

SPECTRUM 2021



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Dear Readers,

A virus took control of the world in 2020 – no social or economic sector could escape. The recycling industry was no exception – the effects were manifold. One example was the closure of all waste collection centers in Austria. As a result, waste streams almost stopped. When the gates reopened after the first lockdown in early summer, the situation changed from extreme to extreme: Suddenly, a flood of collected waste materials poured in. This was a huge challenge for our employees in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. Initially, short-time work was scheduled, but suddenly capacity peaks had to be absorbed! At this point, I would really like to express my sincere gratitude to our staff, who took all the necessary steps with us during this challenging time. I am therefore particularly pleased that, compared with many other companies, we did not have to take any measures in the field of human resources.

The past year brought numerous other challenges: we need only recall the Corona regulations, which changed several times. Likewise, personal contact with our branches abroad or with our customers and suppliers was at times almost impossible, if not completely impossible. In addition, there was the renewed lockdown towards the end of the year.

However, we are all familiar with this phrase: “Every crisis is also an opportunity.” This optimistic view allows us to look to the future with a positive attitude despite all the adversity, with the intention of taking advantage of this very opportunity. For this reason, we used the time when the waste collection centers had been closed to implement, among other things, the largest photovoltaic system in the district of Amstetten at the MGG Polymers plant. We are also vigorously researching new separation technologies, especially for old electrical appliances.

The Müller-Guttenbrunn Group has also made important decisions for the future at its subsidiaries outside of Austria: At MGG Mü-Gu in Hungary, for example, substantial investments have been made in expanding capacities. Our subsidiary MER in Germany, which is moving into a new location, is also gaining new opportunities. As you can see, we are looking forward to a hopefully near future in which the Corona virus will have lost its horror and the world will be back to normal. Until then, stay healthy!

Christian Müller-Guttenbrunn
CEO

The end of a railway wagon

Even large machines and equipment are not made for eternity. This also applies to railway wagons, which are frequently scrapped at MGG Metrec in Amstetten.

They have been on the rails for many years and countless kilometers – right across Austria and even beyond its borders. But at some point, time runs out even for the most solid railway wagon and it has to be replaced. But what happens to the old wagons weighing several tons? They are recycled, of course – at MGG Metrec in Amstetten, for example.

Saving valuable components

Thanks to the rail siding, the wagon can be easily and directly delivered to the factory premises. First of all, the delivered railway wagon is closely inspected. Which parts are still in tact and can possibly be reused immediately? Which parts are only scrap and should be melted down again? For example, expensive components such as the wheels, if they are not yet worn, can be preserved and reused. Once these questions have been clarified, the unusual spectacle begins: two excavators lift the old wagon off the rails before the rolling scrap metal gets stuck to the collar – or rather to the walls.

With the orange peel grab on the excavator, the side walls are removed from the wagon before individual elements are cut from the steel skeleton with a welding torch. In the meantime, the excavator operator changes his machine: instead of the grab, a mobile hydraulic shear is now located at the end of the boom. This allows what is left of the wagon to be cut up with ease.

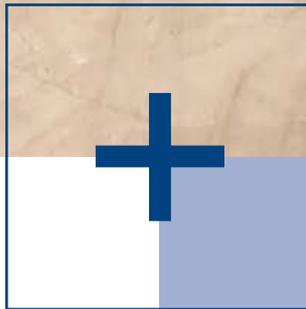
The metal shears cuts through the reinforced profiles like a warm knife through butter. “Nevertheless, you always have to approach things with brains, because the material is often under considerable tension. You should know where to cut and where not to cut,” explains Hannes Grissenberger, site manager at MGG Metrec in Amstetten.

Perfect teamwork

Of course, an excavator driver cannot do all the work with his equipment alone. He always needs help on the ground, which is always available at the right time thanks to the well-coordinated MGG Metrec team. Together, the 25-tonne wagon can be dismantled within a few hours. If the parts are small enough, they are loaded again – onto a wagon, of course. Then the railway wagon, which has now been dismantled into many individual parts, begins its final journey on the



*“The 25-tonne wagon
can be dismantled within a few hours.”*



rails – to the next smelting plant, where it is melted down again into raw material and then processed into a new product.

Disassembly service for other large equipment

Although such dismantling work on large equipment is not part of the daily routine at MGG Metrec in Amstetten, the company is well equipped for it. Not only wagons, but also entire locomotives, trams, trucks or large trailers can be dismantled into small parts on the factory premises. The crew at MGG Metrec is also capable of dismantling large industrial plants (e.g. tanks) and preparing them for recycling. Challenges like these make life really exciting for the recycling professionals at the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group.

Video clip

A video of the dismantling of a rail car at MGG Metrec can be found at:
<https://bit.ly/2XPLIGy>

You can also simply scan this QR code to open the video:





Allrounder, border crosser, **visionary**

Herbert Müller-Guttenbrunn started his career in his father's company in 1967. He moved the company from Waidhofen/Ybbs to Amstetten, grew with the company and rose to become managing director and handed over an international group of companies in 2006. He also worked for many years in the Chamber of Commerce in the field of secondary raw materials trading. For his commitment he was awarded the titles of "Commercial Councillor" and the "Golden Medal of Honour of the Province of Lower Austria". However, the former MGG managing director is still not completely retired, as he reveals in this interview.

Mr. Müller-Guttenbrunn, the corona virus is currently keeping the world in suspense. How do you personally feel about it?

HERBERT MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Fortunately, everyone in our family is healthy – that is the most important thing. Personally, I use the time now to go hiking or to linger in the garden – even for things I haven't done for ten years. In any case, everything is a little different now than usual.

Mr. Müller-Guttenbrunn, you joined your father's company at the age of 22. How did your start go?

HERBERT MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Yes, it was 1967, when I had completed a two-year internship in Kempten. We were just three people back then. Of course, you had to do everything – so I drove the truck, operated the cable excavator, or worked with the metal press.

At that time the company was still based in Waidhofen/Ybbs. How did you experience the founding phase of your father's company?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: I only know that I saw my father very little. During the day he was busy recycling scrap metal, at night he did business in his own bar in Waidhofen Castle.

The bar – or rather a partial heritage around the castle in Waidhofen – was the reason why the family came to the Mostviertel in the first place...

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: That's exactly how it is. I was born and grew up in Klagenfurt for the first five years in my life. My father had an abrasives company in Carinthia, which unfortunately burned down. He was then a salesman and worked for a scrap dealer for a short time – that's why he somehow ended up in the scrap iron business. Because of the inheritance it was decided to move to Waidhofen and my father built up the bar here. There he got into conversation with the Russian occupying forces and with the Böhler employees. At that time there was a lot of iron to be worked off: The park behind the castle was a storage facility for old tank parts and disarmed ammunition. At some point, he started doing this as a sideline and the business continued to grow – even when there were no more old war relics to be worked up.

What were the reasons for this?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: One was certainly the always good cooperation with Böhler-Ybbstal-Werke. From my stay in Germany, I was familiar with the container system, which was new at the time and which we then introduced. In 1968, we set up the first containers at Böhler, with which we were the only company in Austria that was able to directly load onto the rail carriages. This was an important building block for our success, and we also developed along with the important companies Welser and Forster in the region of Waidhofen.

Due to the growth, the space in Waidhofen finally became too small, so that in 1976 the decision was made to go to Amstetten. You played a leading role already in those days...

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Together with Johann Pölz, the mayor of Amstetten at the time, I found the company's current premises.

Pözl then helped us with the mediation via the federal railway. Of course, this was no comparison to today. It looked really bad back then. Everything was littered with bomb craters, some of which still contained wagons and lots of dud bombs. The excavator driver really needed courage back then to level everything here. Once that was done, we converted the sole proprietorship into a limited liability company in which my father, mother, brother and I each held a 25 percent share.

How did it go at the new location?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Quite well and we have invested a lot. So, we bought the first large shears from Denmark relatively soon after moving to Amstetten. At the beginning I was still an operator of that machine – and I was also on the road with the truck from time to time. We already had around ten employees in the company, but I was happy to step in during the holiday period or when somebody got sick. In 1980 we put our first small shredder into operation, the so-called mill – and in 1984 we founded our first subsidiary, Metran, in Kematen.

At that time, your brother Dietrich was already working for the company. How harmonious was your cooperation?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: It always worked out well. My brother joined the company in 1978 after the restaurant in Waidhofen was sold. He took many tasks off my hands – for example, he took care of truck purchasing and looked after many of our suppliers. This left me time to devote to other activities – such as founding companies abroad. In any case, we always divided the tasks well and he always had my backing.

In 1985, you became managing director – but you had already taken over many of your father's tasks before that...

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: My father was a pilot in the war. The joy of flying has remained with him. Unfortunately, he had to make an emergency landing with a motor glider in Zell am See, where he was seriously injured. He had lost an eye, could hardly see anymore, and was hardly mobile – but he was still the boss and always in the office. Due to his impairment, I had to take over some of the work, of course, but always discussed everything with him – fortunately he always said yes to my suggestions. So, in 1985, before his death, we built the large shredder – its planning was the last major investment he witnessed. Unfortunately, he did not anymore witness the construction of our office complex during the following year.

After his death you officially took over the agendas of the managing director – how would you describe yourself as the boss in retrospect?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: I would say I was anti-authoritarian in meetings, authoritarian in decisions. After all, someone must call the shots – and that should be the boss.

Earlier you mentioned the founding of new subsidiaries abroad. Many of them are based in former Eastern Bloc countries. How adventurous were these company foundations shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: You can't compare that with today. I often founded companies with people I had already dealt with before when purchasing raw materials. A lot of things were only done through state-owned companies, where you had to know exactly whom you were talking to and how you did this. Unfortunately, I also learned the hard way: the people I trusted most at that time often disappointed me. So, it didn't always work out well economically with some managing directors with whom I got on well personally. Nevertheless, each and every one of these company foundations or shareholdings was a huge experience.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 8! ▶

“In 1968, we set up the first containers at Böhler, with which we were the only company in Austria that was able to directly load onto the rail carriages.”





“In any case, you were much more appreciated abroad as a recycler.

In Austria we were commonly known as dirty scrap iron dealers.”

What attracted you to international expansion?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: It was simply exciting to get to know other people, other ways of living and thinking. In any case, you were much more appreciated abroad as a recycler. In Austria we were commonly known as dirty scrap iron dealers. It is only in the last 20 years that this esteem has increased.

Is there a special experience that immediately comes to mind when you think of the international companies in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: There would be very special experiences with which one could write books at every company foundation. The disposal of old cars has always been an important issue in our company. This was also the case with our expansion into Hungary. At that time there was a premium for scrapping old Trabants. I was just on site in Budapest when a couple drove up to the company site and said goodbye to their old car as if it were a funeral. The woman was even crying. You could see what value the car had for people.

What was the greatest value for you in the company?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: The greatest value of a company is definitely its employees. You can't do anything on your own as boss, you need good people to achieve great things.

Great things have definitely been achieved in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. However, there are always one or two things that make you fail. What do you regret not having achieved?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: The project that cost me the most energy – and which was never realized – was the attempt to build an incineration plant and aluminum smelting plant in Kematen. Today, the whole thing would be considered a “green project”, because we wanted to use the heat to dry paper at the then called Neusiedler paper mill and to generate electricity. Although we had all the permits, it was never implemented – partly because our German partner went bankrupt. Unfortunately, the project had been so badly handled before that we had to put it on ice. But on the plot of land that was intended for the project is now the MGG Polymers plant, which my son co-founded. Many people tell me now that because of this failed project, companies such as voestalpine or MGG Polymers were allowed to be settled there. That makes me proud – but this project has cost me a lot of nerves. But everything else was great fun.

What did you enjoy most when you think back to your time as managing director?

Müller-Guttenbrunn: We played tennis every Friday for over ten years. These doubles games were always great fun when I was there – especially when we sat together after the game and talked about professional and private matters. There was a lot of fun. On top of that, once a year we organised a tennis tournament where employees of our foreign companies also came. After that, events such as golf or go-karting were added – but I didn't take part in that anymore. After the first time at the go-kart, everything hurt me – absolutely nobody takes any consideration! We have been on the road a lot with motorized vehicles in the past and I still remember the motorcycle tours with the company employees very well. Riding bikes gave me great pleasure. And indeed, I still ride my bicycle with pleasure – up to 2,000 kilometres a year.

From the bicycle back to business: your son Christian now runs the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. How do you see the current situation?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Christian is doing great, with all the other managers in the company. He has always been with the company for internships during his studies. After his time abroad at Thyssen, he finally moved to the company as a controller and grew into his job. We must keep up with the current recycling issues – I'm only thinking of recycling e-cars, where we still need major development. When I look at our figures for the last few years, a lot of things work – also because we have really terrific employees. That's why we must also look to the future to have the right people in the right places. At the moment, it is hardly possible to predict anything with certainty because of the Corona crisis. Many things are still running as usual for us, but many

companies are using short-time working, which is why production waste is decreasing. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the right decisions are being made in the company and that the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group will master this crisis well. But the most important thing first of all is that everyone remains healthy.

You are absolutely right, of course. It is clear that you are not yet fully retired and are well informed about what is happening in the company. After all, you are still on the company advisory board and manage the business in the subcompany for property management and investments. So how often can you still be found in the company?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Thanks to my smartphone, I keep myself constantly up to date. Our controlling system works perfectly, so I always have the latest figures at my fingertips. When I'm in Amstetten, I like to come for a coffee with my son or the other employees. I may not come here for two or three months because I'm traveling the world. Then there are times when I am there two or three times a week. Of course, there are various meetings of the company committees – so I'm in Amstetten quite often. But I also enjoy my time with my wife in our holiday home at Lake Balaton in Hungary or on cruises. Now this is not possible due to the Corona pandemic – so unfortunately, I had to cancel some planned tours. I hope for all of us that mankind will get this crisis under control quickly and that travel will be possible again soon.

We gladly support this wish, say thank you for the detailed conversation and wish you continued enjoyment of life, travel – and of course the activities around the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group!





Recycling under **the sign of the Terminator**

In recent years, superstar Arnold Schwarzenegger has become increasingly involved in environmental and climate protection. Through his example, the film actor and former Californian governor inspired many people – including the eyewear producers of the small Salzburg company Vision1 Eyewear. They developed a special limited edition of sunglasses, on the lenses of which you can read the saying “I’ll be back”, which is known worldwide from the Terminator movies. The Müller-Guttenbrunn Group is also delighted about these accessories with that special something, because these glasses are made of recycled plastic from the MGG Polymers plant. There, about 100 employees currently produce 20,000 tons of recycled technical plastics (ABS, PS, PP and PCABS) from old electrical appliances every year.

Five euros for Schwarzenegger climate protection initiative

For all those interested: The glasses can be bought in Müller drugstores or in the Müller online store. For each piece sold, the Schwarzenegger Climate Protection Initiative is supported with five dollars.

“A really cool project, and we congratulate Vision1 Eyewear with this initiative. All of us at MGG Polymers love such creative projects – just like the great PCR pen from Ritter-Pen,” says Chris Slijkhuis, General Manager of MGG Polymers enthusiastically. The Austrian plastics recycling specialist supplies recovered ABS plastic produced from end-of-life electronic as raw material for these ballpoints made by the traditional German manufacturer Ritter. The ballpoint pen is available in black and grey.

These two application examples prove once again that post-consumer recycled plastics can be used to create high-quality products with peppiness. This is an additional motivation for the MGG Polymers team to convince even more manufacturers to make greater use of recycled plastics in the future.

*“These two application examples
prove once again that post-consumer
recycled plastics can be used to create
high-quality products with peppiness.”*

Full speed ahead

– with the power of the sun

Environmental protection is a top priority at the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group every day. Especially as a pioneer in recycling, the Amstetten-based family-owned company always tries to play a pioneering role when it comes to nature, climate and environmental protection. For this reason, in 2020 the company embarked on a new, particularly important project: the largest photovoltaic system in the Amstetten district.

This system was built on the roof of the MGG Polymers plant in Kematen, where this existing space can be used sensibly for this purpose. With 2,544 Photovoltaic (PV) modules, the plant is to achieve an output of 788 kWp (kilo Watt peak). Thus, the new plant is not only be the largest in the Amstetten region, but one of the most powerful in Lower Austria. "At MGG Polymers, we are already obtaining electricity from sustainable sources for our sustainably produced polymers from WEEE," explains MGG Polymers Technical Managing Director Günther Höggerl. "Isn't it obvious to produce at least a good part of it ourselves for recycling these plastics? What could be more obvious than using the power of the sun?"

However, the photovoltaic system at the MGG Polymers plant was only the beginning in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group, so they also installed a PV system at MGG Metran. There, 2,161 PV modules provide a maximum total output of 605 kWp (kilo Watt peak). The new system enables a self-sufficiency of up to 75 percent, especially in summer. This means that MGG Metran can use a large part of its electricity from solar energy in a CO₂-neutral manner during metal processing (around 100,000 tons of material per year).

In order to use the electricity from solar energy for mobility as well, the company also built its own e-charging station with charging stations for e-cars and e-bikes. MGG Metran Managing Director Gunther Panowitz is enthusiastic: "Now we can use green electricity from our own on-site generation for our recycling processes. In addition, we now have the possibility to charge two cars and four e-bikes. It's definitely an important step in improving ourselves as a company."

More about this topic

In the first six months, the new PV system at the MGG Polymers plant produced 636 MWh of electricity, saving 318 tons of CO₂.

A video about the new photovoltaic system at MGG Metran can be found at: <https://bit.ly/36GUqvl>

You can also simply scan this QR code, to open the video:



This project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (EFRE). More information on this fund at: www.efre.gv.at



“Especially as a pioneer in recycling, the family-owned company always tries to play a pioneering role when it comes to nature, climate and environmental protection.”

saferec.at:

destroy data (carriers), recycle material

At www.saferec.at MGG Metran offers a new service for all private individuals and SMEs: data carriers such as hard disks, smartphones or notebooks can be destroyed easily and securely. For customers, this means low costs with maximum security.

Data security. This buzzword is a recurring theme in modern life. After all, data is the new gold, as futurologists have discovered. If you think about data security for a moment, a few questions will probably soon come to mind: How secure are my personal data? Which devices store my data? What happens to my data? Can data be irretrievably deleted or destroyed?

Open questions for SMEs

Similar questions are also being asked in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where solutions are being sought to securely erase data and destroy data media. Simply disposing of data carriers in electronic waste is definitely not a solution: Time and again, data from the recycling cycle appears in unwanted places. Online platforms are used in some cases to offer and sell spare parts such as hard disks, data storage devices or even entire devices such as notebooks, mobile phones etc. containing sensitive and often highly personal data. This is a good opportunity for criminals to get their hands on the “new gold” – often with very unpleasant surprises for those involved.

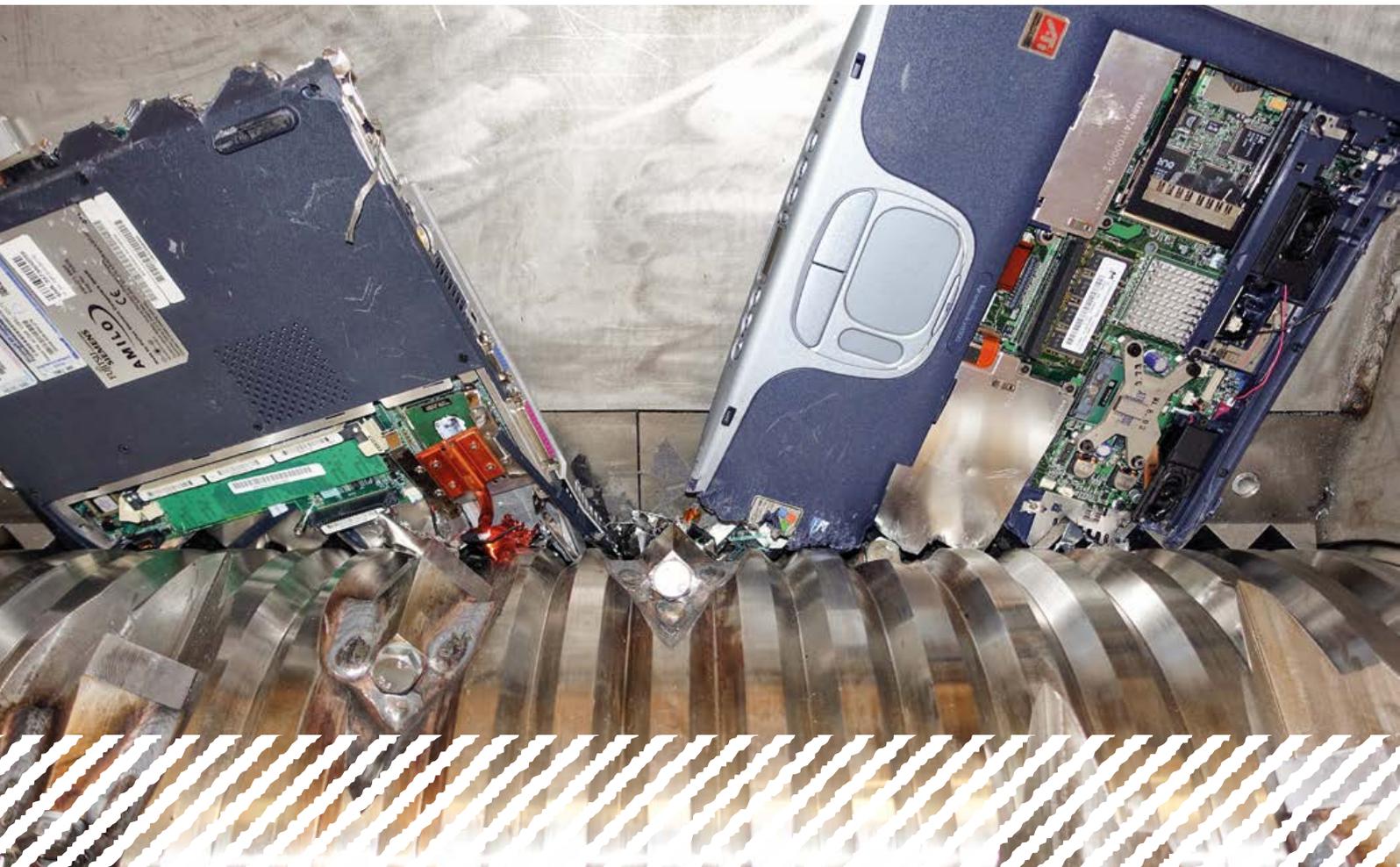
How do you deal with data?

Since 25 May 2018, the European Union has had very clear rules: On this day, the Data Protection Regulation (DSGVO) finally took full effect. It regulates the protection of personal data within the EU. It contains defined rules that specify how long data may be stored and when they are to be deleted/destroyed. The DSGVO made many people – including many (small) entrepreneurs and self-employed persons – aware of the often lax handling of data and important information.

Large companies (e.g. banks, insurance companies) and public institutions have decades of experience in having files – formerly in paper form, now as data carriers – destroyed on a large scale. Today, specialist companies set up security containers for this purpose on site, which are filled and then collected. The data carriers contained are then shredded and the stored data are demonstrably destroyed.

Search for a simple solution

“However, this approach only works for larger companies,” knows Daniel Forstner, from Innovation Management in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group, all too well. “For small companies and individual entrepreneurs, there is no really convenient solution as yet. Therefore, they are often looking for a simple, but safe way to have their





“Small companies and individual entrepreneurs are often looking for a simple, but safe way to have their hard disks, memory cards etc. destroyed.”

hard disks, memory cards etc. destroyed.” MGG Metran, together with its two partners Saferec AG and Swiss Post, now offers exactly such a procedure: a simple way for end customers to have data media securely destroyed. With the certificate issued in the process, customers ultimately hold proof in their hands that they comply with the DSGVO regulations. The best thing about this service: the data medium is not only destroyed, but also recycled. In this way you not only comply with the data protection regulations, but also contribute to environmental protection.

How saferec.at works

It works that simple: Via the online platform www.saferec.at you specify which data carriers (hard disks, laptops, smartphones, PCs, etc.) are to be destroyed. The service is ordered and – as usual in online shops – paid for in a secure way. The customer then receives all the relevant documents by e-mail – including the delivery papers, which have an individual QR code. Together with the printed delivery documents, the data carriers to be destroyed are then sent to MGG Metran.

Using Swiss Post’s Track and Trace service, it is possible to track the parcel’s route to the MGG Metran factory. When the parcel arrives at MGG Metran in Kematen, the data carrier is removed and destroyed. In the course of the process, the QR code on the delivery papers is scanned, and the customer receives an e-mail with the certificate for the destruction of the data carrier.

Data carrier shredded to 15 millimetres

Incidentally, the data carriers to be destroyed are shredded in two stages in the shredding plant. The parts are then a maximum of 15 mm in size. These are then mixed to other shredded e-scrap parts and separated into pure material fractions (aluminium, copper, stainless steel, plastic) in the following recycling steps. The processed material can then be used again in new products. Daniel Forstner is sure: “This service is a real benefit for end customers. Without much effort, you can be sure that the stored data will not appear anywhere – and at the same time you have the absolute certainty that the hardware will be recycled professionally.”

“I often don’t know what to expect the next morning!”

At the age of 17 Vikas Shambhalwal came to Austria from India. He quickly found his professional home at MGG Polymers, which he no longer wants to miss. In our MGG relay interview, the head of electrical engineering reveals the reasons for this and much more.

Mr. Shambhalwal, you have now been working for MGG Polymers for twelve years. How did it come about that you started here in 2009?

VIKAS SHAMBHALWAL: After my apprenticeship at the HTL technical school for electrical engineering in Waidhofen I was looking for work. Of course I wanted to stay close by and so I looked around for a job in the area. So it was a good thing that Polymers had just been looking for a shift supervisor.

That means you started in production?

SHAMBHALWAL: Yes, I worked in shift at the plant for about a year and a half. This work is really exhausting – especially the night shifts have been very hard for me. I am definitely not a night owl, I just need my sleep at night. From my point of view, luck was on my side again: after the departure of the head of the electrical department, Robert Pörner, this position had to be filled again. I was subsequently approached by the management and was asked whether I could imagine taking on this job. I accepted immediately, without thinking twice. For me there was simply not much to think about – this was my chance to do what I like to do.

What are your specific responsibilities as head of electronics here at the MGG Polymers plant?

SHAMBHALWAL: The most important work is to fix malfunctions in the electronics of the equipment – after all, it is essential for the company that the equipment is working at full capacity. These malfunctions can of course be quite different with the large number of machines. Furthermore, new pieces of equipment have to be installed and commissioned and existing equipment needs to be improved and rebuilt again and again. There are also a lot of things to do all around – apart from servicing and repair work, there also is some office work, such as ordering of goods that must also be done and this can be immediately followed by laying cables again afterwards. It is simply a very varied task that is absolutely tailored to my interests.

Sounds like you have found your calling...

SHAMBHALWAL: Yes, you could say that. Because I am also a real hobbyist in my spare time. At home I work on devices that I then use myself. At MGG Polymers, these skills have always been supported and encouraged from the very beginning – by the management, the production crew, and my colleagues. There are probably many other companies that simply dispose of equipment when something is no longer working properly. Here I get the opportunity to repair these things in the electrical workshop. Often it is small things that can be easily and quickly straightened, and the device works perfectly again subsequently. In my view, this is sustainability in action – and I really enjoy this work. If I have a bad day, all I have to do is go to the electronics workshop, sit down to work and my day is saved.

You can really feel the joy in the varied work. Is there a typical daily or weekly schedule for you at all?

SHAMBHALWAL: No, every day is different. I often cannot tell the day before what to expect the next morning. This is especially true after the weekend.

You say that you often don’t know what to expect – what was it like when you came to Austria from India as a youngster in 2002? Did you know what to expect then?



“Often it is small things that can be easily and quickly straightened, and the device works perfectly again subsequently. In my view, this is sustainability in action.”

SHAMBHALWAL: Since my father had lived and worked in Austria since 1991, I knew a little bit of what life here is or could be like from his descriptions. But of course it was a huge change – especially the German language is not that easy. I often cheated my way through at the beginning with English.

Anyway, you speak excellent German now...

SHAMBHALWAL: Thank you – but I often notice myself that in the middle of a sentence I can't think of a certain word and I suddenly get stuck. However, it helped that our family in Austria had to speak German immediately, because we didn't know anyone here who spoke Indian. So I learned German relatively quickly. I am very grateful to my work colleagues that they also always help me when I say something wrong. It is important to me that I am corrected because this is the only way to learn and do it right.

So you feel you are in good hands with MGG Polymers?

SHAMBHALWAL: Definitely! The working atmosphere is wonderful. I get on well with everyone at the factory – and I hope that the reverse is also true and that people appreciate me and my work. In any case, I try to respond to the concerns of all colleagues and help them as much as I can.

Last question: What do you expect or hope for your future – professionally and privately?

SHAMBHALWAL: As with my daily work, I just let myself be surprised by what the future will bring. I hope I will continue to enjoy my work as much as I do for a long time to come. Things have changed in my private life recently: My daughter was born in the summer and I also had to start building a house – I guess I can expect a lot of new things there, too.

Then we wish you and your family all the best and may you continue to maintain your enthusiasm for the work. Thank you very much for the interview!





Recycled plastics – a social experiment

Do you know whether your everyday devices – such as mobile phones, televisions, vacuum cleaners, coffee machines – are made of recycled plastic? Don't worry if you don't know – you're not alone! However, this should change quickly. A multinational consortium has set itself the goal of raising awareness among people and companies. MGG Polymers employees are also involved in the project.

In view of the ever-increasing quantities of plastics, manufacturers are being asked to design their products in such a way that they are easy to recycle and, of course, already consist of recycled plastic material. Of course, manufacturers only do this if consumers follow this path – or perhaps even think ahead. For this reason, PolyCE, a project funded by the European Commission and also supported by the United Nations, calls on consumers to demand electronic and electrical products made of recycled plastic from manufacturers.

PolyCE is a multinational consortium led by the renowned Fraunhofer Institute for Reliability and Microintegration. The consortium includes universities (UN University Bonn, University of Ghent, Belgium, Technical University Berlin and University of Northampton, UK), civil society organisations (European Environmental Bureau) and numerous companies including Philips, Whirlpool and MGG Polymers. The 20 partners who initiated this two-year campaign are active in nine countries: Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, Finland, the United States and the United Kingdom.

80,000 fully loaded trucks

“Electronic and electrical devices consist of around 20 percent plastics. This makes old electrical appliances an important resource if you want to recycle plastics and thus close the cycle by reusing them,” explains Günther Höggerl, Technical Director at MGG Polymers. A current example shows how important good recycling of plastics is: At present, over 10 million tons of electronic scrap are generated annually in Europe (EU, Norway, Switzerland). 2 million tons of this are plastics. This corresponds to 80,000 fully loaded 25-ton trucks that would form a line from Rome to Frankfurt! Not all of this comes back and quite some of this material used to be exported outside Europe, unfortunately.

Insights full of ignorance

The scarcity of resources and the environmental protection concept call for these quantities of plastic to be properly recycled and reused in new products. However, a recent consumer survey conducted by the PolyCE project showed that half of the respondents did not know if they had ever purchased a technical product with recycled plastic! On the other hand, 86 percent who answered yes to this question did not notice any difference in the quality, appearance or performance of these products.

Another important result of the survey was that 95 percent of those who were informed about the health and environmental benefits of

recycled plastic components in electrical and electronic equipment confirmed that they would buy products with this feature. Although consumers indicate a high willingness to act in accordance with the recycling economy, the actual commitment is unfortunately still relatively low.

Communication = the key to success

For this reason, PolyCE sees appropriate communication and information as the key to recycling success. Consumers have an influence, so they should be encouraged to prefer products made of recycled plastic. Each individual can use their individual purchasing power to support products that are easy to recycle.

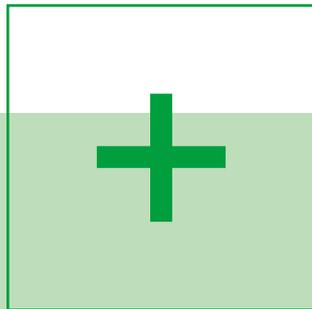
Then manufacturers are asked to adapt the design of their products accordingly. Rüdiger Kuehr, E-waste expert at the UN University in Bonn, is sure that "a better design could lead to considerable environmental and cost savings". "For some products, such as tablet computers and smartphones, much of their manufacturing cost and

environmental impact is the result of decisions made at the product design stage," Kuehr says.

Successful showcase examples

Orange, for example, shows that good design can be achieved with recycled plastic: France's largest telecommunications company relies on modern modem equipment consisting of 100% recycled plastics supplied by MGG Polymers. The plastics of the modems are returned to the MGG plant in Kematen at their end of life for recycling.

With such examples PolyCE wants to show consumers as well as experts the advantages of recycled compared to newly produced plastics. The success of the initiative is relevant to several of the United Nations' goals for sustainable development – particularly responsible consumption/production, sustainable cities and communities, as well as climate protection. It is therefore important that in the future everyone knows whether their everyday equipment is made of recycled plastic or not.



The experiment on the road

PolyCE is a project funded by the European Commission to recycle plastics from electronic waste (WEEE) for a more sustainable future. An experiment asked passersby if they could see differences between products made with or without recycled plastics. The answers? See for yourself: <https://bit.ly/39xYcbs>

Or just scan this QR code:



"It is important that in the future everyone knows whether their everyday equipment is made of recycled plastic or not."



Dangerous playground, great challenges, rosy future

Dietrich Müller-Guttenbrunn steered the fortunes of the company for several decades as managing director with his brother Herbert. In a detailed interview, the passionate golfer talks about the beginnings – which are unthinkable today -, the changes and the current situation in the company.

Mr. Müller-Guttenbrunn, 2020 was marked worldwide by the Corona pandemic. How did you spend this time?

DIETRICH MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: I was in Spain just before everything started and, when the corona crisis broke out in this country, I went into voluntary self-quarantine. I had enough to deal with, so I never developed camp fever or anything like that. I always find something to do!

You also had enough to do in all the years in which you helped build up and shape the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. In addition, you are still active on the advisory board. How often do you inform yourself about what is happening in the company today?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: I am in the company every week and keep myself constantly informed. The great thing is that we have short lines of communication and everything works well. I also discuss a lot with my brother Herbert. I am also pleased that the company has mastered the Corona crisis quite well so far.

You joined the company a little later than your brother, in 1973...

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Yes, formally I joined my father's scrap metal trading company in 1973, where my brother was already working. At that time, I was still running a café-restaurant with my mother in Waidhofen/Ybbs. So, I was mainly active in the gastronomy for two years before I really switched to the scrap trade in 1975. But of course, I already helped out in the company during the holiday season when I was young. I really enjoyed that.

You really experienced the company's start-up years at first hand?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Yes, of course. As children, we practically grew up with the company. I can still remember: We had two scrap yards back then. One was directly opposite the open-air swimming pool of Waidhofen. That's where I saw my friends happily playing around during my vacation work. In those moments I looked at my situation with one laughing and one crying eye – but understand me well I didn't miss out anything. It was a wonderful time of youth. We lived in the castle above the bath – there we had a wonderful big playground.

Wasn't this playground quite dangerous?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Yes, today that would be unimaginable. You have to know that there were many war relics to be found in the

castle park at that time. We didn't even realize how dangerous it actually was. Today, you would never allow children to do that, but back then it was omnipresent, and that's probably why we were simply more tougher guys in these days.

Were there any accidents?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Yes, unfortunately we have experienced serious accidents there. For example, once an employee was blinded by a grenade explosion. We must call ourselves lucky that such dangerous things are no longer present at the scrap yard. After my start in the company, I was often supervisor on our yard and of course had to be careful. But I liked it much better than the cramped, small office where my father and many others smoked. I preferred the fresh air at the junkyard.

What were your responsibilities at the scrap yard in Waidhofen?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: I was often in charge of the yard and liked to drive the excavator myself. If the machines had small defects, I repaired them. After all, I did an apprenticeship as an electrical engineer and as an industrial clerk in the largest electrical company at that time in Waidhofen. Therefore, if there were electrical problems, I could usually fix them myself – and with the rough operation there was always something to fix! Since we employed many semi-skilled workers at that time, often something went wrong.

In 1976 the company finally moved to Amstetten. What has changed for you?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: A lot has changed! I was practically the

vanguard in 1976. There was no regular operation at that time. It was rather the case that a lot of material was delivered and stored here while the facilities and the office were being built. The improvised office was just a caravan for the first six months. I had to take care of the bureaucratic work myself. On top of that, some of the suppliers couldn't find us because they were used to driving to Waidhofen. In addition, half a year before we moved to Amstetten, 500 meters from our current location, we had an interim storage facility, which we then left open again. That caused a lot of confusion, because everything was new and different.

In your private life, some things will have become new and different for you too...

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: With the move, my workplace was suddenly only accessible by car. It quickly became clear to me that I would have to move to Amstetten with my family at some point. It turned out relatively well that we found a semi-detached house together with my parents and moved in 1977.

What has changed from the activities for you?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: At first only the machines were completely different. I was still to be found at the scrap yard, operating the machines, driving the excavator, working with the large shears and occasionally driving the truck. But that was rather the exception. On Saturday morning I took care of the ferrous and utility ferrous sales. And then I moved more and more to the purchasing department and looked after major customers. Consequently, I was on the road a lot.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 20! ▶



“The improvised office was just a caravan for the first six months.”

How did the cooperation in the management with your brother work?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Basically, we were active in separate areas. This meant that there were hardly any points of friction. Our father also taught us that you learn the most when you fall on your face, and he often gave us a free hand in making decisions. There was never a bad word when a business did not work out so well. The important thing was that we learned our lessons from this and that it never happened a second time. I never interfered, when it was not absolutely necessary. After all, nobody makes mistakes on purpose.

Your brother Herbert said in an interview that you often had his back – especially during the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group's expansion abroad. How did you experience that?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: Herbert was definitely the visionary in the company, yet we decided everything unanimously. He always went "out to the front" – whether abroad or in the Chamber of Commerce, where he was working. I must honestly admit that I was happy about that. I did not want to be on the road all the time. After all, he did unwind a few hundred thousand kilometres in his car. In addition, there was the Iron Curtain. You couldn't be sure that you'd come back from the East safely. I was glad if I didn't have to drive there. It was enough for me that my car was stolen in Bratislava once within five minutes. However, I have to admit that we also met wonderful people there

and made great friends. But we also met people where it is better not to touch. That's why we decided to stay away from business in Russia – although we would have been very tempted. However, we have seen German colleagues who learned it the hard way.

If you learn the hard way, you should be able to celebrate success in the end. What was your greatest personal success in all these years?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: For me as Managing Director, the fact that we didn't have to lay off any employees in the period after the crisis of 2008 was probably the greatest success. Yet we really did not have many orders at that time. But it was important to me that we continue to employ our staff. Our employees are our most important capital. I suppose they know that, and they reward us, which is why we have hardly any fluctuation.

Fortunately, the crisis of 2008 has been overcome. How do you see the current situation of the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: In my view, the situation is positive – even if the Corona pandemic now puts a lot of things into perspective. With the rejuvenated team, we are well positioned for the future. In addition, things are always changing: We have scaled back some of the areas in which we played a pioneering role, and are now breaking completely new ground.



"In many cases, it is a question of education how to deal with waste. It is up to each and every one of us to do the right thing."

With the new paths you are probably referring above all to the development from a former scrap dealer to an e-waste recycler. As a result, the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group now also recycles plastics. Where do you think the journey will lead?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: That is the case. The plastics division is very important. In many cases, plastics are now demonized, but it is no longer possible to imagine life without them. In medicine, for example. That's why recycling is very important – and the necessary separation morale. I do get around a bit in the world and my former profession means that I go through life with slightly different eyes. In many parts of the world it is madness how waste is handled. We humans should not be surprised about the extinction of fish and species. In many cases, it is a question of education how to deal with waste. It is up to each and every one of us to do the right thing.

For you it was the right thing to retire in 2010. How easy was it for you to say goodbye?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: I definitely didn't have a pension shock. With my retirement I took over the presidency of the Amstetten-Ferschnitz Golf Club. This task is like a year-round job – I'm constantly on the road for the club. But it gives me great pleasure – after all, I have been playing golf since 1984. My wife supports me as Vice President, so we have a lot to do.

How will you spend the rest of your retirement?

MÜLLER-GUTTENBRUNN: After I recently had to undergo an operation, I'm now enjoying my time much more than before. I have been happily married to my wife Anna for 22 years. Together we have eight children who bring us a lot of joy. In addition there are already eight grandchildren – there is always something going on. My wife and I also like to travel. Since the operation, my motto in life is: Do it now! Many people always say, this and that I will do later, next year or so – but you should especially enjoy your life in the here and now.

That's a good conclusion – may you continue to enjoy your life in the here and now. In any case, we say thank you for your time and the exciting interview!

A long way for the international transport of plastics

By the beginning of 2021, new legal regulations for the transboundary transport of plastics had to be created. The intention behind the new regulations is to drastically reduce plastic waste in the sea. However, recycling companies that reprocess plastics from electronic and electrical waste were left facing great uncertainty since the first draft would have caused major problems. Fortunately, the problems were finally resolved.

Plastics have changed our planet and our society enormously over the last 100 years. Many things that are self-evident today would be unthinkable without plastics. Despite the many positive aspects, plastics also cause major environmental problems. The world's oceans are suffocating in plastic waste, microplastics can now be found almost everywhere and the consequences that will result from this are still completely unclear. But a lot of things don't have to be...

Careless handling of plastics

Why can so much plastic end up in the environment (e.g. the oceans)? Simple answer: Because in many cases plastic products and the resulting waste are not handled carefully. One example of this was the export of plastic waste from Europe to other parts of the world, where the material was "recycled" and "reprocessed". In many cases, profit is what counts, not the well-being of people and the environment. Whether at the electronic waste dump in Agbogboshie or in inferior recycling industries outside Europe, environmental and social standards are lacking and outdated processes are used. Valuable plastics

are often melted down without proper separation, while unprofitable non-target plastics and waste products disappear into the environment.

A proposal to protect the world's oceans

It was precisely such practices that the Norwegian delegation wanted to put a stop to in 2017 as part of the Basel Convention (int. environmental agreement with 170 member countries that regulates transboundary transports and possible hazardous waste) in order to protect the world's oceans. The proposal was intended to make the transboundary transport of plastic waste more difficult.

The idea was to divide plastic shipments into three groups:

- pure plastics: these fractions are already sorted and only need to be extruded. The total quantity can be recycled. The waste can be classified as „green“ listed (like most plastics until recently) and no complex controls are necessary.
- mixed plastics: these fractions still have to be separated, with a certain proportion (possibly) not being recyclable. Control is necessary here to ensure that the processor of these plastics is doing everything correctly and that no environmental risks arise. The competent authorities in the countries involved give their consent. A notification procedure makes this assurance possible. However, the material is thereby classified as non-hazardous.
- contaminated plastic waste: These fractions contain not only different plastics as a mixture, but also impurities. These contaminated plastic mixtures are thereby classified as hazardous waste.



"It was feared that the draft presented could lead to WEEE plastics having to be declared as hazardous waste."

This proposal had good intentions and was an important step in many respects – however, care had to be taken not to stumble on the way to the finished law! This was especially true for EU states like Austria with regard to not unnecessarily slowing down or even making impossible the recycling of plastics within the European Union.

Many questions remained unanswered at first

By January 1, 2021, the proposal described above had to be cast into valid laws. The EU Commission therefore presented a draft for the adaptation of the legal framework, which caused great concern among companies such as MGG Polymers, which recycle plastics from waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE): Many questions remained unanswered, which could have led to legal pitfalls.

It was feared that the draft presented could lead to WEEE plastics having to be declared as hazardous waste. The reason for this are substances such as brominated flame retardants, which are used as additives so that the plastics have required properties (e.g. flame retardant). Such a classification would have meant that many recycling companies would not have been allowed to accept WEEE plastics at all, because they do not have permits to accept hazardous waste.

In addition, the transport of the plastics, which would suddenly have been classified as hazardous waste, would have become considerably more expensive. Another effect would have been that the costs for incinerating the waste with the undesirable substances would also have increased considerably.

That could not have been in the inventor's mind! After all, in plants such as MGG Polymers, enormous sums are invested in order to be able to recycle plastics from waste electrical and electronic equipment in the most environmentally friendly way possible. Thanks to modern technology, impurities and banned substances are separated, removed from circulation and destroyed in thermal processes (incineration) in an environmentally safe manner. However, such plants require large quantities of plastics to operate successfully.

"Nobody would want that to happen!"

If sufficient quantities of plastics are not available on the national market or if this recycling facility – as is the case with MGG Polymers – is located in a small EU country, material needs to be imported from other EU states. "If such transports were no longer possible or unprofitable due to a new classification, this would only have resulted in adverse effects," says MGG Polymers Managing Director Chris Slijkhuis. "It would have had a significant detrimental impact on EU plans for a circular economy. Established recycling targets would remain unattainable. There would have been a shortage of processed recycled plastics on the one hand, while on the other, plastic parts from old appliances would have had to be incinerated. Nobody would want that to happen!"



The solution: EU48 classification

For this reason, Slijkhuis supported a demand from EERA, the association of European electronics recyclers. This argued for an EU48 classification of WEEE plastic waste within the EU. This means that such fractions would be classified as non-hazardous but notifiable waste. This would allow competent authorities in each EU country to monitor compliance with all regulations.

On December 22, 2020, the text of the law was published – actually with this classification EU48 – and already implemented in practice on January 1, 2021. Thus, a great danger was averted. However, a new challenge arose: the truly ambitious timing. It was not possible to get notifications through in the week between Christmas and the turn of the year. For this reason, some notification requests remained in limbo for weeks. However, with MGG Polymers' pre-consent, these notifications should be enabled quickly, so that all imports of mixed plastics from WEEE to MGG Polymers will be based on valid notifications.

All is well that ends well, as the regulation reached is also in the original spirit of the Norwegian delegation to the Basel Convention, as the proper recycling of WEEE plastics is definitely the most effective prevention of plastic waste in the sea!





“There are more and more composite materials in the collected fractions that are difficult to process, such as sandwich panels or insulation panels. To shred these materials well, we need a shredder with an appropriate cutting capacity.”

New shredder in operation

MGG Metran invested 900,000 euros to install an energy-efficient shredder. The new machine offers many advantages and also new possibilities.

More than four years ago, the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group began collecting and recycling hard plastic products. Code name: Bobby Car project. Even then, shredding the products – such as children’s toys, buckets, garden furniture – was a challenge. The plastic-metal composites could not be shredded efficiently enough with the existing shredder plants, which are designed for processing products rich in metal. With continuously gained experience, the shredders have been adapted again and again in the course of time.

More and more material

Finally, a mobile and flexible shredder was used that was able to shred a wide variety of waste. However, as the volumes collected in the Bobby Car project are fortunately continuing to increase, a new stationary shredder was installed at the MGG Metran plant in the summer of 2020. “The trend in hard plastic collection is fortunately moving towards 2,000 tonnes per year. Until now, intermediate steps were always necessary to separate the plastic parts from iron and metals and to remove impurities. That often meant a lot of additional trips with the wheel loaders across the site.” explains MGG Metran Managing Director Gunther Panowitz.



The new shredder

After checking all possibilities, the choice for the new shredder was made in favour of the XR3000C from the Salzburg manufacturer Untha. Compared to the mobile shredder used so far, it offers a number of advantages such as a slightly higher cutting performance or finer shredding. In addition, the new shredder was also equipped with separators for ferrous and non-ferrous parts as well as impurities. "This enables us to prepare the material from the hard plastic collection in an ideal way to further separate it in our plastics sorting plant," says a delighted Gunther Panowitz.

The modern "Eco Power Drive" drive concept reduces energy consumption enormously. Since no belts, hydraulic pumps or shaft stubs are required, maintenance costs are also reduced. Nevertheless, the two 180 HP motors in the shredder provide the required cutting performance, as Panowitz confirms: „There are more and more composite materials in the collected fractions that are difficult to process, such as sandwich panels or insulation panels. To shred these materials well, we need a shredder with an appropriate cutting capacity like the XR3000C“.

Versatile in use

Like its predecessor, the new shredder can be used in many ways – it can also be used to separate copper compounds (e.g. copper cables). Another possible use for the XR3000C at MGG Metran is the processing of aluminium cans. Not only iron and other metals are separated from aluminium, but another strength of the new machine becomes apparent: the variously selectable cutting geometry. Gunther Panowitz explains: "By using different perforated sieves, we are very flexible and can produce different sizes. We now notice that thanks to the new cutting geometry the parts can be pressed better“.

After the first few months of operation, MGG Metran is very positive about the 900,000 Euro investment. Managing Director Gunther Panowitz says: "The shredder works exactly as we imagined. However, I am sure that we will also gain new experience with this machine in order to further improve our processes."



The man for special cases

Danny Steriti has been managing the fortunes of Müller-Guttenbrunn Handel GmbH (MGG Trade) in Switzerland since 2001 – but in the meantime he is also well versed in troubleshooting. In an in-depth interview, the 56-year-old from the Rhein valley reveals, among other things, why he swapped his job as a window dresser for one with the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. He also describes exciting adventures, his slightly different view of things and what opportunities he sees in the crisis.

Mr Steriti, you have been working at Müller-Guttenbrunn for almost 30 years now. How did you come to work for us in the first place?

DANNY STERITI: Yes, I joined the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group exactly on 1 August 1992. But I didn't fit into the industry at all, because I am a trained decorator – in other words, a window dresser. However, the job pays extremely badly, so I trained in sales and personnel management in the department shop group where I did my apprenticeship. As a result, I became a team leader at the age of 22 and rose to the position of deputy managing director of a company with 120 people. At the age of 24 I was elected Vice-President of the Jelmoli Group Employee Council and was thus the mouthpiece for 4,200 employees throughout Switzerland vis-à-vis the Executive Committee. Every month we met with the Executive Committee and spent one or two days discussing employee concerns. Over the years, I could no longer identify with Group personnel policy, so I was determined to change. It must also be said that I am multilingual – if only because my father came from southern Italy and my mother from Carinthia and I grew up in Switzerland. Therefore I wanted to orientate myself professionally so that I could apply these skills. By chance I was asked by an employee of Metfer in Liechtenstein – one of the companies of the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group – whether I would like to take over her job.

And that suited you right away?

STERITI: For me it was – but I was overqualified for the Metfer managing director at the time. But I really wanted this job and fortunately we came to an agreement. However, the start was anything but ideal, because only a few days after I started working for Metfer I tore my Achilles tendon while playing football. I was totally uncomfortable calling my boss and telling him that I was in hospital. I wanted to get back to work as quickly as possible – which I did. That was anything but good for my foot, but I simply had a bad conscience. Today, it would be much easier with a laptop and smartphone and you could work from home or the hospital. Back then, with all the paperwork and bulky writing utensils, that was unthinkable!

What did you do there in the beginning?

STERITI: In the beginning I was responsible for the office, then I got into the field and started buying scrap metal. At that time we were still loading ships with iron scrap in Africa and unloading them in Spain or Italy. We even had a small port in Szczecin in Poland. That was an exciting time – but at some point it was no longer profitable to bring iron scrap from North Africa via Spain to Europe. So the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group also developed more and more into the East and founded new branches.

You played a decisive role in the establishment of some of these new branches...

STERITI: That's right. In 1995 we started exporting the first batches of scrap from Romania. On the advice of the former managing director, the first branch was established in Timisoara in 2000. After I took over the management at Metfer, the Romanian business was further expanded. In 2004 we founded a subsidiary of the same name in Arad. Companies were then acquired in a 2-year cycle. However, not everything worked smoothly with the Romanian partners and had to be reorganised. In cooperation with Michael Kimmeswenger, I was

“Managing people is one of the biggest challenges in life. Anyone can have top skills, even if some people don’t feel that way.”

allowed to take over the troubleshooting and clean up as best I could. That way I got away more and more from the day-to-day trade and this enabled me to concentrate on those essentials that needed to be tidied up. This is not always easy, it’s mostly mismanagement from earlier times! Of course this also means that I am often on the road – before the Corona pandemic I spent up to 80 percent of my working time abroad. Now, thanks to COVID19, the whole thing has shifted a little more to video conferencing.

In addition to the many languages you have learned, you certainly also benefit from the skills in human resources management – don’t you?

STERITI: Definitely, because it is always about people – and every person and culture is different, both are interesting. Managing people is one of the biggest challenges in life. Anyone can have top skills even though you don’t see it at first sight. People are the most important asset in a company. Of course, you can always have disappointment because you cannot see inside and some people play the wrong game or manipulate. Then it takes courage to make painful decisions.

Do you often experience human disappointment?

STERITI: It happens again and again – and you are never prepared for it. Nevertheless, you should always be open – just as you are for new cultures. I always had contact with families in all the countries – whether England, Italy, Spain, the former Eastern Bloc or Africa. That’s when you see how people “work”, how they tick. West Africa was a very special borderline experience anyway.

Why was that?

STERITI: Back in Guinea, we tried to get into business by scrapping old bauxite mines. That was a challenge not only culturally and logistically, because the country was constantly on the brink of revolution. In any case, we had to flee head over heels because a coup took place overnight and the military took over. We had to flee the country,

with gunshots and grenade detonations in the background! The last containers of scrap metal were brought out of the country months later through good relations. An exciting story, but in business terms it was a fiasco – but you learn from that too.

So you also see the positive in defeat. Would you call yourself an optimist?

STERITI: I was and am an optimist – even now in the situation with Corona. You always have to keep yourself in mind: Even where it rains heavily, the sun will shine again at some point. Of course, we will not be able to overcome the current crisis as quickly as we did the global financial crisis in 2009. Nevertheless, a crisis must always be seen as an opportunity. Take the automotive industry, for example: for years little or nothing has happened there, even after the diesel gate! With Corona, you are on the brink of the abyss and suddenly all car manufacturers are shaking up e-mobility projects. Sometimes this impetus is needed to get people out of their lethargy. It is absolutely human to become comfortable as long as things are going reasonably well – even if the approaching problem is already on the horizon. Often it is only an existential crisis that gives the impetus to develop further or to change something. For us as the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group, this is of course just as much a challenge, because as a producer of secondary raw materials we are directly affected by the problems in the industry. However, I am convinced of our company and look forward to mastering the new challenges. They are part of our lives. We must take up challenges, take the first step and then run.

From your statements one can conclude that you like to look at the big picture – or is this impression deceptive?

STERITI: I think so. As a decorator, you learn to think in three dimensions and perspectives. This is how you like to approach challenges and opportunities differently. Every decision can be viewed three-dimensionally, the personal side, the opposite side and the objective side. This three-dimensional thinking has often helped me in life – for example to eliminate risks. This does not mean that I do not make mistakes! As mentioned earlier, some things go wrong for me too. You fall to learn to stand up.

Thinking in three dimensions will certainly help you in your current position as Managing Director of MGG Trade. We have not talked about that yet! What is there to say about the company?

STERITI: We partly market the secondary raw materials of individual MGG subsidiaries on the international market. Our main customer is Italy. We also ship certain mixed products to India.

The corona pandemic mentioned earlier has changed the working world for many people. Does that also apply to MGG Trade?

STERITI: Three-dimensional thinking has helped me here, because three years ago we already started to focus on digitalisation and set up virtual workplaces. So we are no longer dependent on the location of the office, but can work anywhere. So the lockdown was not a big problem for us in terms of work technology.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 28! ▶



Does this mean that you are currently not going to the office?

STERITI: Yes, yes – I have the privilege of being able to cycle to our office in my home town of Buchs. Since our employees are currently on short-time work, I have to cover many areas. That's why I'm currently doing a lot of work that I don't normally do. For example, I am currently assigned to the telephone service again.

What about the trips abroad that you mentioned earlier?

STERITI: They have of course been drastically reduced. I always planned my trips a month in advance in the time before Corona. I like to do the planning and booking myself, so that I have a certain flexibility. That way I can change my hotel room or flight at the decisive moment. That makes many things easier. As travel is limited I now exchange information with many people via video calls. Even with our Swiss team I communicate partly via face time. Corona will continue to drive many things forward – many things will become more dynamic and digital. Generally speaking, if I have to move physically, I will always be slower than a message by e-mail or the exchange via video chat. Corona may not be the last virus that will annoy us humans. However, since we do not want to live in a permanent lockdown state, we will have to adapt our lifestyle sooner or later. We are still in a finding phase, because nobody really knows where the journey will take us. We just must not be afraid, because fear blocks us. We have to take the necessary steps of our own accord to be able to shape the path. If we are not fast enough, someone will push us and then we have to follow the path we have chosen. I cannot say what the final path will look like, only that it will be tiring, but exciting at the same time.

Perhaps you can tell us something about the future of the secondary raw materials market in which you are active?

STERITI: As we all know, China is becoming more and more isolated, but continues to shower the world with cheap products. In the sha-

dow of China, other Asian countries are also continuing to develop. It should not be forgotten that we cannot recycle certain products and materials. However, recycling waste in a completely clean way should become a basic idea in the future. For a long time, we chose the easy way and shipped waste to Asia and Africa, which, by the way, is still happening to some extent today. This is now falling on our heads. Europe must be a pioneer in this area – precisely because so many people live together in a relatively small part of the world. This is probably why we are thinking about it the most – and I am sure that the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group will make an essential contribution to this. It has already demonstrated this with the scrapping of cars and the recycling of electrical waste.

On the subject of the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group, let me ask you a final question: you have worked for the Group for 28 years, have travelled a lot and seen a lot. What do you think makes MGG special?

STERITI: Many companies claim it, but at Müller-Guttenbrunn, people really are the centre of attention. The company is very social – I experienced this myself when I was struggling with cancer in 1998. I also experienced this during and after the financial crisis, when nobody was laid off. That's when you realise that you really do hold on to people and their know-how. I experienced it quite differently in a large corporation, where you are really just a number. Fortunately, that is not the case here. I've experienced ups and downs with the Müller-Guttenbrunn family. It's incredible how MGG has developed. It is always a pleasure for me when I see the blue-green trucks from the MGG companies somewhere on the motorway. Every time I get a little bit of patriotism, because I am proud to be a small part of it. There is a reason why I have been working here for 28 years. I feel good and I wish that this will continue.

Mr Steriti, may your wish come true. In any case, many thanks for the exciting conversation and the interesting insights!





Conquered in flight

In order to solve an ever increasing problem, attempts were made to settle peregrines at the MGG Metran area – with success. In the early summer of 2020, offspring hatched again.

In many cities they have become a plague: the pigeons. In some places they are already considered pests! It is not for nothing that they have even been given the unflattering nickname “Rats of the air”. But even outside the large conurbations, the street pigeon finds a good livelihood with sufficient food. Over the years, for example, more and more pigeons have made their home on the MGG Metran site – and this has led to problems.

No joy with the pigeons

“With their excrement, the animals use to glue together cable cups, wires and other electrical supply lines,” says Gunther Panowitz, Managing Director of MGG Metran. In addition, the pigeons – like many other bird species – find food in the recycled waste. Cans with leftover food or pet food that are not completely empty are a real find. This would not be too bad in principle, but the birds do like to hijack the whole can. So it was not rare to see the animals on the surrounding flat roofs eating their prey with relish. This was doubly annoying, because good recycling material was lost in this way, which then repeatedly clogged the gutters!

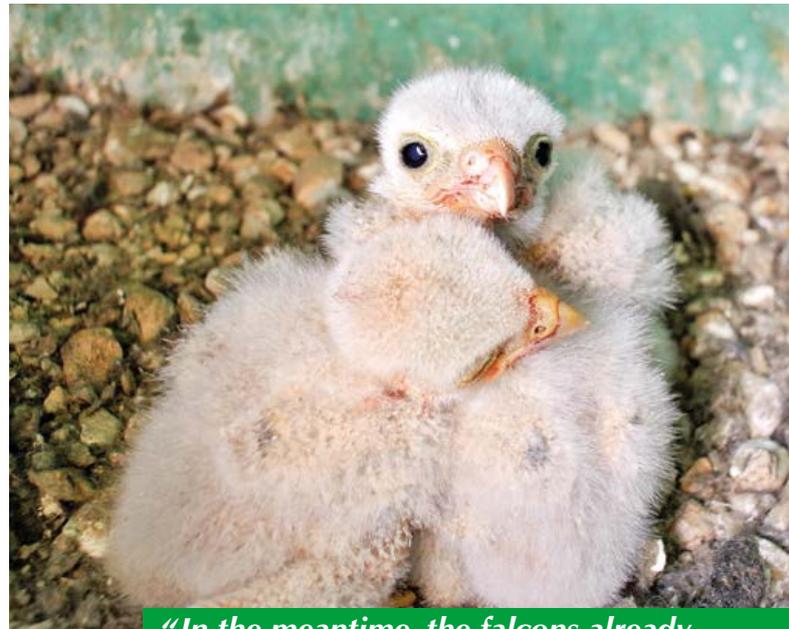
Hunters instead of poison

For this reason, MGG Metran was forced to stop the unbridled reproduction of pigeons. However, poison or similar means were out of the question. After all, as a recycling company, ecological considerations are paramount. Instead, the idea was developed to locate birds of prey on the company premises. For this reason, large nesting boxes were built, which are ideally suited to animals such as the peregrine falcon.

With great hope, MGG Metran employees fixed the nesting boxes under the roofs. After that, they had to wait. The first year they waited in vain, but the second year peregrine falcons actually nested. As a skilled hunter, it almost exclusively captures flying birds. He spies his prey either from an elevated sitting post or in a high circle flight. Pigeons are right at the top of the menu – ideal from the point of view of the MGG Metran team. The number of pigeons could be reduced in the meantime.

New home found

In the meantime, the falcons already feel so at home at the MGG Metran site that they even breed in the nest boxes and raise their offspring. In the early summer of 2020, small peregrine falcons hatched again from the brooded eggs. “The falcons have finally arrived at our home. We are always amazed when we can watch these majestic hunters during their flights,” says Gunther Panowitz, pleased that the ecological pigeon defence works so well.



“In the meantime, the falcons already feel so at home at the MGG Metran site that they even breed in the nest boxes and raise their offspring.”

Sustainable green plastics in new electric and electronic appliances

More and more manufacturers are turning to “green products”. As a result, the interest of manufacturers in PCR plastics is also growing. As one of the pioneers in this field, MGG Polymers is the first point of contact for many well-known producers. One product manufactured with PCR plastics from MGG Polymers has even been awarded the Plastics Recycling Awards Europe 2020!

MGG Polymers used the year 2020 to reposition itself on the market. To this end, the sustainability of its own PCR plastics (post-consumer recycled plastics) was placed even more in the focus of its market presence. “We want to make our customers even more aware of the fact that we produce sustainable plastics from Waste of Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in a quality that can be reused for the production of new equipment,” emphasises MGG Polymers Managing Director Slijkhuis. These are points that speak for MGG Polymers plastics:

1. The raw materials come from the EU market.
2. MGG Polymers does not use fossil raw materials in its production.
3. MGG Polymers produces with green electricity from solar energy and hydropower.
4. The environmentally friendly and sustainable plastics have much more stable prices than virgin plastics, which are dependent on fluctuations in the international oil market.

Some well-known producers appreciate this and use the sustainable PCR plastics to produce components for new electrical appliances. “We are pleased to note that the general public is increasingly interested in the use of PCR plastics for new e-products,” says Chris Slijkhuis.

Right on trend

More and more manufacturers recognize this trend. Since quite a while catchwords such as “eco” or “environmentally friendly” have been used a lot. However, manufacturers often refer to only one aspect – for example, lower energy consumption compared to the predecessor model. The situation is completely different with the new “Senseo Viva Café ECO” coffee machine from Philips. First of all, the product is made of over 75 percent recycled plastics. But there are also other parameters regarding energy consumption, CO₂ reduction (not only by the use of PCR plastics but also by through less pa-

ckaging) or durability. “We have already seen with other products that an environmentally conscious design and its implementation with PCR plastics can be realized without disadvantages and deterioration, if done properly” reports Chris Slijkhuis. The new Philips coffee machine won the Plastics Recycling Awards Europe 2020 in the category “Automotive, Electrical or Electronic Product of the Year”.





Plastics Recycling Awards Europe

The Plastics Recycling Awards Europe 2020 ceremony - like so many events of the year - had to be done digitally. If you would like to watch the award ceremony, you can do so here: <https://bit.ly/35yoo4C>

You can also easily scan the QR code on the right, to open the video!



Big ideas for a small footprint

A similar example - even with improved performance - is the "Livebox 5" wireless router from Orange, which, in fact, is also produced with PCR plastics from MGG Polymers. Here, the carbon footprint has been reduced by 29 percent compared to the previous model, while at the same time the speed has been doubled. The reduction in the carbon footprint was also achieved by several factors: The housing was made from 100 percent recycled plastic. The product has also been designed to be lighter and more compact, allowing passive ventilation without a fan. Electronic components have generally been reduced - a fact that simplifies repairs and facilitates recycling. During the presentation of the product, Orange director Fabienne Dulac explained: "From the functions to the components and materials used, the Livebox was designed to offer the best performance while reducing the environmental impact".

Conclusion: "eco" is more than just reducing energy consumption. Environmentally friendly products require a clever basic design and other accompanying measures such as the reduction of packaging materials. An increasingly important component of "eco" products is definitely the use of PCR plastics. MGG-Polymers intends to build on the pioneering achievements of the past years and continue along this path. Managing Director Slijkhuis is convinced: "Together with the manufacturers, we can achieve a lot. We see that first-class products can be manufactured with our PCR plastics from WEEE".



"Conclusion: 'eco' is more than just reducing energy consumption. Environmentally friendly products require a clever basic design and other accompanying measures."



“It sounds banal, but the most important thing is to have the right material on the shovel or to put the material in the right pile.”

“I can give it a try!”

For more than two years now, Petra Reitbauer has been making sure that the plastics sorting plant at MGG Metran in Kematen is running properly. To do so, she also clamps herself behind the wheel of one of the large blue-green wheel loaders. For the relay interview, in which someone from the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group is always asked to step in front of the curtain to introduce their workplace, the 33-year-old has decided to take a break from work for once.

Ms Reitbauer, you have been working at MGG Metran for two years. As a plant operator and wheel loader driver, you have not exactly chosen typical female professions. How did this come about?

PETRA REITBAUER: Yes, currently I am the only woman here at the Metran production site. I originally was trained for a job in the retail business. As this is a low paying industry I decided in 2008 that I wanted to change. I’m flexible, I simply like to work and this is how I ended up at MGG Polymers back then.

The sister company is only a few hundred metres away. What did you do there?

REITBAUER: I first worked in the quality assurance laboratory for eight years. That was very exciting, but then I decided to work in production.

And what prompted you to move to MGG Metran after 10 years?

REITBAUER: You have to like working in shifts. After having worked at MGG Polymers production for some time, I decided that I did not want to continue doing night shifts anymore. I also wanted to be able to plan my time-off a little better and of course, doing something new also appealed to me. So I got the chance to switch to MGG Metran.

Here you are primarily responsible for the plastics sorting plant. Could you explain, how the system works to anyone who doesn’t know it?

REITBAUER: The KUSO, as it is called in our company, is fed with shredded material – the main part consisting of plastics in all shapes, colours and sizes. The system separates out impurities and recognizes what type of plastic the individual parts are and then separates them according to the type of plastics. Finally, the plastics are filled into big bags, which are then delivered to MGG Polymers.

So what are your concrete activities at the KUSO?

REITBAUER: First of all, the system has to be set up accordingly so that it separates exactly what it is supposed to separate. To do this, the system must be constantly monitored to ensure that, for example, the extraction or separation screens are functioning properly. Furthermore, I have to repeatedly take samples of our finished production and bring them to the quality assurance department for analysis. My tasks also include stopping the system from time to time to replace parts – such as the knives in the cutting mill.

You are not only active at the KUSO, but also on the wheel loaders from time to time...

REITBAUER: Indeed, I step in as a substitute when colleagues are on holiday or on sick leave. During the holiday season, it often happens that I sit on one of the high-powered vehicles and bring material to our sorting lines or drive the separated materials to the respective boxes.

What prompted you to sit in such a driver's cab?

REITBAUER: I was asked if I was interested in driving the wheel loaders. I remember saying at the time: "I have respect, but I can give it a try!" In the meantime, it really like and enjoy doing it.

What do you need to pay attention to in this job?

REITBAUER: It sounds banal, but the most important thing is to have the right material on the shovel or to put the material in the right pile. In stressful moments it is often not so easy to keep track of things. After all, there are a lot of different fractions to be found on our site.

What is it like to drive these large vehicles if you don't do it every day?

REITBAUER: It's a bit like driving a car. You don't forget that so quickly – I can find every lever right away. But it's true that if I haven't driven for some time, I have to adjust again. So I'm often a bit more careful at the beginning before I really step on the gaspedal again.

There are quite a few loaders and other vehicles driving around the Metran area. Don't you get in the way?

REITBAUER: All in all, we have four loaders in use. But each one has its own area on site so that everything runs smoothly. We are also connected to each other by radio – so we can help each other if necessary. Communication is very important and works really well.



Does this variety at work also make it attractive for you?

REITBAUER: Of course it's better if you don't have to do monotonous work day in, day out. For me it is always particularly exciting when the KUSO is just standing still because there is no material to separate. Then all kinds of different jobs can be waiting for me: Today, for example, I first worked on the sorting conveyor and then I helped in quality assurance. In any case, there is always enough to do.

With so many different jobs, your free time will hopefully provide a good balance ...

REITBAUER: Compensation in the sense of resting rather not, as I have four dogs that keep me on my toes. I do dog sports with them such as trail work. That's why I spend a lot of time with Sindy, Kiwi, Curly and Cloe in nature and on the dog training area. As you can see: I definitely don't have a lack of fresh air!

Then we wish you continued enjoyment with your four-legged friends and also the varied work at MGG Metran!

Experiences from the Corona period

Corona has not only changed our personal behaviour, but also the economy and society. The Mostviertler MGG companies have also felt the effects of this. Let's take a look at what happened in 2020.

Corona was and is the main topic of this year. Like a tsunami, the virus swept over the world, which was completely unprepared for it. When Cov-Sars-2 had also arrived in Austria, things took an abrupt turn – and the country was standing still. The lockdown brought many things to a shutdown. This also applied to the waste collection industry. The waste collection points were all closed in March. Thus the flow of waste material dried up. This also became noticeable in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group.

From the three Mostviertler MGG plants, MGG Metrec in Amstetten was the first to be affected. Due to the lack of quantities of electrical waste and scrap, it was decided to make use of the option of short-time working. "In the beginning, we had a crisis meeting every second day because none of us knew what to do next," recalls Michael Grimm, Managing Director of MGG Metrec. Gradually, MGG Metrec and MGG Polymers were also affected by the lower volumes. As no more recycled material was arriving from abroad, all offices were closed, short-time working and home office for employees were introduced. A completely new experience for many employees.

After the lull came the flood

After the initial shock was overcome and infection rates in Austria remained relatively low, the harsh measures were eased in April. At the end of April, the first waste collection centres resumed their work. After waste volumes had tended towards zero, there was now an enormous boost. Many people had used the time of the lockdown to clear out cellars and attics and to sort out a lot. But this was not only in Austria – also from the neighbouring countries a lot of material was delivered. MGG Metrec had already ended short-time work at this time.

Things looked different at MGG Polymers, as Managing Director Chris Slijkhuis describes: "We always kept our logistics department occupied during the lockdown phase in order to be able to accept incoming material. Our plan was: as soon as we could produce for at least ten days, we would start up our production again. On 5 May we were finally ready to start again." If the necessary material for recycling was missing in the weeks before, the opposite happened after MGG Polymers had restarted the production again: The flood of material could hardly be managed. The stock of material was quickly filled up again. However, it can be assumed that the flow of material will be reduced again, as the emptied cellars and attics are probably only a one-off effect.





“Thanks to the willingness of the employees to work short time, it was possible that the entire workforce could be maintained.”

A similar effect was also seen at MGG Metran, where work output was initially reduced by 20 percent by means of short-time working until June. “Since July, we have had a relatively normal volume of material again,” says Managing Director Gunther Panowitz.

The crisis as an opportunity

As is well known, every crisis also offers an opportunity. The Metran plant used the time with low capacity utilisation for tests and trials. “We want to get better and better – that is our claim. That is why we have experimented with material stocks to further optimise our separation processes”.

MGG Polymers also used the time to put a new photovoltaic system into operation. This has already produced over 636 megawatt hours this year. This corresponds to a CO₂ saving of 318 tonnes. In addition,

the MGG company repositioned itself on the market and emphasised the sustainability of plastics production. “We want to make our customers even more aware of the fact that we produce sustainable plastics from old electrical equipment in a quality that can be reused for the production of new appliances,” emphasises MGG’s Managing Director Slijkhuis and also refers to the new website that was created during the Corona period.

Thanks to the willingness of the employees to work short time, it was possible that the entire workforce could be maintained. The Corona precaution measures taken have furthermore contributed to the absence of the development of clusters in the companies. Nevertheless, the Corona rules do influence the daily working routine of the employees – and nobody can predict how things will develop in the coming weeks and months.

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