



# SPECTRUM 2022



- 04 | 05    **When recycling gets dicey**
- 06 | 07    **As if the company belonged to me**
- 08        **High award for thoroughbred firefighter**
- 09        **Across the border with a new code**
- 10 | 13    **From nurseryman to Robin Hood**
- 14        **To the limit – and sometimes beyond**
- 15        **New habitat for bees**
- 16 | 17    **“Absolutely no mistakes should happen!”**
- 18        **Raw materials from the siding**
- 19        **More space, higher efficiency**
- 20 | 21    **Quality all around the clock**
- 22        **MGG Polymers at FAKUMA 2021: In the spirit of sustainability**
- 23        **E-mobility is writ large**
- 24 | 25    **Morning man with a horsepower machine**
- 26 | 27    **Renovation of an important transport artery**

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## Dear readers!

Who would have thought that the Corona pandemic still has our planet firmly in its grip almost two years after its outbreak? As a system-relevant company, from the very beginning, it was clear for us to meet the challenges with the greatest possible flexibility. In this way, we are helping not only to cope with the unpleasant side effects of the pandemic, but to emerge stronger from it! Together we can make these unpredictable times a little more predictable!

Of course, the safety of our employees, customers and partners is of primary importance. In addition to the special social challenges of these times, there are also numerous legal and statutory developments, that occupy our industry.

At MGG we have relied on the railway as an ecological transport alternative to the road ever since the company was founded. At Metrec, for example, around 4.000 wagons travel in and out of the company in Amstetten every year. Around 170.000 tonnes of material are moved in the process. Last year our track system was comprehensively renovated in order to be well positioned for the future (see report on page 26/27). Metran also delivers and removes around 24.000 tonnes of material per year via our railway station in Kematen.

An amendment to the Austrian Waste Management Act is currently causing heated discussions. It stipulates that, under certain conditions, transports of waste with a total weight of more than ten tonnes must be shifted from road to rail or to means of transport with equivalent or

lower pollutant or greenhouse gas potential in a phased plan starting on 1 January 2023. In my opinion, it is a great pity that this objective was discussed and ultimately adopted in such an undifferentiated manner.

In order to achieve the Austrian national climate targets, the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> is the order of the day, but unfortunately many customers and suppliers do not have easy access to rail loading. Therefore, the implementation of the new law requirements will be a major hurdle for some companies. And one must also be allowed to critically question this new law: After all, what makes sense from an ecological point of view in theory must first pass the nationwide practical test. For example, we will have to ask ourselves how economically efficient the transport of plastic waste by rail is and whether we have not overshot the mark here.

As always, I hope you enjoy reading our annual Spectrum magazine. I think there are again many informative and interesting glimpses behind the scenes of our group.

Stay well!

Yours

Christian Müller-Guttenbrunn  
CEO

## When recycling gets dicey

**A fire at the MGG Metran plant site once again highlighted the great danger posed by lithium-ion batteries in collected recycling material. There are plenty of ideas for improving the current unsatisfactory situation from the point of view of recycling companies.**

Fires in recycling plants are unfortunately not uncommon. Often the cause is a single, incorrectly disposed, damaged lithium-ion battery. In February 2021, plastic recycling material stored at the MGG Metran site was also on fire in the middle of the night. Thanks to the rapid deployment of 13 fire departments, the fire was quickly brought under control and extinguished, so that no one was injured. Suspected cause of fire: an incorrectly disposed lithium-ion battery.

### **Dangerous cell phone battery**

This form of battery, which is also installed in smartphones, has a high energy density. Slight damage, however, can quickly lead to spontaneous combustion. Rechargeable batteries and batteries are therefore usually already removed during the collection of old appliances at waste yards. For this reason, it is first and foremost important to dispose electrical and electronic equipment – and this increasingly includes rather atypical products such as toys – properly. Usually, rechargeable batteries and batteries are disposed separately from the device. However, rechargeable batteries are increasingly being installed in devices in such a way that they can only be remo-

ved by specialists with special tools. Therefore, despite all precautionary measures, it happens again and again that a rechargeable battery is overlooked and becomes a potential cause of fire in the recycling material. To counter this danger, the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group (MGG), which processes thousands of tons of electrical and electronic scrap each year, has drastically increased safety measures in recent years. Unfortunately, incorrectly disposed electrical and electronic equipment that contains rechargeable batteries are regularly found in the hard plastic collections at MGG Metran which poses an enormous fire hazard.

### **Helpful exchange of experience**

Unfortunately, the fire at MGG Metran proves once again that there never is a 100% safety. The Association of European Electronics Recyclers (EERA), in which the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group is involved, is also aware of this. The association therefore invited its members to exchange experiences on how to minimize the risk of fire from lithium-ion batteries in recycling plants. In the resulting report, there are numerous preventive measures in organization, technology and infrastructure that recycling companies can take. The key conclusion, however, is that the best way to prevent fires is to eliminate the risk posed by spent batteries as early as possible in the collection and recycling chain. In truth, this starts with the design of a new electrical/electronic product!



*“The fire at MGG Metran at the end of February 2021 was probably caused by an incorrectly disposed lithium-ion battery.”*



*“Unfortunately, incorrectly disposed electrical and electronic equipment that contains rechargeable batteries are regularly found in the collected solid plastic waste material at MGG Metran and this poses an enormous fire hazard.”*

### **Clear demands**

EERA therefore calls on the legislators, authorities and all other involved bodies and organizations to do their part to increase safety in the collection and treatment electrical and electronic scrap (WEEE). Specifically, they are calling for:

- Valid rules on the transport of lithium-ion batteries (European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, or ADR) and on the collection and logistics of WEEE (CENELEC standard EN 50625) have to be enforced better.
- Removable rechargeable batteries/batteries have to be removed before shipment. Devices with built-in batteries must be transported separately and in accordance with ADR.
- Small electronic devices that increasingly contain embedded batteries must not be transported in large containers.
- Devices that contain batteries have to be easily identified using standardized stickers.
- As more and more knowledge is required for the collection of WEEE, the training and qualification of personnel has to be improved.
- The steadily increasing costs for the collection and proper treatment of battery-operated devices are to be covered by the manufacturers.
- Manufacturers are requested to develop safer batteries or to allow easy identification and removal of rechargeable batteries/batteries from their products at the end of the product life cycle, as part of the product design.



## As if the company **belonged to me**

**Anyone looking for Gerhard Gassner will find the 58-year-old in the slotted iron hall at MGG Metrec. For the now traditional MGG relay interview, the busy employee from Kollmitzberg briefly takes a break from work and talks about it. He talks about constant variety, dishonest customers and what he enjoys most in the iron hall.**

***Hello Mr. Gassner! Due to the lockdowns, it has often been unusually quiet in the iron hall in recent months. Normally, there must be a lot more going on, right?***

GERHARD GASSNER: Yes, when up to six customers are bringing or picking up material at the same time, it gets really busy. Then I have to be particularly quick to avoid traffic jams on the scales. Besides, the customer is king – and, as we all know, you don't keep kings waiting.

***How would you describe your work here in the iron hall?***

GASSNER: There are two of us here in the hall. One of us drives the forklift, the other looks after the customers and keeps things tidy. We always take turns – that ensures constant variety. But that's given anyway by the customers for whom we cut, weigh or measure the grooved iron. Then we have to record all the necessary data and send the customer to the office with the completed material sheet for invoicing. If customers have to wait a little because several customers are coming at once, then you need a smile to keep them happy. I think I manage that quite well.

***How did you end up here at Müller-Guttenbrunn's iron hall in the first place?***

GASSNER: Hannes Grissenberger, my brother-in-law and yard foreman here at MGG Metrec, informed me in 2007 that someone was being sought for the iron hall due to a retirement. At that time I was a truck driver – and I really enjoyed doing that. So I thought for a while

whether I should change jobs. But Hannes said I should come and spend a day in the hall and have a look. I liked it right away and the decision was clear.

***You have already mentioned that you drove a truck. However, you are a trained locksmith...***

GASSNER: That's right. I completed my locksmith apprenticeship at the Mittermair company in Amstetten and worked there until 1992. After that, I moved to the Fehringer poultry farm in Aschbach as a factory mechanic. There, as a mechanic, I was also responsible for over 80 vehicles. I didn't just take care of the pickup or the brakes, but also liked to work on the transmission.

***Where did your interest in vehicles come from?***

GASSNER: Definitely through my father. He was also a truck driver, so I got to know the work in the workshop at a young age. I liked that even back then. As did the independent work and tinkering.

***And how did you end up at the truck?***

GASSNER: I was already allowed to drive the truck at the Fehringer poultry farm. After my father died, I took over his vehicle at the Zehner building materials business in Amstetten. I was then on the road from Vienna to Hallein for over 20 years and saw a lot of construction sites, as I mainly supplied private home builders.

***Home builders are sure to come to you now when they need grooving irons. Who else comes?***

GASSNER: Yes, everyone who needs utility irons comes to us. We have irons in a wide variety of shapes – from flat to angled – and also a wide variety of tubes. We also have customers who bring their scrap metal – for example, plumbers with stove and heating pipes. Farmers

bring old plows and harrows, for example. Householders come by when they want to replace a metal door, but they also bring old tin cans and nails. Everything you can imagine is brought to us.

***When does your work start in the morning?***

GASSNER: We start work here at 7 o'clock in the morning. Normally, we clean the saw or take care of the other machines. However, it does happen that the first customers are here at 7 o'clock. Until half past three in the afternoon we have the opportunity to buy or deliver material. After that, however, it really ends on time, because the day-end closing is done in the office. Afterwards, of course, everything has to be cleaned up. In any case, there is work throughout the day – also because we have to help out quickly elsewhere from time to time. Sometimes I am on the road with a truck here at the company site to transport material to and from the shredder.

***With so much going on, one thing or another is bound to have happened – isn't it?***

GASSNER: Yes, once we even went to court! A customer manipulated the material ticket and wanted to scam himself out of some easy money. We went to court three times – the first two times the person in question didn't show up. It's a real shame that some people are like that. That's why you often have to watch out, because some people just want to park their old car batteries here or disguise iron as more valuable copper. In 43 years of work, however, I have already acquired a certain knowledge of human nature, so that I can quickly assess

such customers. Such incidents naturally dampen my enjoyment a little, but most of the time I have a lot of fun in my work.

***What do you enjoy most about this work?***

GASSNER: What I enjoy most is dealing with customers – most of them are sociable and honest. I simply need to be able to exchange a few words with the customers. I would never be able to spend a whole year on the assembly line. In addition, it's really great that the management here at Müller-Guttenbrunn completely trusts in us. This means that we can do our work independently here in the iron hall. My credo is anyway: I work every day as if the company belonged to me. That way you make yourself responsible for what you do.

***That's definitely a good attitude. At the end of this interview, why don't you tell us what Gerhard Gassner does as a private person? Are you as busy there as well?***

GASSNER: I would say yes! At home we have a small farm with a few rabbits and chickens and my daughter's horse. I still like to tinker with the machines there – after all, there's always something to repair. I also used to do a lot of fishing on the Danube. Now, when necessary, I help my neighbor, who is also a farmer, or at the village renewal association, for example, when tractor work is needed.

***Then we wish you continued enthusiasm in your work – both at home and at MGG Metrec! In any case, thank you very much for the interesting interview.***

***“What I enjoy most is dealing with customers.”***





## High award for thoroughbred firefighter

**Armin Blutsch is called out when there's a fire: whether it's IT problems at the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group or when there's actually „fire on the roof“. He was honored for his commitment to the volunteer fire department at the Hofburg in early March 2021.**

Armin Blutsch has been part of the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group for almost 30 years. The IT specialist takes care of everything from small problems such as a malfunctioning monitor to managing large projects. However, he is generally quick on the spot when there is a fire somewhere – in the truest sense of the word!

It is hard to imagine the Amstetten Volunteer Fire Department without Armin Blutsch – after all, he has already been active there for half a century. Half of these 50 years he was even commander. In addition he is also active as vice-president in the federal fire-brigade federation for 340,000 firefighters in Austria. For his great commitment, Blutsch was awarded the Grand Decoration of Honor for Services to the Republic of Austria by Federal President Alexander van der Bellen on March 8 2021. The MGG team congratulates very warmly on this high honor!

### Heroes and their deeds

During the small ceremony in the legendary Maria Theresien Room in the Vienna Hofburg, the Federal President spoke of the firefighters being true heroes. In the case of Armin Blutsch, the heroic deeds can be poured into a concrete number of over 5,400 missions and exercises. Among them was the major fire at the Mondi-Neusiedler paper mill in Hausmening in 2001, which can also be expressed in figures: At that time, 8,500 tons of paper burned, so it took two weeks to extinguish the fire using 27 million liters of water.

### A sensitive topic

Of course, the subject of fire risk is also a constantly present topic in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. Armin Blutsch is well aware of this: „Due to the increased fire risk in some areas, it was and still is a sensitive topic. For the company management, fire protection has been a very high priority for years, which can be seen in the investments already made.“ The expertise of the experienced firefighter is always a great help in enabling optimum fire protection at the MGG plants. On the other hand, Blutsch appreciates the good compatibility between his job and his commitment to the volunteer fire department: „My bosses have always shown great understanding for the fire department. Nevertheless, the top priority is, of course, always: IT has to run!“

Although the thoroughbred firefighter resigned his command at FF Amstetten at the beginning of 2021, he is not yet thinking about quitting: „As I am still fire department vice president until the beginning of June 2022, there is still a lot to do. However, the number of fire department appointments will definitely decrease. So now there is more time for my other hobbies.“

*“Armin Blutsch was awarded the Grand Decoration of Honor for Services to the Republic of Austria by Federal President Alexander van der Bellen.”*



## Across the border with a new code

**The EU Waste Shipment Regulation brought serious changes for the transport of plastic waste across national borders. At MGG Polymers considers the solution that is finally adopted practicable, despite some flaws.**

At the end of the year 2020, things had to move quickly: On December 22, 2020, the EU Shipment Regulation was amended according to binding requirements of the Basel Convention. The goal of the amendments: To strengthen the control of transboundary shipments of plastic waste and ensure its environmentally sound recycling. The new regulation came into force just 10 days later. For plastics recyclers like MGG Polymers, this meant a sigh of relief on the one hand, but on the other hand it was almost impossible to implement everything on time.

### New waste code

In concrete terms, it was positive for the plastics recycling industry that E-Waste plastics did not suddenly have to be classified as hazardous waste. This would have made transport significantly more expensive and possibly even would have made processing impossible. Although no one could have wanted this, this possibility was definitely on the cards! The final text of the regulation now provides that within the EU, in addition to the „green listed“ plastic waste (code EU3011), which must not contain more than 2% impurities, and the plastic waste that is considered hazardous (code AC300), there is another entry with the abbreviation EU48. This EU48 category now includes mixed plastics from waste electrical/electronic equipment. (For those who want to know exactly: Incidentally, other codes apply to the import and export of these fractions to and from countries outside the EU. These are B3011, Y48 and A3210; however, AC300 applies to shipments of hazardous plastic waste from/in OECD countries).

### Notification required

Transport of EU48 fractions, under which mixed plastics from WEEE are to be classified as from January 1st within the EU, is subject to the prior notification and consent procedure. This means that written

consent must be sought and granted from all competent authorities at the point of shipment, transit countries and destination before the first shipment can be scheduled. Subsequently, three days prior to each waste shipment, notification must be made to all authorities. In addition, notification of shipment, arrival and processing to all competent authorities is mandatory at each of this stage of the supply-chain. This consent is usually valid for one year. However, it can be extended up to three years for recovery facilities with pre-consent (in the EU).

### Quick action is required – no bureaucracy

As the delegated EU act was only adopted shortly before Christmas, on December 22, plastics recycling companies had to act quickly. However, it now became apparent that bureaucracy was and is standing in the way of a quick solution. „We already asked for the necessary notifications in October, when this solution began to emerge,“ describes former MGG Polymers Managing Director Chris Slijkhuis, „However, the responsible bodies replied to us at the time that, after all, the regulation was not yet in force and therefore no notifications were possible. Of course, after the decision was made, it was no longer possible to get all the necessary notifications in place before January 1st. Fortunately, we had already notifications in place with most of our suppliers before then, so it's not quite so bad.“ At the end of 2021, the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group drew a positive interim balance, as most of the notification procedures could be completed, with the exception of a few suppliers.

Despite this unpleasant side effect, Slijkhuis sees the new regulation on the cross-border transport of plastics as a good mechanism. Especially given the fact that only a staggering 22 percent of plastics from WEEE end-up being delivered to formal and compliant recycling facilities such as MGG Polymers. Slijkhuis hopes that these new rules will help increasing this rate in the coming years, so that more plastics from WEEE are recycled formally in accordance with the law. This is an urgent pre-requisite for developing the circular economy within Europe.



*“New waste code for transboundary shipments of plastic waste.”*



## From nurseryman to Robin Hood

**MGG Polymers Managing Director Chris Slijkhuis retired on 30. April 2021. The Viennese cosmopolitan from the Netherlands looks back on an exciting time – not only in the last two years, during which he gave the plastics recycling company a completely new image. An attempt to sketch a portrait of the former MGG Polymers managing director.**

Anyone who meets Chris Slijkhuis immediately notices his infectiously positive manner, which is impossible to resist. This is complemented by his infectious laugh, which immediately reinforces this impression. It is precisely this positive attitude that the native Dutchman has tried to transfer to MGG Polymers over the past two years as Managing Director, breaking completely new ground in the process. Yet he had actually already retired in 2019 and was hundreds of kilometers away from the plastics recycling plant in Kematen – but let's take it one step at a time!

### From Boskoop out into the world

As the son of a nurseryman in Boskoop, Holland, his career path was clearly marked out after his horticultural studies: He was to take over his father's Garden Center. But things turned out completely differently – possibly also because he got to know the wide world at a young age through his father's many journeys. So, after completing his military service, Slijkhuis – which translates as "Mudhouse" – was drawn to a greenhouse company in the north of the Netherlands, where he

worked on greenhouse projects in countries in the Middle East and southern Europe. In Portugal, he met a group of young entrepreneurs and was invited to help build a factory for apple juice concentrate, and three years in Portugal followed.

The internationality followed Chris Slijkhuis – or was it the other way round? – also in his private life: he met his wife Els, a Belgian, during a holiday trip to Davos in 1980. After their time in Portugal, the couple returned to the Netherlands and moved to Belgium shortly afterwards. Professionally, after an intermezzo at a mechanical engineering company, he worked for a flat glass manufacturer in Belgium and for a Norwegian packaging manufacturer – and also studied for an MBA at the University of Antwerp.

### The road to Vienna and Silicon Valley

What followed was an engagement that would change the lives of Chris Slijkhuis and his family forever. At the pallet pooling company Chep, he not only built up a large international network by participating in congresses and trade associations, but he also moved to Vienna with his wife and two children to establish the Chep company in Austria, and later in Switzerland and the Czech Republic. This is where he stayed when he made another career change and joined Flextronics (now Flex), a typical Silicon Valley company with its European headquarter in Vienna.

At this globally active contract manufacturer and manufacturing

service provider for many well-known electronic OEM's, the Vienne by choice, took care of supply chain management – for example, for the first generation of Microsoft's Xbox. As a result, Slijkhuis was constantly on the move – or rather in the air: trips within Europe, to China or to the headquarters in the USA were constantly on the agenda. One day he met Mike Biddle – this American pioneering spirit was to found today's MGG Polymers plant in Kematen/Ybbs together with Christian Müller-Guttenbrunn a short time later.

### A new start

This joint venture was also a new starting point for Chris Slijkhuis and he joined Mike Biddle's team. The year was 2005, plastics recycling was still in its infancy and many new processes had to be set in motion – from sourcing the material to be recycled to selling the finished products. In addition to the plant in Kematen, a similar project was also started in China. For all these interlocks and processes, Slijkhuis, with his countless experiences in a wide variety of sectors across national borders, was the ideal man, especially to get the complex supply chain processes going.

The financial crisis of 2008 exacerbated the teething problems of the plans for plastics recycling, but the plant in Kematen stayed on course – thanks to the foresight in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. „It was only because of the support and patience of Müller-Guttenbrunn that the crisis could be overcome in this way,“ Chris Slijkhuis is certain in retrospect. „I admire how the company does not act in the short term, but thinks and acts in terms of generations over decades.“

### In search of a job

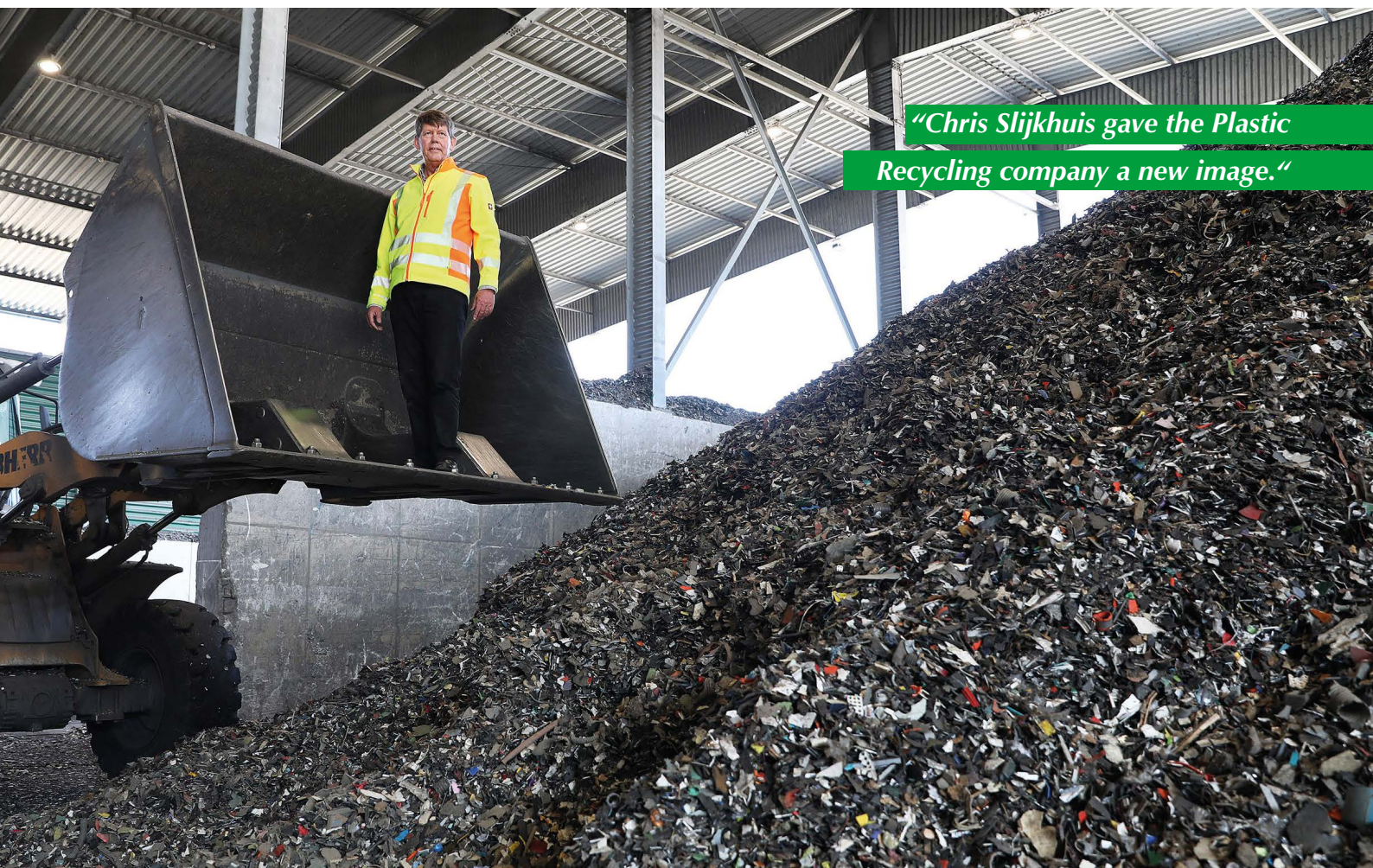
After the slump due to the crisis, things started to look up again – and the owners of Müller-Guttenbrunn's joint venture partner, where Chris Slijkhuis was employed at the time, prepared for an IPO due to the positive development – which, however, was never to come. A new management was installed, which immediately took short-term steps to be able to present the best possible figures at the planned IPO.

In the process, the company got rid of many of its former pioneers, for whom it no longer saw a need. This also affected Slijkhuis, who at the age of 58 was suddenly faced with the challenge of looking for a new place to work. At first, I thought: „At almost 60, it will be difficult to find a job. You're no longer in demand. But I soon had three offers – the only catch was that they were all abroad. But I wanted to stay in Vienna and not be on the road all the time. Until then, it was unfortunately the case that I was often only at home on weekends,“ Slijkhuis recalls. Müller-Guttenbrunn recognised the unique opportunity and secured the services of the multilingual manager, who speaks fluent English, Dutch, German and French and also understands a little Portuguese.

### A little culture shock

A small culture shock followed. Slijkhuis, who had previously managed four companies and initiated many things at Müller-Guttenbrunn's joint venture partner, now got to know other work processes and perspectives in the family-run company in Amstetten – keyword: thinking

CONTINUE ON PAGE 12! ▶



*“Chris Slijkhuis gave the Plastic Recycling company a new image.”*

*“I knew immediately that I had to do it.”*

across generations. However, the cosmopolitan quickly digested the shock and settled in well in the tranquil Mostviertel. Slijkhuis took care of quality management and the complex matter of notifications required for the transport of material to be recycled. However, he also worked in the areas of public relations and e-waste – which would eventually bring him back to MGG Polymers.

However, someone like Chris Slijkhuis has to break out of the idyllic tranquillity of the Mostviertel from time to time. For example, the now Viennese with a Dutch accent was repeatedly in Brussels on behalf of EERA, the European Association of Electronics Recyclers, or at the corresponding committees of the United Nations. He has also travelled to countries such as Ghana, El Salvador and Kazakhstan on behalf of the UN University to lecture on E-Waste and plastics recycling. In 2019, however, at the age of 65, it should be over – or at least a

little quieter. Slijkhuis gave up agendas and moved to Belgium for a year to do some lobbying on flame retardants and waste shipments. But the quiet in the background was not to last long!

### Back to the front row

What had happened? Müller-Guttenbrunn's joint venture partner at the plastics recycling plant in Kematen had suffered shipwreck and was sold. The Müller-Guttenbrunn Group took over the company in Kematen completely and was forced to go new ways in 2019. In the meantime, the plant was operating under the name MGG Polymers and now they asked the short-term Belgian Chris Slijkhuis if he could reposition the company. He didn't hesitate for a second: „I knew immediately that I had to do it!“

Big tasks awaited Slijkhuis and Günther Höggerl, who took over the management of MGG Polymers with him. The duo not only created new momentum in the company, but also completely repositioned the company in the market. Here Slijkhuis benefited from the fact that he knows both the view of the recycling company and that of producers in the electronics sector: „At MGG Polymers we don't just produce plastics. We produce green plastics! In this way, the waste material from old electrical and electronic equipment is turned into new, green raw material that can be used in new electrical and electronic equipment. However, you have to talk to the producers wanting to become greener, in their language.“



### It works...

To be able to devote himself to his work in the best possible way, Slijkhuis even moved into an apartment in the Mostviertel. His commitment paid off: the repositioning is working excellently despite all the side noises of the Corona crisis, and the team is better positioned than ever before. Knowing that MGG Polymers has a positive path ahead of it, Chris Slijkhuis actually retired on May 1st 2021 and handed over the management completely to Günther Höggerl.

Chris Slijkhuis and retirement – really?! The neologism (un)-retirement was definitely invented for a person like Chris Slijkhuis. No question, in the future he hopes to find more time for his family and friends as well as the countless hobbies such as playing the piano, singing, kayaking and other water sports. However, he can't and doesn't want to retire completely from recycling either. „I'm a bit like Robin Hood in that respect,“ he once said in a personal conversation that revolved around the new simplified EU regulations on the international transport of (e-waste). „The European Circular Economy can only develop if the international rules are made so that waste such as plastics from e-waste can be easily transported to recyclers that strictly follow legal requirements. Today, it can take years before companies like MGG Polymers can import raw materials – this circumstance is comparable to the wedged container ship in the Suez Canal. A circular economy, where a product is recycled at the end of its life, cannot develop in this way. But it should work – if only for future generations. It's worth

fighting for!“ A citizen of the world thinks beyond national borders. So, it will be interesting to see what chapters Chris Slijkhuis will add to his life story. The son of a nurseryman from Boskoop, who once set out to seek his fortune in the world, has definitely made it a bit better with his commitment to the recycling industry.

The Müller-Guttenbrunn Group says thank you for this and wishes him continued success and good health on his future path in life.



## To the limit – and sometimes beyond

**The EU project PolyCE presented MGG Polymers with great challenges, but also brought great success. Many manufacturers got an insight into what the recycling plastics from Kematen can do – and even MGG Polymers was surprised by some of the results.**

Improving the recycling of plastics from electrical and electronic waste for a more sustainable future. This was the goal set by the PolyCE project funded by the EU Commission a few years ago. Now the 20 participating companies and organizations look back on a successful project, but have long since turned their focus to the future. This is also the case with MGG Polymers, as Managing Director Günther Höggerl reports.

### A new dimension

For the company from Kematen/Ybbs, participation in this project was not a matter of course, as it represented a completely new dimension. In the top-class consortium, which included big names such as Philips, Whirlpool, the Fraunhofer Institute or universities from Berlin, Gent or Northampton, the company was the only fully integrated recycling company. Even before the start, they were convinced of the importance of this project – now, after the end of the project, even more so, Günther Höggerl confirms: „I found the work on PolyCE to be an ideal platform for us. Together with large companies and organizations from England to Spain, we have pushed forward cooperation in the spirit of the European idea. There was a lot in common in the process and very little that divided us.“

### Visible results for the end customer

Högerl was particularly impressed by the fact that one of the project goals was to quickly turn findings into products – and not just prototypes, but in series-produced products that are sold. PolyCE's scientific work thus became visible not only on paper or in pages long documents, but manifested itself in everyday objects such as coffee machines. For example, Philips used the findings of MGG Polymers as part of PolyCE to implement the new „Senseo Viva Café ECO“ coffee machine, which is made from more than 75 percent recycled plastics. Incidentally, this innovation won the Plastics Recycling Award Europe in the category „Automotive, Electrical or Electronic Product of the Year.“

Other products were developed in the PolyCE project, and MGG Polymers was involved in their creation. These include housings for various sensors from the Dutch company Wireless Value. These wireless products are used for reliable information transmission in a wide variety of industries and sectors for monitoring and controlling processes. „With just such examples, we have proven to manufacturers that we can give plastics a second life“, says Höggerl with satisfaction.

### Almost unsolvable tasks mastered

The great thing about PolyCE has been the toughness of the challenge, the MGG Polymers managing director continues: „We have always been faced with new seemingly unsolvable tasks. Whether it was high temperature resistance, strength or other requirements for our recycling products – the question was always: Where is the limit? Our products have surprised us again and again. With each one of these tasks, we pushed ourselves to the limits, only to finally realize the almost impossible.“ As a result, MGG Polymers was able to learn a lot about its own PCR plastics, generate new knowledge and gain insights into which homework still needs to be done for the future – and this future is green: for example, the European „Circular Plastics Alliance“ – a voluntary initiative of public and private players from the various plastics value chains – has committed to using 10 million tons of recycled plastics as early as 2025. That would be almost a sixth of the total requirement in Europe! An ambitious goal, to which MGG Polymers also wants and will make its contribution with the newly gained knowledge.

*“Together with large companies and organizations from England to Spain, we have pushed forward cooperation in the spirit of the European idea.”*





*“When the bees die, it is a problem that humans cannot ignore.”*

## New habitat for bees

**Nature, climate and environmental protection is lived anew every day in the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group. The recycling pioneer proves this once again: This time with several clear signs for the bees.**

Busy as bees, they like to say. The bees definitely have something in common with the employees of the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group and its subsidiaries. So while some are busy making honey from nectar and pollinating countless plants in the process, others are busy producing new raw materials from old materials.

Both are important, but the bees have found it increasingly difficult in recent years: monocultures, parasites, pesticides and climate change are taking such a toll on the bees that bee mortality is becoming increasingly alarming. “When the bees die, it is a problem that humans cannot ignore,” Christian Müller-Guttenbrunn is alarmed. „After all, bees are responsible for 85 % of all flower pollination. Thus, they form the basis for a large part of our food!”

### Renaturalized bee oases

Because Müller-Guttenbrunn is aware of the great importance of bees,

it has now taken on bee sponsorships. Together with the association Biene Wienerwald, agricultural areas are purchased that are renatured to become natural habitats for bees. In addition to the typical honey bee, these bee oases also serve as a refuge for wild bees and all other pollinating insects.

### Meadows for beneficial insects on company premises

But it is not only in the Vienna Woods that the company is setting an example – it is also on its own doorstep in the Mostviertel region, directly on the MGG Metran factory premises. Local berry bushes were planted there in the last year. These are primarily intended to be a source of food for the bird population, but will certainly also be used by bees. Another initiative – this time focusing on the bee and other beneficial insects – followed in autumn, as MGG Metran managing director Gunther Panowitz reveals: „We established beneficial insect meadows in all the spaces in between on our site. The seeds for 500 m<sup>2</sup> of area were planted. With Thomas Wiesflecker, we have a capable gardener in our ranks who will bring these beneficial insect meadows to life. In any case, I’m looking forward to seeing the bees buzzing even louder here.” Bees and bumblebees can already be seen flying on the greened infiltration areas – with the flowering oases, there will certainly be even more in the future.

## “Absolutely no mistakes should happen!”

Brigitte Heiden has been taking care of a wide variety of logistics issues at the MGG Polymers plant for many years. For the traditional MGG relay interview, in which an employee of the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group is introduced, she, who is now retired, exceptionally leaves work for a few minutes and talks about her everyday working life.

**Ms. Heiden, you have now been with MGG Polymers for ten years.**

**How did you join the company?**

BRIGITTE HEIDEN: It was pure chance that I ended up here. A friend of mine applied for the job here at the time. However, she only wanted a part-time job, which was not possible here. She called me and said this would be just right for me. I was just at Sonntagberg in the basilica. Normally I always have my cell phone turned off when I'm there – but there I had forgotten it. I drove here the same day, introduced myself and two days later I started working here.

**What did you do for a living before that?**

HEIDEN: I started working at Böhler right after finishing business school. I worked there for 20 years in the drawing office or in distribution. After that, I looked around for a full-time job, which I then found in the sawmill at Mayr-Melnhof. The work there was very varied and I always enjoyed it – and finally I ended up here at MGG Polymers. So three different materials – metal, wood and plastic – have accompanied me through my professional life.

**Here at MGG Polymers you are responsible for logistics. What tasks do you expect here every day?**

HEIDEN: I take care of incoming goods – in our case, WEEE material, i.e. material from waste electrical and electronic equipment. This involves handling the trucks and taking care of the paperwork and

official processing. Proper handling is particularly important when it comes to the professional disposal of residual materials. Absolutely no mistakes should happen! However, this is not always easy, as we are dependent on the disposal companies here. From an operational point of view, it is of course important that there is no major backlog – whether of trucks, delivery materials, finished products or the residual materials to be disposed of.

**You certainly have your hands full here. You also come into contact with a lot of people. In general, the logistics office is considered a meeting place in the company – who do you meet so often?**

HEIDEN: Every day in the morning, deliveries and waste disposal are coordinated with the production manager and the shift supervisor. In addition, the employees always like to come in to see us. Additional to my boss, three other colleagues sit in the office with me – there's always a lot of fun. There are also some external people – not just the truck drivers, but also the mail and parcel delivery staff. All external companies that carry out work for us, as well as various representatives or other visitors, have to register with me in logistics when they enter the company for fire safety reasons. In some moments, you really have to be stress-resistant when everyone wants something at once and the phone is ringing too. In addition, many of the drivers don't speak German – so they have to communicate with their hands, feet and the Google translator. So if you want a quiet job, you are definitely wrong here! However, I really enjoy my work and therefore I am not easily upset by anything. You develop a certain talent for multitasking!

**How do you start such a varied workday?**

HEIDEN: I'm always in the office by 6:15 a.m. and try to have a coffee in peace, which doesn't always work out because the first trucks are often already there. My official start of work is at half past six, by then at the latest it starts lively. I send the first trucks to unload, prepare the freight documents, and send documents to the authorities. In the course of the day, I also make a round once in a while to make sure myself how things are going with the material stock. Sometimes I also get an inspection visit from the customs authorities when a delivery is being checked – I certainly don't get bored.



**„The challenge is to do everything  
precisely and correctly,  
despite the lack of rest.“**



**What are the biggest challenges you face during a typical working day?**

HEIDEN: The challenge is to do everything precisely and correctly, despite the lack of rest. Invoices have to be checked, at the same time the delivery papers for disposal and raw material receipt have to be prepared, and you also have to keep an eye on the truck scales. If a truck stands on the scales for a minute, it is guaranteed to be honked – but you shouldn't let yourself be disturbed. Not even if someone is grumpy and thinks they have to take out their anger on me. You can't put up with everything, but you can't just switch to stubbornness right away either, because in the end, cooperation is very important.

**There's always something going on. What makes your job so interesting for you personally?**

HEIDEN: It is and always will be exciting because you meet so many different people. No day is like the other, improvisational skills are always in demand. I've always found it great here that I can do my work independently. It hardly ever happens that someone interferes. I also think it's great that we are a very funny office. Our team has been working together for some time and we have a lot of fun. It's a very young team, which also keeps me young – I will definitely miss my colleagues in retirement.

**What exciting experiences do you remember?**

HEIDEN: The interplay in the delivery hall was and is definitely exciting: Either it becomes so empty that you have to worry that there will soon be no more material for production. At other times, mountains of material pile up there again because one truck after the other arrives, and we don't know where to put all the material.

What I will definitely remember is a very special episode that was caused by a truck driver at our plant a few years ago: At that time, a truck was parked in front of the driveway the entire morning. When it was still there at noon, we knocked on the door and looked for the driver. Then we called the company, which also did not reach the driver. We were all worried and called the police. When the police arrived, the driver suddenly crawled out of his bunk and was completely asleep, wondering what was going on. Fortunately, he was only fast asleep.

**Not only have you experienced episodes like this in the last decade, but you've also had three managing directors. What has changed in the process over time?**

HEIDEN: What is immediately noticeable is the fact that space is becoming less and less and it is getting tighter and tighter. There is constant investment and modernization. One noticeable change was definitely that the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group took over the plant completely in 2017. The American style before that took a little getting used to for a Mostviertel woman like me. At Müller-Guttenbrunn, you notice that people count much more than in a huge corporation. That gives you a lot of security!



**You briefly mentioned your retirement earlier – it will be in December. What do you miss most?**

HEIDEN: There may be people who are longing for retirement. I'm definitely not one of them; I've always enjoyed going to work. However, I will miss the regular daily routine and, above all, my work colleagues. I can hardly believe it's really that far already – all those years of work have passed so incredibly quickly.

**But there are certainly a lot of things you are looking forward to...**

HEIDEN: Yes, of course – above all I'm looking forward to having more time for my two grandchildren. I also enjoy hiking in the mountains, love music and dancing, and five years ago I took up archery. Hopefully there will be more time for that as well as for rock concerts, lectures or interesting courses. Maybe I'll even take a balloon flight again, because I fulfilled that wish last year – and, as in life in general, it's exciting to see where the wind takes you. So I'm guaranteed not to suffer a pension shock, that's for sure!

**Thank you very much for the interview. We wish you all the best for your (un)retirement!**



*“We find the right solution for each of these special orders.”*

## Raw materials from **the siding**

**Time and again, special machines are dismantled at MGG Metrec so that the raw materials used can be used for new products. Recently, two diesel locomotives of Wiener Linien started their last journey.**

They had traveled more than 100,000 kilometers on the Vienna subway tracks. However, the last kilometers – from Vienna to the Mostviertel region – were covered by the two yellow diesel locomotives with the numbers 6912 and 6913 on flatbed trailers. Their wheels had long since been removed at this point – their final dismantling followed a short time later. The dismantled wheels were then delivered at a later date – as is usual in such cases.



### **Transport and towing service on rails**

The two 24-ton trucks were put into service in 1977 and 1984. Over all these years, they were used as towing vehicles in the Vienna subway network. So when transportation of rails, power lines and other materials was on the agenda, the two diesel locomotives did the heavy lifting. They were also used when a subway train set broke down. The locomotives were also used for shunting work in the stations. For the sake of the environment, the two diesel vehicles have now been decommissioned and replaced by electrically powered battery locomotives.

### **The right solutions for special orders**

With this step, it was clear: 6912 and 6913 would be scrapped. No easy task with two 24-ton vehicles – but the MGG Metrec team in Amstetten has a lot of experience with such dismantling work. In addition to heavy rail equipment, Amstetten also scraps trucks, large trailers or industrial equipment (e.g. tanks) and prepares them for recycling. „We find the right solution for each of these special orders. This time we had to use a fire department crane and set the first crushing steps with the excavator,“ reports production manager Hannes Grissenberger. „Only then could our large scrap shears get to work and do the rest.“ In the end, all that remained of the two locomotives was a lot of metal, which could then be melted down and used for new products

## More space, higher efficiency

MGG Mü-Gu Kft., the Hungarian subsidiary of the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group, invested heavily and is currently expanding its capacities on the outskirts of Budapest. Work on the new premises were completed by the end of the year 2021.

Almost 30 years ago, the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group founded the subsidiary MGG Mü-Gu Kft. in Hungary. Due to constant growth, the plant on the outskirts of Budapest has constantly reached its capacity limits in recent years. „Efficiency is an important keyword in the company. We will therefore continue to optimize and modernize our processes,“ announced Managing Director Nándor Hoffmann. An essential point to be able to work more efficiently is a plant expansion, which was implemented in 2021.

### 36,000 m<sup>2</sup> area with many possibilities

In the past two years, the company has completed the purchase of a 36,000 m<sup>2</sup> site. „The new area is located about 10 minutes south of the existing site,“ reveals Nándor Hoffmann. About half of the site was paved over for the time being and will be home to MGG Mü-Gu Kft.'s metalworking operations in the future. Work on the new premises is in full swing and the first construction phase was completed by the beginning of autumn 2021.

An office and social building for 35 employees was built on the new premises. In addition, a 2,300 m<sup>2</sup> hall now provides plenty of space for the material to be processed. There are sufficient parking spaces and a filling station for the company's own fleet of trucks, which previously had to be parked in a rented space. „We will also build two 60-ton scales for the trucks and four smaller scales for receiving goods,“ Hoffmann reveals.



### New investments to follow

In order to also be able to process the delivered material efficiently, new innovative technology was installed by the end of last year. Of course, important environmental concerns have also been taken into account in the expansion of the plant. Thus, in addition to a rainwater basin that holds 2,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water, a modern sewer system including oil separators was installed to comply with the strictest regulations. MGG Mü-Gu Kft. managing director Hoffmann is satisfied in any case: „With the new facilities, we are finally able to exploit a lot of efficiency potential. In addition, we still have enough options at the new site should we reach our capacity limits again.“

Incidentally, in Amstetten the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group has also purchased an adjacent plot of land in order to be prepared for investments in the future.



*“Efficiency is an important keyword in the company. We will therefore continue to optimize and modernize our processes.”*

## Quality all around the clock

**MGG Polymers laboratory is a very important place: Every day a lot of data generated from the inspection of incoming goods, process control and product checks build the basis to decide whether our Post Consumer Recycled (PCR) plastics can be delivered to the customers. A large part of the laboratory equipment was recently renewed, but the company is already planning further steps.**

There is always something going on in the laboratory at MGG Polymers - 24 hours a day, all the year! This is the place, where it is ensured that the quality of the post-consumer recycled (PCR) plastics produced is really high. With continuous usage over more than a decade, the entire laboratory equipment is subjected to enormous stress. Therefore, it was decided to renew the furniture all around in summer 2021 and also to purchase important new testing instrument. „We recently acquired a new tensile testing machine. Tensile testing is one of a number of final tests which are performed, before the material can be shipped to our customers“ explains Philipp Felber, head of quality and environmental management at MGG Polymers.

### From beginning to end

From the very beginning on, the facility in Kematen had always paid great attention to quality control and quality assurance. From the incoming raw material (electronic scrap) to the outgoing finished PCR plastics, nothing is left to chance. The laboratory team constantly checks the material - and this for good reason, as Philipp Felber explains: „This way we can intervene immediately as soon as any

process in our chain does not work as desired. If we notice at the end that a product does not meet our high-quality requirements, it is being blocked within our ERP system and therefore cannot be delivered automatically. In detail, not even a delivery note can be printed. So, the goods have to be checked again and sometimes they are even reprocessed until everything fits.“

### 100 % within the legal thresholds

During 5-shift operations, the materials are analysed all around the clock so that a stable product quality meeting all the legal requirements can be guaranteed. The individual analyses for the final products can be divided into three areas: rheological, mechanical and chemical tests. Chemical analyses are carried out by certified testing institutes. This ensures that all specifications regarding the European chemicals legislation (REACH) and the regulation of hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment (RoHS) are met.

„We invest a lot of money every year to ensure that we manufacture our products 100% in compliance with the law,“ Philipp Felber emphasises and explains the difficulty in plastic recycling: „For us as recyclers, we have to comply with both, waste legislation on the one hand, but also product legislation on the other hand. Therefore, it is important for our customers to receive a tested product that has really been manufactured according to all legal guidelines. We do guarantee this with providing various certificates, so that our customers can safely manufacture new devices from PCR plastics.“

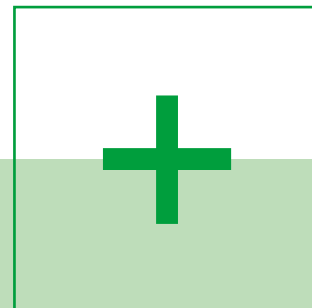




*“From the incoming raw material  
(electronic scrap) to the outgoing finished  
PCR plastics, nothing is left to chance.”*

### New projects

No surprise that MGG Polymers is already making further plans: Both, the laboratory itself and the team will be enlarged in the future. The equipment will also be continuously expanded. Even a premiere is to be made possible in the MGG Polymers laboratory, as Philipp Felber reveals: „We want to carry out ageing tests together with customers. This will be new in the field of PCR plastics, because currently such tests are only carried out in the production of new plastics from crude oil. In the field of plastics recycling, this will be a world first again.“



### Things to know about REACH and RoHS

REACH stands for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. It's THE European legislation for any chemicals and is in force since 1 June 2007. One aim of REACH is to regulate the use of substances of very high concern (chemicals). This applies to the substance itself as well as to mixtures and articles in which it is used. REACH covers all (chemical) substances in consumer products. Manufacturers and importers into the EU are responsible for the safety of the chemicals which are put on the market. Depending on the hazardousness of the substance, corresponding data must be provided to the competent authority ECHA. Currently, 219 substances are listed as particularly hazardous in a separate list („candidate list“). This list is updated twice a year if necessary.

RoHS stands for „Restriction of (the use of certain) Hazardous Substances in electrical and electronic Equipment“. Put in place in 2002 as first version, the actual one (“RoHS 2“) came into force on 8 June 2011. The aim of the RoHS Directive is to reduce the burden on health and the environment caused by particularly hazardous substances and materials. The directive applies to all electrical and electronic equipment and regulates which particularly toxic substances (e.g. heavy metals, flame retardants and plasticisers) must be kept to an absolute minimum. Currently, the RoHS Directive lists the following hazardous substances: Lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, polybrominated biphenyls (PBB), polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE), di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), butylbenzyl phthalate (BBP), dibutyl phthalate (DBP) and diisobutyl phthalate (DIBP).

# MGG Polymers at FAKUMA 2021: In the spirit of sustainability



*“The enormous interest in post-consumer recycled plastics made our booth to one of the real hotspots at the FAKUMA.”*

**The international trade fair for plastics processing in Friedrichshafen attracted almost 1,500 exhibitors - including MGG Polymers. As a pioneer in plastics recycling, many existing and potential customers found their way to our booth, clearly showing that sustainability issues are now on the top of the agenda.**

It was an enthusiastic re-start in mid-October 2021 in Friedrichshafen at FAKUMA, the international trade fair for plastics processing. No wonder, since it was the first major international presence event for the plastics industry since the outbreak of the Corona pandemic. 1,470 exhibitors from 39 countries presented the latest in injection moulding, extrusion technology, thermoforming, 3D printing - and of course plastics recycling - on 85,000 square metres of exhibition floor space. After all, the most frequently used buzzwords were sustainability, circular economy and recycling. So, the recycling pioneers from MGG Polymers were not allowed to be missed!

## MGG Polymers amongst “Top 100”

„Of course, the topic setting at this important trade fair was ideal for us“, reports Darko Huskic, one of MGG Polymers’ sales managers who took care of interested visitors for the whole fair. The realignment of MGG Polymers strategy almost three years ago with an even stronger focus on sustainability turned out to be perfect again. Recognizing these efforts, the Austrian company was named as one of the top 100 innovators in the recycling world by the „Recycling International“ magazine in advance of the fair. This visibility together with an enormous interest in post-consumer recycled plastics made our completely new designed and refreshed booth to one of the real hotspots at the FAKUMA.

## Positive feedback

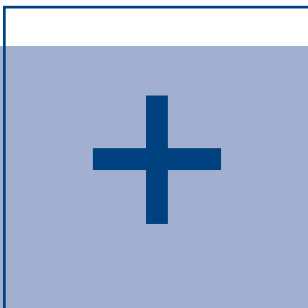
“Our refreshed stand was very well received by visitors. We presented the connections in an easy-to-understand way and, of course, increased our focus on sustainability” explains Huskic.

A total of eight MGG Polymers representatives met with numerous interested parties during the five days of the fair. Darko Huskic was particularly impressed by the positive feedback from customers: „One of the main reasons is clearly stability – not only in quality, but also in pricing. It was well appreciated that we were able to offer constant price levels not only last year but also in 2021. Many other plastics suppliers had very fluctuating prices, which is of course not welcome to customers.“

A recurring topic in discussions at FAKUMA was the CO2 footprint (carbon footprint). „We talked a lot about this topic with interested visitors,“ describes Darko Huskic. „I’m convinced that in less than five years, proof of a carbon footprint will be an absolute must for every product and every company.“

## Plans for the next FAKUMA

It won’t be that long until the next FAKUMA will take place in October 2023. The MGG Polymers sales team already has a few ideas and visions for this, according to Darko Huskic: „We have made improvements in separation and sorting and will present a few new types in 2023. Additionally, we are also in preparation to have a reporting system available in 2023 which documents our efforts in the area of sustainability.“



### Video clip

A video from our performance at the FAKUMA can be found at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDmp1kw\\_POo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDmp1kw_POo)

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





*We use the electricity we generate with the power of the sun in production, where we can more than halve the electricity we draw from the grid in summer when the sun is at full power, and now we can also supply it to our own e-charging stations for electromobility.*

## E-mobility is writ large

**The MGG companies in Mostviertel are working hard on the green mobility of the future. Two e-filling stations were recently put into operation on the MGG Metran site, and a photovoltaic system was set up in addition to the existing e-filling station at the Amstetten site.**

Climate goals have been an ongoing topic for years. To achieve this, a great deal of effort is required – for example, to drastically reduce direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. For many years, the Müller-Guttenbrunn Group has made numerous efforts in a wide variety of areas to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – and of course is still working on it.

### For e-cars and e-bikes

Efforts are currently being made primarily with regard to electromobility: to this end, an 800 kW<sub>peak</sub> photovoltaic system was installed at the MGG Polymers plant and a 600 kW<sub>peak</sub> PV system at MGG Metran last year. That's a total of more than 5,000 PV modules on the roofs of the recycling plants. „We use the electricity we generate with the power of the sun in production, where we can more than halve the electricity we draw from the grid in summer when the sun is at full power, and now we can also supply it to our own e-charging stations for electromobility. This way, we can actually put this power on the road,“ explains MGG Managing Director Christian Müller-Guttenbrunn.

That's why two e-charging stations went into operation at MGG Metran this fall. Each has two 22 kW connections. In this way, the solar power produced by the 600 kW<sub>peak</sub> PV systems on four hall roofs can be fed into the vehicle batteries. In addition, there are also charging options for e-bikes.

„From January to autumn 2021, our PV system has already produced nearly 500 megawatt-hours this year. That's roughly the annual consumption of about 200 households!“ reports Gunther Panowitz, managing director at MGG Metran. The amount of carbon dioxide saved in this way is around 240 tonnes – compared to the already very environmentally friendly Austrian electricity mix, which has a very high proportion of hydropower.

### New Photovoltaic system in Amstetten

By autumn 2021 Müller-Guttenbrunn offers green e-mobility also at the Amstetten location (MGG Headquarters, MGG Metrec). There has been an e-charging station for two vehicles there for a year. „Now, of course, we also wanted to supply the green electricity to go with it,“ MGG Managing Director Christian Müller-Guttenbrunn announced. Therefore, a 2,200-square-meter photovoltaic system with an output of 204 kW<sub>peak</sub> was installed this autumn.



*“In one hour, we move around 300 to 400 tons of material with our wheel loaders.”*

## Morning man with a horsepower machine

It is a gray and rainy autumn morning when Gerhard Windhager briefly parks his heavy work equipment to take time for the MGG relay interview. For 33 years, Gerhard Windhager, who lives in Grein, has been working at MGG Metran, where he always uses the wheel loader to transport the material to the right place on the company premises. In an interview, the 57-year-old reveals what his working day is like and what he particularly appreciates about it.

**Mr. Windhager, you have been with MGG Metran in Kematen for 33 years. How did you end up here in 1988?**

GERHARD WINDHAGER: I got to know the Müller-Guttenbrunn company through my wife. She worked as a cleaner in Amstetten and here at MGG Metran in Kematen. At that time, I was a regular soldier in the Austrian Army, but I wanted to do something else. She told me that they were looking for people, I applied and the rest is history.

**33 years is a long time. What has happened during these years?**

WINDHAGER: A lot of work! Especially in the beginning, we pushed countless hours of overtime – and also worked many hours on weekends. At that time, the site was much more manageable. Just the office building and two halls were erected back then – no comparison to today. A lot has changed. When you see how many different systems are now sorting through the material, you can't compare it with the situation at the end of the 1980s. Of course, the entire process has also become much more complex. So it's not just the area that has

been constantly changing – the work steps have also become more and more comprehensive.

**That sounds like an ongoing improvement. Have there also been big leaps in the process?**

WINDHAGER: A huge change was certainly the introduction of shift operation in 2005. Of course, that changed the working day for the workforce from the ground up.

**Have you also changed along with it?**

WINDHAGER: Of course! In the beginning, I worked on a wide variety of equipment, tried everything out a bit and got to know it. Then I switched to the wheel loader and have now been driving it around the site for over 20 years. The vehicles have also become bigger and bigger – but I have enough previous knowledge and know-how to simply grow along day by day.

**Speaking of day by day – what does your working day actually look like?**

WINDHAGER: We have two shifts. On the morning shift, I get up at 3:30. At 4 a.m. I then drive with a colleague from Grein to the plant. Here, the shift is handed over at 4:45 a.m. and at 5 a.m. things really get going. Then it's a whole day of loading the sites – including the new vibrator – with material and clearing out the 28 boxes again and again. What exactly is on the agenda depends on the material



available at any given time. When there is a need, trucks are loaded and everything else that has to be done is taken care of. At 1 p.m., the afternoon shift takes over. You then have to work until 11 p.m.

**Which do you prefer – the early shift or the late shift?**

WINDHAGER: I'm definitely a morning person – getting up is relatively easy for me. That's why I like the early shift much better. In general, I think it's great to have a regular work rhythm.

**What else do you like about your daily work?**

WINDHAGER: Personally, I always find it interesting to see how the delivered material is gradually sorted in all the separation steps. You can follow the work steps quite well on the wheel loader – from delivery to loading of our sorted products. That just keeps fascinating me.

**Do you always sit at the same vehicle?**

WINDHAGER: Yes – I drive a Liebherr L550. It weighs 21 tons and has 140 kW under the hood. I can transport up to 6 cubic meters of material with it. Driving such a vehicle has always been a dream job for me. That's why I really enjoy it – but it's not just the driving that matters. There are usually a maximum of three of us on the road in a shift – you have to communicate constantly via radio so that you coordinate well and don't make any unnecessary meters.

**Is it possible to say what distance you cover on average in a working day?**

WINDHAGER: Well, my display on the wheel loader says that in just

under 14,700 hours of operation, 53,500 kilometers have been driven in forward gear and 12,000 kilometers in reverse gear. Another figure: In one hour, we move around 300 to 400 tons of material with our wheel loaders – depending on the material on the bucket.

**We have already mentioned another number several times: 33 years – that's how long you have been with the company. You must have seen a lot there. What distinguishes MGG Metran as an employer from your point of view?**

WINDHAGER: Everything here is collegial. If there are problems, we can always talk things out and clarify them. There is also a great sense of community among the colleagues. For example, I was the best man at the wedding of one of my colleagues, and I was allowed to be the godfather of another colleague's child. We live this bond here every day.

**So perhaps we can make a flying switch to the private person Gerhard Windhager – what can and do you want to tell us about him?**

WINDHAGER: I am 57 years old, married and have 3 grown-up sons. All three have recently built houses. Therefore, there hasn't been much time for other leisure activities in recent years. When I can make it in time, I enjoy cycling along the Danube. In addition, I am happy that I can now devote more time to my family again – for example to my three grandchildren.

**Then we hope you enjoy it – and of course continue to work on your wheel loader!**





## Renovation of an important transport artery

**Within one month, the track system at MGG Metrec in Amstetten was completely renewed. To ensure that the facilities at the company site did not have to stand still for long, meticulous planning was carried out in advance. The planning also paid off in the end.**

Everything was meticulously planned. Nothing was left to chance. After all, one of the vital transportation arteries for MGG Metrec was at stake – specifically, the rehabilitation of the aging rail tracks. Every year, around 4,000 wagons travel in and out of the company premises in Amstetten. In the process, 170,000 tons of material are moved. Therefore, this important artery could not be disconnected for too long due to the refurbishment...

### Higher requirements

Although the track system at MGG Metrec has always been well maintained, the gnawing ravages of time couldn't be stopped completely. Especially not because the demands on the tracks have increased enormously, as MGG Metrec Managing Director Michael Grimm reports: „When I started at Müller-Guttenbrunn 35 years ago, 25 tons of material were loaded into the wagons. Today it is 65 tons!“

### Of course: recycling!

So on September 20, after meticulous planning, the Swietelsky construction crew started work. The workers immediately set about demolishing the west approach, which could not be used at all in the

last two years. While the wooden sleepers were replaced by much more robust sleepers made of concrete, the excavated material (track ballast, earth material, etc.) was recycled using screening equipment. In the end, around 1,000 tons of the 1,800 tons of material removed could be reused.

### The crucial part

Due to the structural conditions, the workers had to lay the first 300 linear meters of track manually. Things got really exciting from October 14 onwards: important equipment at MGG Metrec (shears, shredder) was shut down so that the eastbound track could be completely renovated. To ensure that the plants were shut down for as short a time as possible, the Swietelsky team was increased from 6 to 13 men in order to be able to work around the clock in two shifts during the following days. The plan worked: The old rails and sleepers were removed, followed by the ballast and earth material. After the track trench was filled again, 17-ton track panels, each 30 meters long, were laid with a powerful railway crane. In addition, further track ballast was brought in, which was compacted with a tamping machine.

The good work done in advance paid off: As planned, the renovation was completed on October 20 and the facilities at MGG Metrec were able to resume their usual operations. „It really went optimally. The fact that the cooperation with MGG Metrec was excellent also contributed to this. It really was a harmonious working atmosphere,

because when we needed something quickly – a loader, for example – we got it immediately. That is not always a matter of course,” Swietelsky foreman Alois Löbl confirmed the ideal process.

### Setting the course for the future

For MGG Metrec, the investment of almost 600,000 euros is a real stepping stone for the future. „At last, we can once again enter and leave from the west. Of course, this means an enormous increase in efficiency. The change from wooden to concrete sleepers also means that the system will last longer and we can take advantage of the higher axle loads of the new wagons,” explains MGG Managing Director Michael Grimm. This means that the important transport artery can be used even better in the future.

### Data on the renovation:

- Investment sum: 600,000 euros
- Construction time: 22.9.-20.10.2021 (= 27 shifts, in the time from 14.-19.10. was worked through)
- Excavation: approx. 1,000 m<sup>3</sup> (= approx. 1,800 t); of which approx. 1,000 t reused as track ballast and filling material
- 1,500 tons of track ballast placed
- 1,081 concrete sleepers laid
- 720 m of rails laid
- 13 track panels (each 30 m long and weighing 17 t) laid

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