roll RSB® because of its high reliability and comprehensive operation. Kocks is the benchmark in the market due to its excellent technical reputation."
With the investment in the Kocks 3-roll technology, Yonggang will play an outstanding role among the leading SBQ producers in tomorrow's challenging world.

Kocks RSB, Jiyuan, China

The Chinese special steel producer Henan Jiyuan Iron & Steel Co, Ltd (Henan Jiyuan) issued Friedrich Kocks GmbH & Co KG, the FAC for the successful commissioning of the 3-roll Reducing & Sizing Block (RSB®) 300++/4 in 5.0 design.
Since 2008 Henan Jiyuan has already been operating a Kocks RSB® 370++/4 in its bar mill No1.
The new RSB® 300++/4 is installed in a relocated small bar mill where the new RSB® replaces an existing 2-high sizing mill. The RSB® 5.0 is designed for thermomechanical rolling and finishes all straight bar sizes within a dimensional range from 12.0 to 42.0mm dia.
Besides the Reducing & Sizing Block (RSB®) the roll shop preparation of the 3-roll stands and 3-roller guides were part of the scope of supply.
Finally, Nanjing Iron & Steel Co Ltd has issued a Final Acceptance Certificate for the biggest Kocks RSB® 500. The FAC was awarded on the successful commissioning of the 3-roll Reducing & Sizing Block (RSB®) 500++/4 in 5.0 design.



Kocks RSB, Nisco, Nanjing, China

The Kocks 3-roll RSB® 500++ is the answer to the expanding and demanding market for medium and large size SBQ products. It operates at Nisco's 800,000 tpy medium bar mill as the finishing unit for the production of straight bars within a dimensional range from 50.0 to 160.0mm dia.
Apart from the RSB® 5.0, Kocks was responsible for the thermomechanical rolling process including five water boxes and full automation package. The low temperature rolling process is applied for sizes up to 130mm dia.
As well as the RSB® 500++/4, NISCO has also been operating an RSB® 370++/4 in the small bar mill since 2013. ■

Technological transition creates additional demand

Is there a new commodity super-cycle?

China wants to release state reserves

China not only influences commodity markets because of the enormous economic growth of the last decades and the associated demand for raw materials, but, as a heavy weight, it is also trying to pursue a raw material price policy beyond market processes. At one time, it would only take a cough from Alan Greenspan, long-time president of the US Fed, to move the US dollar rate. Today, the Chinese government wants to do the same as far as raw material prices, important for the future development of its economy, are concerned. Commodity price increases can not only cause inflation, but can also put the brakes on planned growth.

For this reason, the Chinese government had announced it would monitor the markets closely and, if necessary, regulate prices should the situation not calm down. In this connection, the Chinese National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration recently announced that it is planning to release strategic stock reserves, including copper, aluminium and zinc, in a bidding process with domestic non-ferrous producers and processors.

Already in the past, China was always opportunistic in the raw materials sector, when it was about supplying the country with raw materials. Whether through protectionism and corresponding trade restrictions in order to keep raw materials in the country, whether through global networks, investments, and dependencies which should secure important raw materials, for example in African countries, but also nickel ores and nickel pig iron in Indonesia. But who would think otherwise for a

		in US$/lb	*in US$/t*
Ni average July:		8.54	18,820
High	30.07.:	9.02	19,885
Low	01.07.:	8.20	18,078
August (3 months' nickel):			
	09.08.:	8.52	18,774
	06.08.:	8.87	19,550
	05.08.:	8.75	19,291
	04.08.:	8.83	19,456
	03.08.:	8.76	19,311
	02.08.:	8.94	19,713
	30.07.:	9.02	19,885
	29.07.:	8.96	19,764

The Commodity Review is a regular contribution by the Oryx Stainless Group. Oryx Stainless is one of the world's leading companies for trading and processing raw materials needed for the stainless steel industry. One of the company's services, for traders and processors of stainless steel alike, is to offer concepts to optimise scrap marketing, hedging of metal prices and foreign exchange risks and to provide commodity analyses.

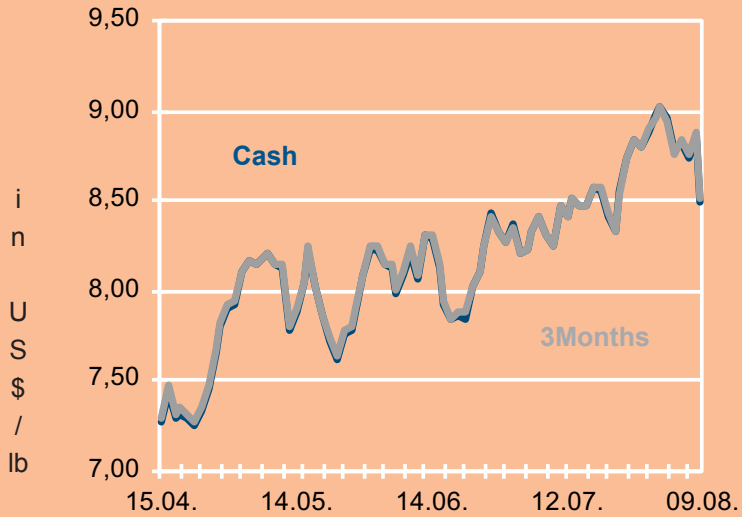
country with a population of 1.4 billion people?
And communist China has never claimed to be a democracy and liberal market economy or indeed an advocate of free trade (except where its own exports are concerned). “China First” is therefore a fact. And so, with a world market share of 50% and more in the consumption of nearly all raw materials, it is not surprising that after the announcements there was not only an end to the higher volatility, but also most of the base metals, including copper, aluminium and nickel, were a little more moderate.

Brakes put on the highs

The rise in prices was stopped for the time being, and to put it clearly, this is also healthy. Even though, it is only logical that commodity prices rose as a consequence of balancing supply and demand, following quite classical economic teaching. However, the speed and extent of the increases in some non-exchange traded commodities was more a reminder of the concerted action of Reddit traders with GameStop shares. And analogously, it should be warned that for various reasons (compensation through postponed demand, parallel recovery, logistic restrictions etc.) many commodity markets are currently in a bottleneck situation where supply is stuttering.

This does also apply to steel and stainless steel scrap, where the consistently high demand meets just an insufficient availability. Significant amounts can only be secured through high prices, which currently still lack the equivalent on the consumer side. And there can be no doubt about the actual return of the sellers’ markets, even if buyers are eager to display their doubts. Some poets would like to talk here of the father of wishful thinking. But this is certainly no reason to get carried away, for the situation, especially with the primary commodities, will normalise once again. Then someone will come along and hit the bottom of the ketchup bottle and from one

London Metal Exchange nickel price development

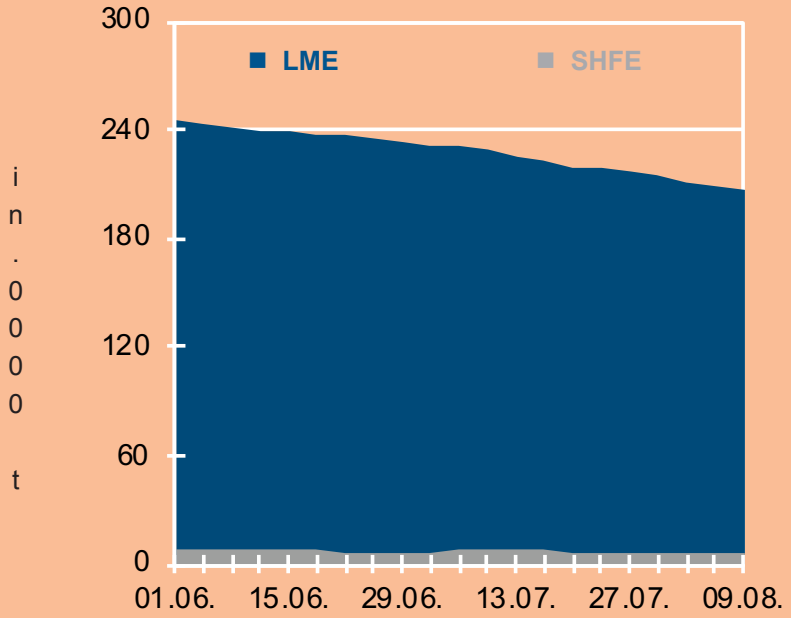


day to the next prices will plummet again. The bubble will deflate.

Demand for raw materials is subject to longer-term changes

However, this should not hide the fact that there are indeed certain signs for a longer-term commodity cycle. Some, such as Goldman Sachs, are even talking of a new super-cycle, but there is perhaps no need to go this far. The global energy transition ensures, not only against a background of climate change, a considerable additional demand for base metals and other raw materials for the technical equipment and necessary infrastructure investments. This technology leap will ensure, in the longer-term and on average, a solid support and an upwards trend in commodity prices.

Nickel inventories London Metal Exchange & Shanghai Futures Exchange



Daily price peaks are, of course, not suitable as proof, and will also in the future accompany the price development, which will also continue to include price corrections. This is because prices, especially of exchange traded commodities, are still also influenced in the shorter term by other factors, some of which are even independent of commodity markets. Nickel is currently trading on the London Metal Exchange (LME) stably on a higher level, recently however, probably in view of the Chinese announcements, a little lighter with prices around USD 17,500.00/mt, and so in line with copper which is also trading lighter, and not as obvious for aluminium.

When prices rise, Jim Rogers is not far away

With regard to a possible new super cycle, Goldman Sachs expects commodity prices to rise consistently, certainly in the short term and also over time afterwards. Such a forecast was made already at the end of April and if the development of oil and gas and also precious and industrial metal prices is looked at, this expectation does not really seem quite so unreasonable. For the alloy metal nickel, in focus here, the investment bank expects for 2021 an average price of USD 19,437.50/mt and for 2022 even a little higher still with a round figure of USD 20,000.00/mt. Prices are, therefore, well supported and heading upwards, but will not completely touch the sky.

When there is talk of a super-cycle one person cannot be missing, and that is Jim Rogers, in the meantime almost 80 years old. This augur from the last commodity boom, as well as being the ex-partner of George Soros, is back on stage and proclaims that commodities are at present the world's cheapest asset class. In so doing, he does indirectly pave the way for investors to become involved. Already in 1998, Rogers had created the Rogers International Commodity Index and established its own commodity fund which had performed very well in the 2000s.

With the 2007/2008 cooling of the boom, Jim Rogers was not heard of much anymore, but now, since there are renewed signs of a growth, he is back again. There is life in the old dog yet, and at the moment the data is proving the commodity guru right. And yet, it is basically tragic, when representatives of a certain asset class are almost inextricably linked to a certain price trend. The natural cyclical nature of markets means that these are only called on in certain "appropriate" phases, however such calls are not really heard at all times.

Similarly, this also applies to the financial mathematician Nassim Nicholas Taleb, the originator of the black swan theory. As a consequence, it was impossible for him to make any positive forecasts because the public just did not believe them anymore. He was virtually the specialist for negative developments. Then better to be Jim Rogers, whereby it should be now clear, however, that Jim Rogers is there because commodity prices are going up, and not the other way around, i.e. that commodity prices are rising because Jim Rogers is there.

LME opens its floor trading again and yet open trade is dying a slow death

At the beginning of the month, the LME announced that from the 6th September it would resume trading in the open ring. As repeatedly reported here, LME floor trading is the last of its type, where traders call out prices and quantities to one another in a ring consisting of red sofas. The reopening of the ring is indeed a concession of the LME. But then the LME CEO, Matthew Chamberlain, indicated that the LME in the medium term has to listen to what the market really wants, whereby he obviously implied, that the future belongs to electronic trading and the ring is a relic of the past.

Ever since electronic trading began on the LME in the early 2000s, the future sustainability of the ring was put in question. Since stock exchange trading on a global scale is now largely carried out electronically, the iconic trading rooms now only play a subordinate part. Exchange jargon and hand gestures are only seen today in the old films. Critics even go as far as saying that the floor of the New York Stock Exchange is now only a Hollywood film set. The actual pricing takes place in the computer centre of the NYSE in New Jersey. The New York Mercantile Exchange stopped analogue trading years ago, while the Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group recently announced that trading in person for agricultural financial products would not be resumed.

LME CEO Matthew Chamberlain replies on discussion paper about market structure

The March issue reported on a discussion paper of the LME which has been met with broad resistance in the market. Amongst other things, it was about a change to the calculation method for clearing, which would have led to the LME losing its charm for the real economy. The LME CEO asked the market for its opinion. None too few experts took the opportunity to make their views known.

A few days ago the CEO thanked all participants by email for the feedback, and made an official statement on the next course of action: The LME reverses course and will not be changing the clearing system. But the LME would still like to carry out a study on whether it would be possible to offer customers a choice between different calculation methods for clearing. As already mentioned above, ring trading is to be resumed. The CEO has, however, written that the daily closing prices will continue to be determined electronically, as it has been since the closure due to COVID-19 in March 2020. In the

times before corona the daily closing prices were determined in the ring. Just the reference price, much preferred by industry, will once again continue to be set in the ring.

Overall, it has been seen that the LME, in its push towards electronic trading and the new method of margins, is on a progressive path. However, most market participants apparently prefer a path which is not as much investor orientated. By resuming floor trading and retaining the old margin method, the LME is making concessions to the market. It does also show that in the long term the last word has not been spoken about this.

The United States would like to form strategic alliances for battery raw materials

The United States would like to team up with partners to secure the raw materials which are important for battery production for electric vehicles. In order for this strategy to be implemented, President Joe Biden's administration plans to provide funding for international projects to forge ahead in mining metal deposits. At the same time, supply of metal should be increased by recycling old batteries. In addition, a working group set up by the American government is examining whether metals used in electric vehicle batteries and other technologies of the future, can be mined and processed within the United States.

At the moment, the American government sees a dependency on China for these raw materials. The goal is not to have complete autonomy away from China, the world's largest producer of these scarce raw materials. But the American government would like to reduce its dependency on China.

This raw material strategy is also connected to the ambitious climate goals of the USA, that by 2030 most of cars produced in the USA are electric and by 2040 every car on the road is battery powered.

Study confirms important future for nickel in further development of batteries

In a study, recently published in the "Mining Review Africa", nickel is named as the main beneficiary since electric vehicles have been introduced. The study was carried out by Fitch Solutions, a unit of the well-known rating agency Fitch, and addresses the opportunities and risks for nickel in battery development, and also the role of Africa in mining for nickel in the future.

Africa still has nickel deposits which have so far remained untouched. Since nickel prices will tend to rise over the coming years due to a supply deficit, Africa could profit from this price trend. African nickel production will presumably rise in the coming years. South Africa and Tanzania will participate most in this.

Nickel, compared to other metals, stands out as it has a higher energy density, the use of which has a clear advantage in terms of the range and charging capacity of electric vehicles. The experts from Fitch Solutions, therefore, summarise that the proportion of nickel will continue to increase, whilst the amount of cobalt will correspondingly decrease.

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"Your material solution provider"

Sverdrup Steel: a specialist in Duplex grades for oil and gas, and more...

Since starting out in 1991 as a supplier to the rapidly expanding Norwegian oil and gas industry, Sverdrup Steel's role has grown significantly, and the company now also supplies many other market sectors, including pulp and paper, mining, chemical, general construction, and the marine industry.

Today, Sverdrup Steel is a leading European distributor, and provider of services, for the whole range of Duplex grades. Fast delivery and quality have become trademarks of the company. To ensure that this remains the case, the company holds more than 7,000 tonnes of material in stock to guarantee availability, and sources its supplies of material only from leading European manufacturers to ensure the best quality, thereby guaranteeing not only its own, but also its clients' reputation.

Duplex sheet, plate and coil is available ex-stock in thicknesses from 0.40mm up to 50mm, in widths 1,300mm, 1,500mm and 2,000mm. Long products are also stocked, mainly as round bars, up to 410mm diameter. Grades include 1.4162, 1.4362 (PREN min. 28), 1.4462, 1.4410 and 1.4501 (round bars only).

Sverdrup Steel also maintains a large inventory of Lean Duplex grades, including cold and hot rolled coils and plates in grades 1.4162 (LDX 2101) and 1.4362 (EDX 2304). The main inventory is held in Germany which ensures rapid deliveries to all European markets.

Coils in widths 1,500mm and 2,000mm can be cut to any desired length up to 15 metres, and combined with the existing cutting facilities, such as laser, plasma, and waterjet cutting, the service can meet most requirements. There is also the possibility to offer

press-bending profiles and guillotine shearing of plates up to lengths of 6 metres.

Superior and sought after grades

LDX 2101 is a superior grade for use in general construction and tank building where the strength of the material can be utilised. From the point of view of corrosion, it is a good choice when 304 is normally used.

EDX 2304 has also become widely popular recently, and can be used with excellent results where 316L is often normally found. With its high mechanical properties, and the fact that Sverdrup Steel has a modified version with extra corrosion resistance (PREN elevated to min. 28), this grade can now be used favourably in many demanding applications. Sverdrup Steel now sells this grade into the oil and gas sector where 316L has traditionally been used.

EDX 2304 is also kept in stock as square and rectangular tubes and hot rolled angle bars. It is manufactured according to Norsok M650 and with the relevant product data sheets for the products wanted.

Material widely available in many markets

Sverdrup Steel is widely represented in various markets. In Europe, there are local representatives in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Poland, as well as Norway of course. Outside Europe, Sverdrup Steel has its own company with a warehouse and service centre in Korea, and also sales representatives in China.

Sverdrup Steel is in the fortunate position of being able to rely fully on its own in-house metallurgists. This allows the company to serve its clients in the best possible way, not only when it comes to materials selection and claims handling, but also to examining and understanding specifications. ■

Focusing efforts on supplying decarbonisation solutions

Drop in demand impacts Tubacex Q1 results

Tubacex recently presented its results for the first quarter of 2021, which have been impacted by a drop in demand, leading to a fall in its backlog. Sales totalled Euro86.5m, down 43.7% on the same period of the previous year and EBITDA stood at Euro0.1m. The result for the first quarter is a loss of Euro16.4m.

CEO of Tubacex, Jesús Esmorís, stated that "the first months of 2021 have been a challenge for Tubacex. Efforts made in recent months in terms of cost reduction, with annual savings of more than Euro30m, and increased efficiency and diversification of products have enabled us to manage such a complicated environment".

Financial debt has increased by Euro12.3m as a result of two extraordinary events that occurred during the first quarter of 2021. On the one hand, the cash outflow related to compensation as a result of the restructuring plan that the company has been forced to implement worldwide, affecting 600 people at all of the group's plants. This restructuring was necessary in order to adapt not only to the extraordinary events of the pandemic, but also the crisis derived from the sector's structural change. The main sector at which Tubacex products are aimed, oil and gas, is immersed in a structural crisis as a result of the transition towards energy decarbonisation.

On the other hand, the final phase of the acquisition of the minority stake in Tubacex Prakash, which commenced six years ago, has been completed. Therefore, net financial debt stands at Euro310.4m at the close of the first quarter of the year, which, combined with the extremely low EBITDA due to the current circumstances has led to the debt ratio standing at 12x.

It is worth remembering the successful financial restructuring plan implemented by Tubacex in 2020, which focused on extending the debt maturity and the strong cash position. The Group maintains a cash position of Euro189.6m and liquidity in excess of Euro265m, which guarantees the soundness of the balance sheet and covers the maturity of loans until 2025.

Esmorís foresees a second quarter similar to that of the first quarter, although he considers that "our production units are gradually increasing their levels of activity and should slowly get back to normality, with the exception of the Spanish plants, which are currently on strike".

Tubacex is focusing its efforts on accompanying industries on their path towards decarbonisation. The company supplies advanced solutions that reduce by up to 40% CO_2 emissions in conventional energy sector processes. It is also targeting part of its sales at the nuclear industry, which is backed by international associations and is growing as a complementary source of electricity, along with renewable energies.

Meanwhile, the Tubacex board of directors has appointed Francisco Javier García Sanz, former global vice-president of the Volkswagen Group, as the company's new chairman. García Sanz takes over from Álvaro Videgain, who has stepped down as chairman after being associated with the company for 40 years, 22 of which as executive chairman.

García Sanz holds a degree in business administration and an honorary doctorate from the University of Stuttgart (2008). After 15 years in General Motors, he joined the procurement area at the Volkswagen Group and, subsequently and until 2018, occupied the vice-presidency, a role which he combined with the presidency of SEAT. During his career, he has sat on the boards of directors of Audi, Scania and Porsche. He also presided over the Spanish Association of Car and Lorry Manufacturers (ANFAC) from 2008 to 2012. He has been an independent director on the Tubacex board since 2019.

Videgain, graduate in law and in economics and business administration from the University of Deusto, has stepped down after being associated with the company for four decades. He initially started off in the sales department until he was appointed CEO in 1992 and executive chairman in 1993. He carried out both roles until January 2013 when Jesús Esmorís joined as CEO and Videgain continued as chairman. To date, he has also presided over the Tubacex Foundation, with which he shall continue to be associated as one of its trustees. ■

Renews metalcutting plant with an eye to lights-out machining

EV Engineering uses pandemic downturn to invest and upgrade

To upgrade its plant and instigate 24-hour production later this year, High Wycombe-based subcontract machining firm EV Engineering has bought four Japanese-built Okuma mill-turn centres from sole UK agent NCMT and a pair of machining centres from another supplier. Founded in 2001 by David White, the subcontractor specialises in producing complex prismatic components in exotic materials for the oil, gas and energy sector, which accounts for around three-quarters of the firm's turnover.

White said: "The decline in the industry during the middle of the last decade made it difficult for us to invest in new equipment sooner. However, we have used the current short-term downturn caused by the pandemic to invest and upgrade all aspects of our High Wycombe facility."

It was at the EMO 2005 machine tool exhibition in Hannover, where Okuma launched its first Multus mill-turn machining centre with a B-axis spindle, that the EV Engineering production team became interested in the Okuma range of machinery. The 5-axis Multus features advanced collision avoidance in real-time both in-cycle and in-manual mode, preventing collisions and minimising unscheduled downtime. It was the latest version of this Multus machine, with a sub-spindle and steady rest, that arrived on the shop floor in High Wycombe in 2018.

The Okuma Multus B400II-W turn-mill centre with B-axis spindle on the shop floor at EV Engineering. Some parts produced can cost well in excess of £10,000, so this machine will not be automated

White commented: "It is an extremely rigid, slant-bed lathe on which we carry out a lot of machining including deep hole drilling in titanium and Inconel. It is not feasible to leave it to produce such high-value parts unattended, so

Close-up of a 17-4 stainless steel camera component being machined in the B400II-W. White describes Okuma spindles as "phenomenal"

David White in front of the Okuma Multus U3000-2SW turn-mill centre at EV Engineering, High Wycombe. He is holding a machined titanium gyro component for an underwater ROV (remotely operated vehicle)

we do not intend to add automation on this machine.

"The same currently goes for the Okuma Genos L3000 that we bought the same year, as it is a two-axis lathe with live tooling dedicated to producing smaller parts in lower volumes.

"It is our intention, however, to retrofit a robot to the Multus U3000-2SW multitasking B-axis lathe with automatic tool changer, lower turret and sub-spindle we installed in December 2019 to give us the benefit of lights-out running."

The Okuma Space Turn LB3000-MY lathe with a live Y-axis turret, currently on order and due for delivery in May 2021, is already prepared by NCMT for automation. It will be fitted with a Belgian-manufactured RoboJob Turn-Assist, which features a flexible workpiece stacker and a 6-axis robot for loading and unloading workpieces.

Apart from high build quality and good accessibility to the working area, a key reason for EV Engineering standardising on lathes from Okuma was the availability of the optional One-Touch IGF conversational programming software in addition to the G-code interface in the manufacturer's proprietary OSP control system. In White's opinion, it is the best shop floor programming system and control on the market.

The plan is to utilise it to allow shop floor programming for fast turnaround components that do not require the use of CAD, freeing the engineering department to concentrate on producing the more complex cycles offline.

Machining for the oil and gas industry involves processing exotic materials with a high level of accuracy and repeatability. Assisting in achieving this level of precision is the thermal stability of Okuma machines, derived from the manufacturer's Thermo-Friendly Concept applied to both the machine structure and the spindle.

The two independent systems are based on feedback from temperature sensors to the control to deliver high accuracy machining in a normal shop floor environment. Tests show that thermal deviation is less than 10 microns over a 24-hour period, despite a wide variation in the ambient temperature in the workshop.

In addition to automating two of its turning machines, EV Engineering intends to install an automated pallet storage and handling system to feed two 5-axis machining centres, one of which has yet to arrive to replace a smaller 3-axis model. As with the lathes, extended periods of unattended operation will allow one operator to look after multiple machines, driving down manufacturing costs and maximising return on investment.

White concluded: "Our plan is to be the best in the business, employ the best engineers and provide the best service. That will be underpinned by using the best machines and software on the market." ■

Two views of the Okuma Genos L3000M turn-mill centre at EV Engineering

20 years of innovation, growth and continuity for renewable energies

Weltec Biopower celebrates company anniversary

Germany is the global trailblazer in the field of renewable energies and the Weltec group is one of the pioneers in this industry. Since its founding on July 1, 2001, Weltec Biopower has focused and continued to develop from an AD plant manufacturer to an all-round specialist along the entire biogas value chain.

To this day, Weltec Biopower has been in the hands of a small group of powerful shareholders and has refrained from involving investors. Not least on the basis of this stable ownership structure, the Weltec Group has become one of the world's leading providers for the construction and operation of biogas and biomethane/RNG plants. The results and projects of the last two decades around the globe speak for themselves: To date, the company, which currently employs around 120 people, has planned and installed more than 350 stainless steel energy systems on 5 continents in 25 countries. In addition, the group has invested a three-digit million Euro amount in its own plant.

Germany is the global trailblazer in the field of renewable energies and the Weltec group is one of the pioneers in this industry

Thanks to an international diversification strategy and the high product and plant quality, Weltec has also mastered challenging phases, such as the successful turnaround in the difficult years 2014 and 2015. In 2012 and 2014, the amendment of the German Renewable Energy Law (EEG) resulted in hard reductions of the feed-in tariffs, which led to a massive decline in biogas plant construction. Not all market players survived this time. But even under these tougher framework conditions, Weltec Biopower was able to maintain and even expand its market position.

Jens Albartus, managing director of Weltec Biopower since July 2006, has been in charge of the group for most of the company's 20-year history. Asked about the Weltec success story, he commented: "We have always remained faithful to our mission "organic energy worldwide" and to our corporate values over the years. In addition, we offer technologies of very high quality from a single source. Another important success factor is that we design the main components of our plants ourselves and have them manufactured in our region. With this we can guarantee a very high quality. We take the needs and framework conditions of our customers very seriously. Each plant is consistently designed for the requirements of our customers. Furthermore, our low staff turnover should also be mentioned. Many colleagues have been employed at Weltec for over ten years. We stand out in the industry for twenty

years due to the sum of this mixture of expertise, individuality, quality, resources and strategy."
Asked to what extent the company had had to adapt or change in order to remain successful, Albartus said: "We developed our products with a high quality right from the start. But we have steadily expanded our portfolio over time and adapted it to the market. Therefore we have been able to develop extremely successfully over the past twenty years - from a pure plant planner and builder to a biogas specialist along the entire value chain. Due to the expansion of our range of services with maintenance, permanent or interim plant operation, heat contracting and the production of biomethane as a fuel, our customer structure has also changed significantly.
"As a plant manufacturer and service provider, we work for companies in the food, waste, sewage and agricultural sectors. But we also supply horticultural companies and the real estate sector with sustainable heat. Recently added customers and partners are from the fuel industry. Heavy-duty vehicles and trucks are already being driven with our biomethane as fuel."

Managing director Jens Albartus: "We have developed our products with a high quality right from the start. But we have steadily expanded our portfolio and adapted it to the market. Therefore we have been able to develop extremely successfully over the past twenty years."

There are a number of particularly notable projects the company has been involved with Albartus continues: "In 2008 we built in Könnern, Saxony-Anhalt, what was then the world's largest biomethane plant and have been operating it ever since. The project was and is an important milestone for our company group. We are all very satisfied with the successful construction and operation of this AD plant. But international pioneering projects such as the waste-to-energy plant for a large Australian water supplier near Melbourne and the biogas plant for the milk powder producer EDL in Uruguay are projects that I remember fondly. This plant has been providing a thermal output of six megawatts since 2018. The South Americans only use residual materials such as cattle manure and feed leftovers from 14,000 dairy cows and generate 30,000 standard cubic metres of biogas every day. This covers a third of the high heat demand of their own dairy. Just like the plant in Könnern, we have a high industrial scale there. This standard was also the reason for EDL to choose Weltec. We built the plant in Uruguay as a turnkey contractor, including all auxiliary works. After one year of construction, we could hand over the EPC project to the customer.

"More than 350 Weltec plants, around 70% of which are running successfully abroad, now testify to our remarkable story. In many countries we had the opportunity to do pioneering work in the field of biogas. For the future it is important to remain true to our mission and to continue the success story with our strengths - as is currently happening. There is a huge potential of organic residues everywhere that can be converted efficiently and decentrally into green energy with the help of our process technology. So right now we have construction sites in Japan, Northern Ireland and Spain. And the saving of carbon emissions is an important topic worldwide.
"This also includes the use of biogas in the mobility sector. Therefore I am looking forward to the next 20 years very optimistically and with great anticipation. Now things really get going!" ■

First export order for Europe for Linde Severstal

Severstal to cooperate on hydrogen and decarbonisation

Severstal and Gazprom Neft have joined forces on decarbonisation, and Severstal will also partner with Novatek on hydrogen and alternative energy. Meanwhile, Linde Severstal has completed the shipment of heat exchangers to Spain in the first export of this type of equipment from Russia.

PAO Severstal, one of the world's leading vertically integrated steel and mining companies, and PJSC Gazprom Neft, one of Russia's leading oil producers, have signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation agreement to collaborate on the development of technologies and materials for the production, transportation, storage and use of hydrogen in reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

The agreement was signed by Alexander Shevelev, CEO of Severstal, and Vadim Yakovlev, first deputy CEO of Gazprom Neft, and was announced during a panel session at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum (SPIEF) 2021, titled: "Low-Carbon Development and Climate Policy: Opportunities for Russian Businesses on the Global Decarbonization Agenda".

As part of the agreement, Severstal and Gazprom Neft intend to jointly pursue and develop opportunities and technologies for capturing and utilizing carbon dioxide, as well as using hydrogen in metallurgical production and developing materials for its transportation and storage. Provided both parties are interested, the companies may also jointly implement technological decarbonisation projects. This could include altering production processes using hydrocarbon fuel to use methane-hydrogen mixtures instead.

Today, Severstal ranks 11th among global steel companies in terms of greenhouse gas emissions (in the top 25%), according to the World Steel Association. The company has set itself a target to reduce its emissions by 3% by 2023 (from 2020 levels). In 2021, Severstal established a corporate division focused on the use of hydrogen and developing innovative decarbonisation projects (for example, carbon capture and disposal, and CO_2 offsetting).

Shevelev commented: "Reducing our carbon footprint and combating climate change will be a significant theme in the coming decades and is one of the long-term priorities of Severstal's sustainable development program. It should be noted that we see not just challenges and risks, but also huge opportunities in this field. Technologies and projects for the capture and disposal of CO_2 and the production of hydrogen will continue to grow rapidly in the Russian Federation and globally over the next decade, and this will open up a great opportunity for us to capitalize on, and could even provide additional income for our business.

"We are delighted that our long-standing strategic partner Gazprom Neft shares our focus on hydrogen, and has agreed to partner with us on this critical decarbonisation drive. I am confident that together we can make a significant contribution towards achieving our strategic goals of reducing CO_2 emissions and, at the same time, realize the potential of hydrogen for its use in the raw materials market of the future."

Severstal to partner with a leading Russian natural gas producer

Severstal and Novatek, one of Russia's leading natural gas producers, also signed a memorandum of cooperation at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, which will look to develop hydrogen, alternative energy, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction technologies.

Under the agreement, signed by Alexey Mordashov, chairman of the board of directors of PAO Severstal, and Leonid Mikhelson, chairman of the management board of Novatek, the parties will consider launching a joint pilot project for the production of "blue" hydrogen from natural gas using carbon capture and storage technology. The parties intend to jointly develop the capabilities, necessary standards and engineering solutions for the production and supply of hydrogen transportation pipelines, turbines, and hydrogen storage systems and transport tanks.

Both companies also agreed to partner on the production and supply of hydrogen and the development of technological solutions for the use of fuels based on hydrogen and its carriers, including ammonia.
Mordashov commented: "In working towards the global goal of achieving a low carbon economy, Severstal is developing a number of solutions to reduce the carbon footprint of its activities and expand its range of products produced using carbon-free fuels. An example of this is our collaboration with our strategic partner Novatek. We expect to see rapid growth in technologies and projects for the capture and storage of CO_2 as well as for the production of hydrogen, both in Russia and globally, which will open up a host of development opportunities for our companies."

Coil-wound heat exchangers (CWHE) for Spain

Meanwhile, Linde Severstal, the joint venture between Severstal and Germany's Linde GmbH, has completed the shipment of five coil-wound heat exchangers to Spain, in the first export of this type of equipment from Russia. Linde Severstal performed the full production cycle at its workshop in St. Petersburg, including tube winding, assembly and testing of the finished products.
Currently the weight of each CWHE ranges from 14 to 110 tonnes. In the future, the joint venture plans to produce large-volume coil-wound heat exchangers weighing up to 1,000 tonnes for liquefied natural gas plants.

In the summer of 2019, Linde Severstal moved to a new production site in St. Petersburg, close to a water body, in order to improve the logistics for the delivery of heat exchanger equipment to customers whose enterprises are often located in the Northwest region of Russia or in the Arctic circle. This location is also convenient for the export of heat exchanger equipment to other destinations.

Linde Severstal is currently manufacturing a 300-tonne tube bundle of a coil-wound heat exchanger, which will be used for the liquefied natural gas plant in the Novatek project "Arctic LNG 2".

Dmitry Goroshkov, director for sales and business development in the energy sector, commented: "Our plan is for the majority of the joint venture's sales to meet demand from large Russian projects. However, we are also very interested in export orders. Linde Severstal's heat exchanger equipment is the basis for Severstal's unique trade offer for the construction of LNG plants, which includes the supply of a wide range of products produced by the company's assets."

The Linde Severstal JV was established in June 2017, and in summer 2019, Severstal purchased a 26% stake in the joint venture with Linde, which was subsequently increased to 50% in the summer 2020. Linde Severstal manufactures coil-wound heat exchangers, which are fundamental components for natural gas liquefaction and processing plants. Today, Linde Severstal is the first and the only enterprise in Russia producing this form of heat-exchange equipment.

Linde GmbH, the company says, is the world's leading company in the industrial gas and engineering field. Linde's main purpose is to make the world more productive, and every day Linde works to provide high quality solutions, technologies and services that make the company's customers more successful, while also helping companies to operate sustainably and protect the earth. ■

Oil and gas industry met at biggest industry exhibition in Russia

Important impulse for the restart of Moscow's Neftegaz

Neftegaz, the biggest exhibition for the Russian oil and gas industry, opened its doors in Moscow from April 26-29 thereby sending out an important message to the international exhibition industry as a whole. Despite the global impact of the COVID crisis 449 exhibitors from 23 countries once again made the exhibition the key live platform for all top-notch decision makers in the Russian oil and gas industries. This was enabled by an already proven, successful hygiene concept that focused on the safety of all participants.

Around 21,250 trade visitors used the event to personally exchange ideas with their business partners and learn about exhibitors' forward-looking technologies. Summing up results,

Erhard Wienkamp, managing director of operative business at Messe Düsseldorf, said: "The joy of meeting in person again at Neftegaz and physical encounters between people could be sensed on all days of the exhibition. Our exhibitors voiced their satisfaction with visitor turnout and even succeeded in closing a great number of business deals. Compared to the last event before COVID, Neftegaz 2021 managed to follow on from previous years' successes with almost 93% trade visitors. This is a result to be proud of under the condition of the ongoing pandemic, and it underscores the outstanding relevance of this event for the sectors."

The 20th edition of Neftegaz offered the complete product portfolio in terms of equipment and machinery for the oil and gas industry on 42,000 sq metres of exhibition space: ranging from machinery and equipment for extracting and processing oil and gas deposits via offshore technology, oil and gas transport and storage to measuring technology, safety systems as well as control processes for environmental monitoring and occupational safety. Exhibitors included not only small and medium-sized innovative firms but also international industry giants like Burintech, CPT-DC, Gazprom, Himprom, Kanex-Krohne Anlagen Export, Samson Controls, Transneft, TMK and Urals Pipe Works.

In addition to an international participation for Neftegaz Messe Düsseldorf also organised an official German joint stand supported by VDMA, the German Engineering Federation. On 390 sq metres of exhibition space 12 companies - including first-time exhibitors - showcased their innovations at attractive special terms. Thanks to this support the "Made-in-Germany" brands were enabled to position themselves - under one roof - on the growth market that is Russia and to develop their international networks further.

This leading trade exhibition was organised by Messe Düsseldorf in cooperation with its subsidiary Messe Düsseldorf Moscow and the leading Russian trade fair company Expocentre.

Held in parallel with Neftegaz, the National Oil and Gas Forum addressing a series of top issues were a focus for the experts. Discussions revolved around the development of promising technologies for pro-

ducing hydrogen and the corresponding hydrogen strategy within the context of economic growth and international cooperation. Likewise, new technologies for the production and maintenance of fittings for the oil and gas industry as well as current Russian LNG projects plus questions related to the resource base and its financing featured as highlights on the agenda.

The organiser and at the same time patron of the exhibition was the Russian Ministry of Energy. The trade visitors who predominantly hailed from Russia and the neighbouring CIS nations therefore enjoyed the added benefit of a comprehensive conference agenda on current industry trends.

The following companies offered their views of the exhibition

Rene Treto Gonzalez,
project manager, Russia and CIS of Arflu SA
We have not participated in exhibitions in Russia for a long time, for about five years, and decided to take part this year. Due to the pandemic, few foreign companies were represented this time, which attracted the attention of customers to our company. The first two days were very busy. We were approached by both our traditional customers and partners and new ones. Everyone is very interested, we have the most positive impressions. Based on the results of the first two days, we can already say that results have already met our expectations. We definitely want to take part in the next Neftegaz exhibition, because we participate in exhibitions in different cities of Russia: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Ufa. We believe the Russian market is important.

Christian Schenk,
head of project sales at H. Butting GmbH
We are participating in many exhibitions in Brazil, in Norway, in China and all over the world. Where we exhibit depends on application of the material. We are a pipe manufacturer and we have to be present all over the world. And this is what we did in past. Two years ago, we decided that we want to have a presence in Russia and we found a partner with whom we were looking for possibilities for new business. We also decided, after having a partner, to participate in

another exhibition but that was not very exciting so we decided to participate in the Neftegaz exhibition. And what I can see here are companies from the oil, gas and chemical industry. I see the quality of the visitors. People are interested. People are coming. For me this is the success of the exhibition.

Ekaterina Kurbanova,
head of marketing department
at KANEX Krohne Anlagen Export GmbH
To be honest, we weren't hoping for such a large number of visitors and, yes, the results met our expectations. It was the target customers who came to us. Due to the pandemic there is a lack of information and people are eager for this information. There are requests for information specifically about the equipment that we exhibit here but visitors are not just interested in what we have here. We are planning to take part in the next Neftegaz exhibitions. For us Neftegaz is the central event of every year and we cannot miss it.

Dmitry Astashin,
general director of Pietro Fiorentini SpA
It's great that this is an offline event, after a series of online exhibitions and conferences. It's great to see people and colleagues live. It's great to see customers with your own eyes, and not by video conference. From this point of view, expectations were met. Obviously, our Italian colleagues were unable to come because of the pandemic and we hope that all this will end soon and the next exhibition will be held in a normal full-fledged format. We plan to participate again, because in previous years we have not missed a single event of this kind.

Alexey Loginov,
deputy general director of Samson Controls OOO
This is the first exhibition in two years, after a difficult year due to the pandemic. Of course, we did not expect any influx of new customers signing new contracts. In principle, the first two days were busy, all our existing customers were here, they were glad to see us, we were also glad to see them. Everyone missed face-to-face personal communication and it worked within the framework of this exhibition. We were also waiting for this exhibition in order to focus once again the attention of our customers and partners to the fact that we are now a Russian local manufacturer - and we succeeded. From this point of view, we are satisfied. Of course, I would like more new people, faces, questions, tasks, and so on. But I think that with time it will all come, everything will work out. In terms of organisation, everything went well. For us Neftegaz is the main trade fair, we do not participate in another event but will be back for Neftegaz.

Sven Flasshoff,
general director of VDMA eV
I consider it a great success that the exhibition took place. Russia and China are the only countries currently hosting industrial exhibitions. The Germans are very happy that Russia has opened the border. Our German colleagues had the opportunity to attend this exhibition, to confirm that the exhibitions are live here. I like that today is the third day and there are a lot of visitors at the show. Last year I attended various exhibitions in Moscow, but they had a little less visitors, a little less participants. Now everyone has become a little more active attending exhibitions, people want to communicate in person, everyone is tired of online events. The German Ministry of Economy supports this trend and constantly allocates money for German pavilions all over the world, including Russia - this is also very good. My impression is that the people who participate here in the German Pavilion are very pleased.

Alexander Trofimychev,
development director at VEGA Grieshaber KG
We are very pleased with our participation in Neftegaz. The result from the exhibition exceeded all our expectations. I liked the organisation of the exhibition. We plan to take part in the next staging of the exhibition.

The next Neftegaz will be held from April 18 to 21, 2022. ■

Opening doors in oil and gas, and other sectors

Ehrco invests in stainless fittings stock

Critical industrial parts supplier Ehrco has made a significant investment in stocks of stainless steel fittings, to further strengthen its £1 million range offering.

The addition of stainless steel fittings will give Ehrco's clients, particularly those operating in challenging environments such as agriculture and oil and gas, more resilient alternatives to carbon fittings.

Bryan Leavesley, operations director, Ehrco

The applications, which are now available, are also aimed at chemical processing and manufacturing firms.

Dudley-based Ehrco is the UK's largest independent supplier of hydraulic and mobile hose products. It operates a 20,000 sq ft storage facility holding two million pound's worth of stock.

Bryan Leavesley, Ehrco's operations director, says: "This investment in expanding our range will help open doors for us in the food processing, agricultural and oil and gas industries.

"This new development in our range also shows our continuing commitment to seeking out leading manufacturers which meet the challenging needs of heavy industries. Combined with our unrivalled service and technical support, it's enabled us to reinvest heavily in infrastructure and further drive down delivery times."

Ehrco was formed in 1992 and moved to its current site in Peartree Business Park, Dudley, West Midlands in 1997. It employs over 20 members of staff, many with more than 10 years' service with the business. The company sources and supplies high quality fluid power products that complement its hose and fittings range. This includes exclusive UK distributorships for Oleo Tecnica flanges and pi.effe.ci pipe clamps. ■

Virtual conference to go ahead September 7-10, 2021

SPE Offshore Europe live event postponed to 2022

The organisers of SPE Offshore Europe 2021 have announced that the show's face-to-face event is moving to February 1-4, 2022 at P&J Live, Aberdeen and the conference will run virtually from September 7-10, 2021.

Jonathan Heastie, portfolio director - energy & marine at RX (Reed Exhibitions), co-organiser with the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) said: "With September rapidly approaching, many health and safety uncertainties still exist around holding major indoor events of the scale of SPE Offshore Europe. The Offshore Europe (OE) Partnership has consulted widely across the industry including operating and service companies, SMEs and industry organisations on options for the 2021 event. The overwhelming support is to proceed with the conference programme in a virtual format in September 2021, which will facilitate timely discussion pre-COP26, and to hold the face-to-face event in February 2022."

Phil Chandler, director, Europe & Caspian Events at SPE said: "The September conference will be strongly focused on the energy transition and supporting the industry's role in delivering net zero. With further high-level energy transition content at the face-to-face event in February 2022, SPE Offshore Europe will straddle COP26, providing a unique learning opportunity as strategies, experiences and technologies are shared."

The virtual conference in September will include opening ceremony, plenary panel, and keynote and technical sessions. Full programme details will be announced in the next few weeks.

The live event will include an in-person socially distanced exhibition, new energy transition keynote conference content, show floor features including Energy Transition Zone and Theatre, Decommissioning Theatre, a TIDE (talent investment & diversity) programme and networking events.

Heastie added: "We are excited to look forward to a live event in February 2022 which will offer greater potential for visitor attendance, networking and international participation. We conducted a survey of previous visitors and the results were decisive; by holding the event in Q1 2022, both domestic and international visitor levels would be significantly higher and sufficient to merit holding the face-to-face event next year. Furthermore, all the international pavilions expect to attend in February 2022.

"We thank all the stakeholders in SPE Offshore Europe for their continuing support to delivering an event that provides maximum value for the industry in these COVID-impacted times."

Leader of Aberdeen City Council, Cllr Jenny Laing, said: "For almost 50 years Aberdeen has proudly hosted Offshore Europe, a fitting home for one of the energy sector's flagship events as a European energy capital. The event provides us with a platform to not only showcase our world-leading industry capabilities and projects, but places our city and wider region on the global stage.

"Whilst it is disappointing that the face-to-face element of Offshore Europe 2021 has to be postponed as a result of COVID-19, we support the decision made by the organisers. We will work to make the virtual event a success whilst turning our focus to delivering an exceptional and safe event in February 2022 when Aberdeen will once again be proud to bring the delegates together."

Chris Walker, head of communications and external affairs, Oil and Gas Authority said: "Offshore Europe was always going to be different this year and the decision to split the event in two was made with safety and public health considerations at heart. With a firm focus on energy transition and in-

dustry's role in supporting net zero, the virtual event in September promises to bring together a stellar line-up of leading industry speakers and a world-class technical programme. While nothing in life is guaranteed, the prospect of a safe, well-managed 'physical' exhibition next year is something very exciting to look forward to."

Existing exhibition space bookings for the September 2021 event will roll over to February 2022.

Energy transition to take centre stage at SPE Offshore Europe virtual conference

SPE Offshore Europe 2021 conference chair and executive vice president oilfield equipment at Baker Hughes, Neil Saunders and SPE President 2022 Kamel Ben-Naceur will welcome delegates to the four-day, SPE-curated programme comprising of an opening plenary, 10 keynote, and 14 technical sessions incorporating more than 50 technical papers. Seven of the 10 keynote sessions and 50% of the technical programme will be related to energy transition subjects.

Keynote sessions with a net zero focus include: Delivering carbon capture, utilisation and storage; CCUS and hydrogen at scale; energy islands; roadmaps to net zero; scaling up digital to enable a low-carbon industry; facilities of the future and breaking the silo paralysis.

During the opening plenary, Chris Stark, CEO of the Committee on Climate Change will join Gordon Birrell, executive vice president, production & operations at BP; Al Cook, executive vice president, development & production international at Equinor and Phil Kirk, CEO of Harbour Energy for a panel session on the event theme 'Oil & Gas: Working Together for a Net Zero Future'.

For the first time in the history of the biennial event, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the conference and exhibition have been split. The virtual conference will be followed by the in-person exhibition across February 1-4, 2022, which will include new keynote conference content that will be developed after the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) taking place in Glasgow November 1-12, 2021. With the two SPE Offshore Europe events 'bookending' COP26, oil and gas industry leaders, innovators and decision-makers will reconvene in person at the P&J Live in Aberdeen to advance the energy transition outcomes and realign strategies.

Saunders said: "The conference programme at SPE Offshore Europe has always been a 'must-attend' event for those wanting to keep in touch with industry-leading thinking strategically and at a technical level. The industry's path to decarbonisation and role in supporting net zero is top of the agenda this year, and with COP26 just seven weeks later, the programme promises to be a real curtain-opener.

"The future of oil and gas in the energy mix is in our hands and SPE Offshore Europe gives us the chance to work together, before and after COP26, to secure our place in a net zero future."

Kevin Gallagher, SPE Offshore Europe 2021 technical committee chair and digital transformation lead, CNOOC International commented: "The offshore industry has an important role to play in the transition to the low carbon economy. The timing of the conference, prior to COP26, and content of the technical programme are both opportune and highly relevant as we experience an acceleration of the energy transition and the industry response. Audience members will have the opportunity to join high quality sessions ranging from decarbonisation, floating wind and hydrogen to drilling and decommissioning. We look forward to informative and inspiring technical sessions which prompt numerous important discussions at this pivotal time for our industry."

The virtual conference programme will begin each day at 12 noon (BST)/7.00am (EDT) to accommodate international participants. ■

Portfolio expansion: high level of productivity thanks to WAAM technology

Ugitech goes on the additive offensive with UGIWAM®

Additive manufacturing is experiencing a significant upswing in the steel industry. Ugitech, a Swiss Steel Group company, has dedicated itself to this trendy topic and, with UGIWAM®, offers special steel of different compositions for the wire-based additive manufacturing process. Whether austenitic, martensitic or ferritic, duplex wire or nickel-based wire, Ugitech enables perfect adaptation to different requirements and applications.

As a leading supplier of stainless steels and alloys for welding applications, Ugitech provides a wide range of stainless steel and nickel-based wires. The Swiss Steel Group company utilises its many years of experience in steel production to offer material of the highest quality for use in additive manufacturing processes. Findings from the company's own research and development centre flow into the production of the wires, which were developed primarily for Wire Arc Additive Manufacturing (WAAM).

WAAM - special manufacturing technology for 3D components

The wire-based additive manufacturing process is becoming increasingly important in the steel industry (in addition to the powder bed system and powder feed system). In wire arc additive manufacturing, the externally supplied welding wire is melted by an electric arc. The desired 3D components are created layer by layer. The advantages of this manufacturing process are plain to see. Large components with length in metres can be produced in a cost-effective manner in a short period of time.

Ugitech uses its long experience in steel manufacturing to offer the highest quality material for use in additive manufacturing processes (Source: Ugitech)

At up to 5 kg/hour, WAAM technology achieves higher productivity than selective laser melting or electron beam melting. Individual component geome-

tries are created that can only be produced with great effort and increased costs using conventional processes. The near net shape production enables the geometry to be quickly established with low material consumption and waste. As the procedure does not involve the use of lasers and powders, less safety precautions are necessary. Overall, WAAM is particularly suitable for the production of large components in the aerospace, construction and shipbuilding industries as well as in the oil and gas industry.

Thanks to WAAM technology, the desired 3D components are created layer by layer (Source: Ugitech)

Full service for the highest demands

Ugitech offers its customers comprehensive technical support. Experts worldwide assist in the selection of corrosion-resistant, high-performance stainless steels with the desired mechanical and structural properties. The special steel manufacturer uses the latest control and testing technologies. The raw material for the UGIWAM® wires is produced in Ugine (France) which laboratory is ISO 17025 accredited. Customers therefore benefit from extensive process control and receive products of the highest quality - which are also precisely tailored to their needs.

Ugitech will showcase its latest additive manufacturing products at the 3D Print Congress & Exhibition (7th edition), which has been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic and is now scheduled to take place in Lyon from April 5-7, 2022. ■

Key step in strategy to become a close regional partner to suppliers

Oryx Stainless Group opens new yard in Spain

Oryx Stainless España SL has announced the opening of its new yard in Vilanova i la Geltrú, 40 km south of Barcelona. The company, established in 2020, is a 100% affiliate of the Oryx Stainless Group, one of the leading international processors of stainless steel scrap.

The start of the Spanish operation is the next key step in implementing the Oryx Stainless Group's strategy of becoming a close regional partner of existing and new suppliers in selected markets and continuing its services as a reliable provider of raw materials to international stainless steel producers.

The new operation is in an attractive location with direct access to key customers, and high scrap availability due to significant manufacturing hubs in the region.

Oryx Stainless España's management consists of experienced employees of the Oryx Stainless Group, who will focus on providing outstanding professional services to their partners in Southern Europe.

Jorge Rodriguez Cameselle, managing director of Oryx Stainless España said: "Oryx Stainless has been active in the Iberian stainless steel scrap market for some years already. Our team is very much looking forward to deepen the relationship with our suppliers and offer a new alternative to the existing buyers in the Spanish market."

Tobias Kämmer, CEO of the Oryx Stainless Group commented: "We are happy to further intensify our relationship with our business partners in Southern Europe. Oryx Stainless España is committed to the Group's ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) policy and will contribute to the supply of first class secondary raw materials to secure a green and clean production of stainless steel by reducing significantly its CO_2 footprint."

The Oryx Stainless Group, founded in 1990, is one of the world's leading organisations for raw materials used in the production of high-quality stainless steels. The Group focuses its business activities on the handling and processing of stainless steel scrap into Oryx Stainless Blends. These secondary raw material blends - individually adapted for the respective stainless steel producers - replace above all primary raw materials such as ferronickel, ferrochromium and ferromolybdenum. ■

China is the largest producer and user

Global molybdenum production and use rises year on year in Q1 2021

Figures released by the International Molybdenum Association (IMOA) show that the global production of molybdenum rose by 2% to 146m lbs compared to the same quarter of 2020, although this represented a 10% fall when compared to the previous quarter.

Global use of molybdenum rose 24% to 153m lbs compared to the same quarter of the previous year, but fell 1% when compared to the previous quarter.

China became the largest producer of molybdenum at 51.2m lbs. Production there rose 10% compared to same quarter, Q1, of the previous year, although this represented a 9% fall when compared to the previous quarter of 2020. South America, the second largest producer, saw a 3% rise to 45.9m lbs compared to the same quarter of the previous year, although this represented an 11% fall compared to the previous quarter.

North American production fell 4% to 37.7m lbs compared to the same quarter of the previous year, which represented a 5% fall compared to the previous quarter. Production in other regions fell 8% to 11.2m lbs in comparison to the same quarter of the previous year, a 19% fall compared to the previous quarter.

Molybdenum usage increased in all regions, with the exception of Japan, compared to the same quarter of the previous year. Usage increased in all regions, with the exception of China, compared to the previous quarter. China remained the largest user of molybdenum at 61.7m lbs, a significant 53% rise compared to the same quarter of the previous year, although this represented a 10% fall compared to the previous quarter.

Europe remained the second largest user of molybdenum at 34.8m lbs, a 12% increase compared to the same quarter of the previous year and a 10% rise compared to the previous quarter. Usage in other regions increased by 9% to 24.2m lbs compared to the same quarter of the previous year, a 1% rise compared to the previous quarter. The USA saw an 11% rise in use to 14m lbs, a 10% rise compared to the previous quarter.

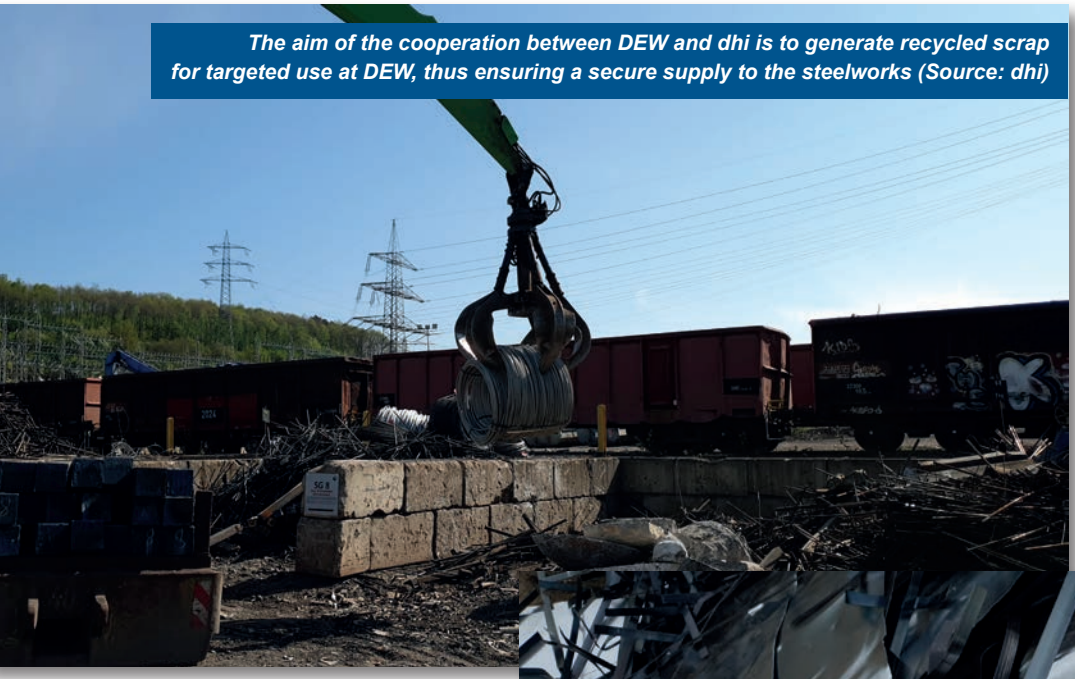
Japan saw the only fall in usage, 1%, to 12.6m lbs compared to the same quarter of the previous year, but this represented an 8% increase compared to the previous quarter. Usage in the CIS increased 23% to 5.6m lbs compared to the same quarter of the previous year, a 5% rise compared to the previous quarter. ■

DEW secures steel supply

Steel scrap: dhi processes valuable resource

While demand for steel is rising worldwide, the battle for scrap as a raw material is coming to a head. Deutsche Edelstahlwerke (DEW), a Swiss Steel Group company, has been supplying its customers reliably for many years. To ensure that this can continue, DEW has been working closely with its subsidiary - dhi Rohstoffmanagement GmbH - since 2012. The aim of the cooperation is to generate recycled scrap for targeted use at DEW, thus ensuring a secure supply to the steelworks.

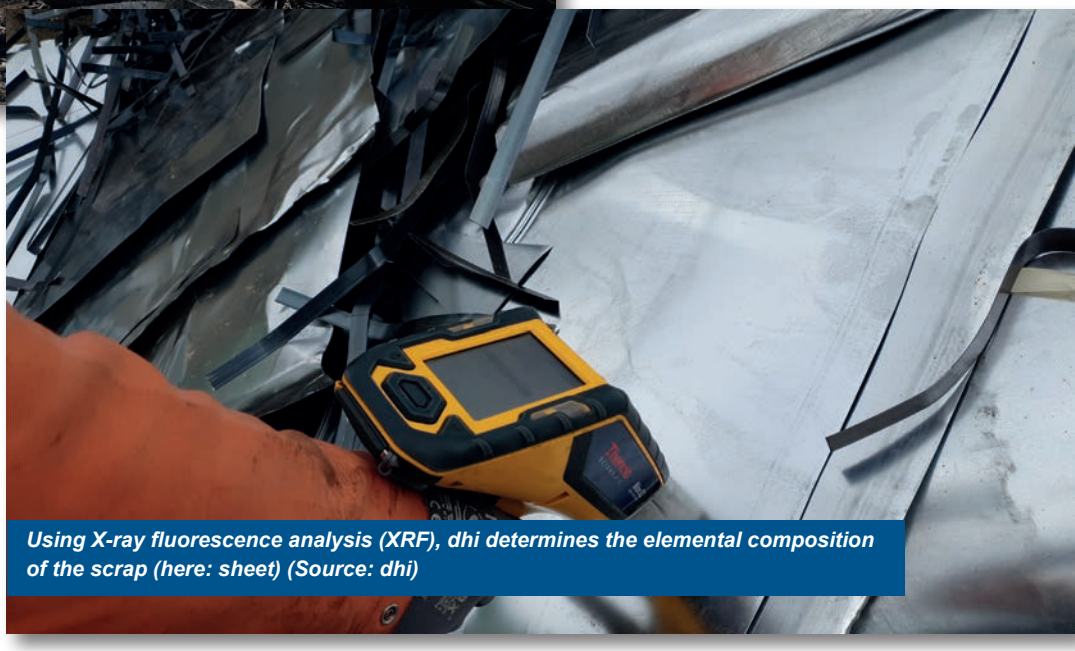
In Europe, steel is in short supply as many companies are restocking and ramping up production following the coronavirus crisis. It is therefore all the more important that customers can rely on a reliable supply of steel products from DEW. "To ensure a sustainable supply of scrap for DEW, dhi works with regional suppliers and thus acts in a way that conserves resources more than purchases from abroad," said Boris Weiffen, head of trading at dhi Rohstoffmanagement GmbH. DEW relies on dhi for the procurement, processing and logistics of steel scrap - and has positioned itself for the future at an early stage with regard to this sought-after resource.



The aim of the cooperation between DEW and dhi is to generate recycled scrap for targeted use at DEW, thus ensuring a secure supply to the steelworks (Source: dhi)

Global challenges, regional solutions

dhi Rohstoffmanagement GmbH is a joint venture of Deutsche Edelstahlwerke Services GmbH (51%) and Horn Industrial Services GmbH (49%). The company's mission is to procure unalloyed and alloyed scrap and then process it for use in DEW's own steelworks. In this way, dhi supports the ef-



Using X-ray fluorescence analysis (XRF), dhi determines the elemental composition of the scrap (here: sheet) (Source: dhi)

forts of all companies in the value chain to further reduce CO_2 emissions. By building up regional networks and expertise in the preparation and composition of scrap, travel distances are minimised and the use of primary alloys is reduced.

How is this possible with a volume of approximately 800,000 tons of scrap per year? The fine subdivision of the scrap into more than 100 different material groups succeeds thanks to sophisticated, digitally supported procedures such as X-ray fluorescence and spectral analysis and thanks to intensive cooperation with all parties involved. Key partners include steel processors and scrap dealers.

dhi also takes care of the subsequent logistical processes. In this way, the desired materials are delivered just-in-time to DEW's own plants. "Our goal is to keep improving the analysis and processing of scrap and to replace more and more primary alloys with secondary raw materials. This approach is environmentally friendly and conserves resources. Instead of sourcing raw materials from far away, DEW receives regional goods," explained Weiffen.

In this way, dhi also supports DEW's Green Steel concept and is working on continuously improving the CO_2 emissions of the "Scope 3 upstream", i.e. a reduction of the CO_2 emissions of DEW's upstream processes and products. ■

dhi's mission is to procure unalloyed and alloyed scrap and then process it for use in DEW's own steelworks (Source: dhi)

Upgraded 4-axis, twin-pallet-change, horizontal-spindle machining centres

Heller introduces fourth generation of its H-Series

A Heller H-Series Gen4, 4-axis, twin-pallet-change, horizontal-spindle machining centre

Under the banner of its 2021 slogan 'Be A Performer', Heller has introduced a fourth generation of its H-Series 4-axis, twin-pallet-change, horizontal-spindle machining centres. The four smaller models, H2000, H4000, H5000 and H6000, which constitute half of the range, have been extensively upgraded in terms of both hardware and software to increase their productivity and improve their quality even further.

A website landing page has been created for this product launch - www.heller.biz/performance/en - designed to guide visitors around the new features of the machines. It includes videos and a performance check area, where prospective customers can fill in their requirements and be directed to the most appropriate machine, all models being individually configurable. They are available in the UK and Ireland through the German firm's subsidiary in Redditch, where many of the machines are assembled.

The complete makeover has seen the introduction of faster tool changes and optimised sequencing, nine new spindles, more structural stability to maximise metal cutting capability throughout the entire working volume, even at the extremes of axis travels, and a Heller graphical user interface for the Fanuc control option.

The new Gen4 models offer the same machining volumes as the previous versions - 630mm, 800mm, 800mm and 1,000mm cube respectively. The smallest model has a maximum table load of 800kg, while the larger machines support 1.4 tonnes on the table. The full H-series range extends

through four more machines to the H16000 with axis travels of 2.4 x 1.6 x 1.6 metres.

With reduction in production cost per part firmly in mind, an optional SPEED equipment package offers elevated rapids of up to 90 metres/min, as well as optimised tool change at three speeds that are tool weight dependent and faster rotary clamping to deliver a reduction in chip-to-chip time of up to 21%. The package also optimises Z-axis and B-axis dynamics according to the fixture mass and the weight of the component on the table. Additionally there is a POWER package with standard rapids up to 65 metres/min and tool change times that have been reduced by up to 15%, offering linear rather than rotary encoder feedback of axis position in X, Y and Z.

New is the availability of two DC (dynamic cutting) universal direct-drive motor spindles, HSK-A63/16,000 rpm/180 Nm and HSK-A100/12,000 rpm/400 Nm, and a PC (power cutting) spindle, HSK-A100/10,000 rpm/360 Nm. There are also six new inline spindles, bringing the total number of options to nine, all featuring the 'HELLER zero-spindle system' for rapid interchangeability, leading to maximum machine availability coupled with low service costs. An out-facing slide system for internal boring and external turning is available, with control of the requisite U-axis already integrated into the machine control.

It is noteworthy that all of the manufacturer's compact, high torque spindles feature ease of servicing, integrated leakage checking to prevent damage and rapid run-up times for high productivity. They are all produced in-house in a recently-opened, air-conditioned,

automated facility at Heller's headquarters in Nürtingen.

The rotary table, with a milling torque of up to 2,900 Nm in the two larger machines, has been FEM-optimised and reinforced with a YRT-C bearing for higher rigidity as well as more rapid positioning and clamping. Its improved robustness and symmetry of construction allows components to be machined at the extremes of the X and Y axis strokes, a goal further promoted in the two smaller Gen4 models by increasing the width of the linear guideways from 35mm to 45mm. Being able to use the whole working volume to maximum effect can have a profound influence on finances, as it is possible to choose a smaller size of machine for a given set of intended applications and thereby reduce capital investment and running costs.

Electrolytically galvanized internal guard surfaces and liberal use of stainless steel in the machine construction, notably in the working area and the tool and workpiece setting stations, enhance durability while steep side walls promote efficient evacuation of swarf. LED lighting has been improved in all operator areas and a camera can be integrated above the tool change door. Easy access to the working area, a short distance from the front of the machine to the spindle and a low component loading height ensure ergonomic machine operation.

For tool storage, seven chain-type magazines with up to 240 pockets are available as well as three rack-type magazines with up to 425 positions. The standard lifting and swivelling pallet changer with hydraulic clamping exchanges pallets with standardised alignment elements for rapid mounting of fixtures. An integrated, five-point media interface to activate hydraulic or pneumatic fixtures and feed data back to the control is optional throughout the range, while the two larger machines may be equipped with a seven-point media interface with 80 bar or 200 bar hydraulic pressure.

The control consoles where the operator interfaces with the machine, including at the component and tool setting areas, have been made even more user-friendly. The operating console of the Siemens Sinumeric 840D sl control has a 24-inch touch screen, while the Fanuc 31i-B 15-inch touch screen option has gained a Heller graphical user interface and a newly-designed HMI panel.

Heller4Industry functions are very much in evidence for enhancing production efficiency and for machine monitoring. The optional software suite is universally applicable from a single machine with or without a network connection, through multi-machine sites, to multi-site operations with cloud-base communication. The standard umati interface (universal machine technology interface) enables machine and production data acquisition. Monitoring of potential collisions, energy consumption, axis wear, spindle condition and tool overload and breakage are all application options. ■

Automated material removal

Cooperation between Schunk and 3M opens up new possibilities

Robot-assisted grinding is a demanding task that requires a tremendous amount of knowledge in terms of techniques, processes and materials. To make it easier for users to find the best solution for their task, two experts in this field have joined forces in an exciting new partnership: Schunk, the competence leader for gripping systems and clamping technology, and 3M, one of the leading manufacturers of industrial abrasives. Together they will support companies in optimally automating their grinding, polishing and brushing processes.

Grinding, deburring and polishing

When it comes to demanding tasks such as removing material or finishing components, the majority of companies still rely on manual processing. This is expensive in large-scale production and does not always deliver the desired precision and reproducibility. Robot-assisted processes, on the other hand, guarantee consistent quality, and can operate, unmanned, around the clock. The automation specialist Schunk provides customers with support for application validation through testing in the Schunk CoLab and delivers the necessary components. With the Schunk product portfolio for machining with robots, customers will be able to almost completely replace manual grinding, polishing and deburring processes in automated production.

Consolidated expertise

As a result of the collaboration with 3M, Schunk has increased potential for users. 3M is constantly working on optimising grinding and polishing processes and making them more efficient with innovative products. Combined with Schunk's automation expertise, this will open up a whole new range of possibilities for developing optimum grinding, polishing and brushing processes. Users will profit from the knowledge and expertise of both companies, which will be available through a collaborative sales approach with customer-specific solutions.

When choosing an automated grinding application, customers will be able to take advantage of the experience of both experts. While Schunk supplies the best components for the robot and supports the technical implementation of the automation application, 3M finds the right grinding material and the optimum process parameters. Moreover, quick and simple feasibility studies on various components can be carried out in the Schunk CoLab, and in 3M's own robotics laboratory there is the possibility of further optimising the abrasive process and achieving optimally matched surface results. In this way, customers will have the best of both worlds and find the best, customised automation solution for their application. ■

Market/Trader Prices for Stainless Steel

Prices quoted are distributor selling prices for larger quantities including surcharges eg 1-tonne parcel. Extras are payable for smaller quantities. In Germany, for example, the following extras typically apply:

Under 1,000 kg to 500 kg	€ 0.10		
Under 500 kg to 250 kg	€ 0.25	Under 250 kg to 100 kg	€ 0.55
Under 100 kg to 50 kg	€ 1.20	Under 50 kg/single sheets	€ 1.70

	Date	1.4301	1.4571
		/kg	/kg
■ Germany	09.08.2021	€ 3.15-3.35	5.00-5.20

RAW MATERIALS

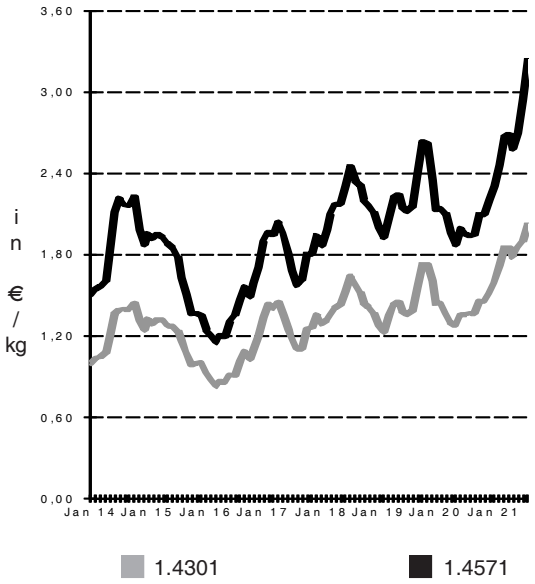
	Date	US$/lb		£/kg		€/kg	
Nickel (LME)		**cash**	**3 mths**	**cash**	**3 mths**	**cash**	**3 mths**
NB: LME nickel prices are quoted in dollars. Euro and £ prices are given here for guidance only	09.08.2021	8.50	8.52	13.53	13.56	15.96	16.00
	06.08.2021	8.86	8.87	14.10	14.12	16.64	16.66
	05.08.2021	8.74	8.75	13.91	13.93	16.42	16.43
	04.08.2021	8.82	8.83	14.04	14.05	16.57	16.58
	03.08.2021	8.77	8.76	13.96	13.94	16.47	16.45
	02.08.2021	8.95	8.94	14.24	14.23	16.81	16.79
	30.07.2021	9.02	9.02	14.36	14.36	16.94	16.94
	29.07.2021	8.97	8.96	14.28	14.26	16.85	16.83
	28.07.2021	8.88	8.89	14.13	14.15	16.68	16.70
	27.07.2021	8.79	8.79	13.99	13.99	16.51	16.51
	26.07.2021	8.84	8.84	14.07	14.07	16.60	16.60
	23.07.2021	8.74	8.74	13.91	13.91	16.42	16.42
Ferro-chrome							
■ charge chrome (net price)*	Quarter 3/21	1.56		2.48		2.93	
	Quarter 2/21	1.56		2.48		2.93	
	Quarter 1/21	1.18		1.88		2.22	
	Quarter 4/20	1.14		1.81		2.14	
■ spot market (high carbon)	16.01.2012	1.15		1.83		2.16	
Molybdenum (LME)							
■ 3 months	09.08.2021	18.65		29.68		35.03	
Stainless Steel Scrap major dealer buying prices							
■ Germany (sheet cuttings, 18 % Cr, 9 % Ni)	09.08.2021					1.55	

Development of German alloy surcharges for selected product forms and grades

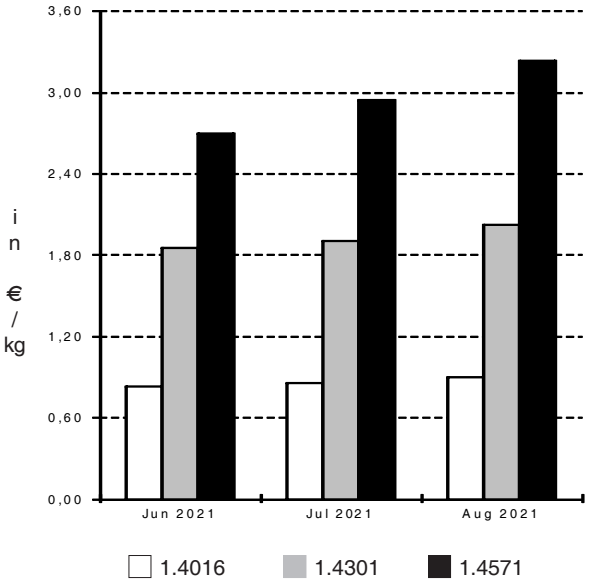
June - August 2021

	Sheet	Welded tube	Bar	Bright bar	Wire rod
	in €/t				
June 2021					
1.4016	835	960	---	---	---
1.4301	1,854	2,132	---	---	---
1.4571	2,701	3,106	---	---	---
July 2021					
1.4016	860	989	---	---	---
1.4301	1,901	2,186	---	---	---
1.4571	2,943	3,384	---	---	---
August 2021					
1.4016	897	1,032	---	---	---
1.4301	2,024	2,328	---	---	---
1.4571	3,236	3,721	---	---	---

Development of German alloy surcharges* for stainless flat products



Surcharge development* 3 months comparison



* including August 2021 surcharges

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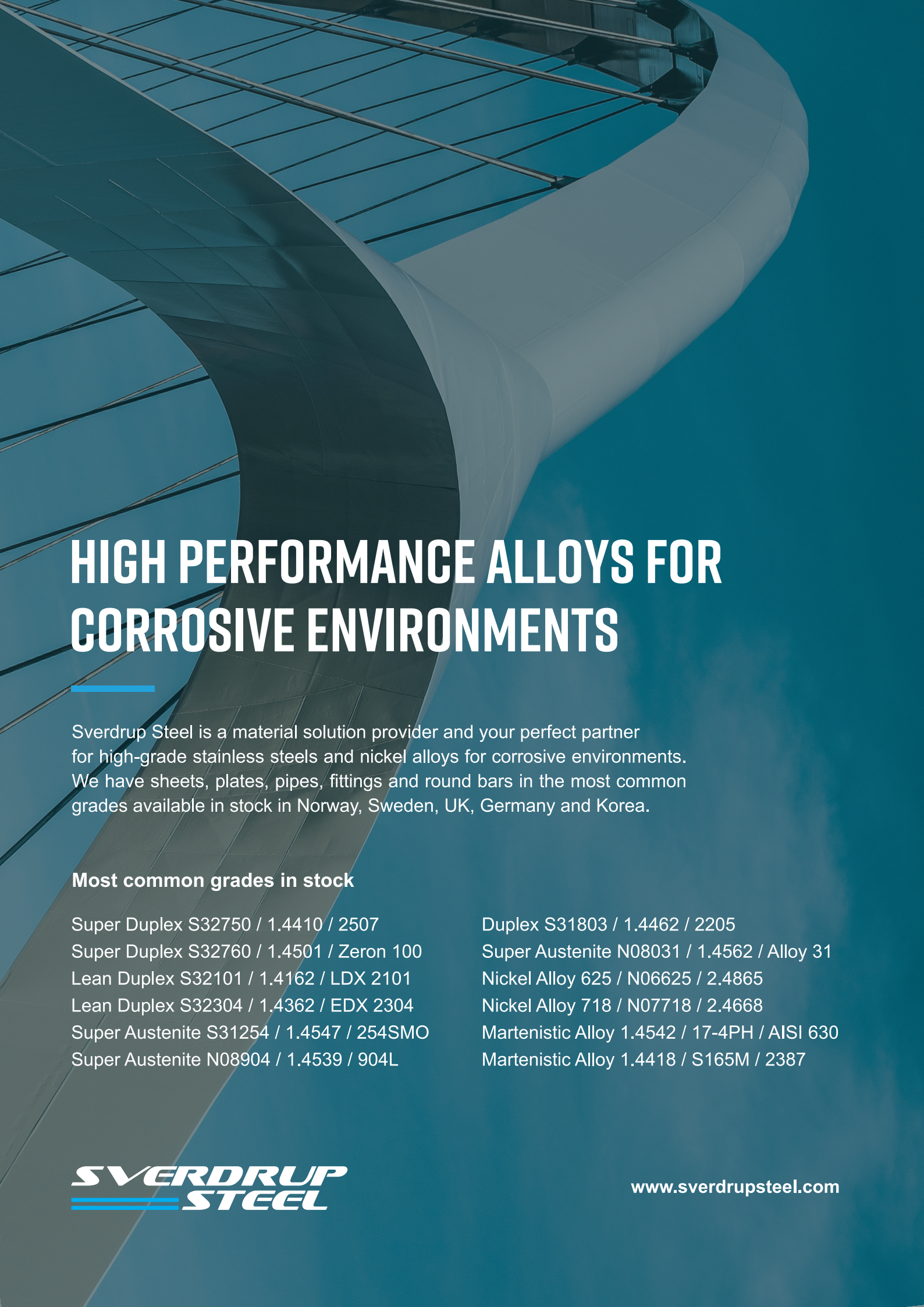

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Lean Duplex S32101 / 1.4162 / LDX 2101
Lean Duplex S32304 / 1.4362 / EDX 2304
Super Austenite S31254 / 1.4547 / 254SMO
Super Austenite N08904 / 1.4539 / 904L
Duplex S31803 / 1.4462 / 2205
Super Austenite N08031 / 1.4562 / Alloy 31
Nickel Alloy 625 / N06625 / 2.4865
Nickel Alloy 718 / N07718 / 2.4668
Martenistic Alloy 1.4542 / 17-4PH / AISI 630
Martenistic Alloy 1.4418 / S165M / 2387

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