



Energy for the AIDA Nova - heavyweights from Saxony-Anhalt conquer the global market

Ilseburger Grobblech GmbH, the only steelworks in a place where visitor's tax is collected.

Fuel tanks, wind turbines, production platforms and suspension bridges around the world have one thing in common: highly resilient and high-performing plate from Saxony-Anhalt. Because where heavy plate in special qualities and quantities is required Ilseburger Grobblech GmbH (ILG) is there. As a subsidiary of Salzgitter AG, it produces approximately 700,000 tonnes of heavy plate for a wide variety of industries every year. With the current major investment, the company is emphasising the sustainability of Ilseburg as a location.

Success stories: Cleaner navigation thanks to innovations from Saxony-Anhalt

One of the most current success stories of ILG is the low-temperature tanks for liquefied natural gas, which are used on the AIDA Nova, among other places. 300 tonnes of Ilseburg heavy plate made from 9 per cent nickel-alloyed steel were built into the cruise ship in order to ensure the energy supply by means of liquefied natural gas (LNG) instead of the usual heavy oil. The AIDA Nova is the first of six ships to be equipped with this technology. The steels with nickel alloy from Saxony-Anhalt meet the high safety regulations of liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage at temperatures of -162 °C. In addition, in collaboration with the steel service centre of its sister company Universal Eisen und Stahl GmbH in Hanover, it is possible for ILG to deliver the material for the tanks tailored and ready for installation. Thanks to the conversion from heavy oil to LNG drive, the emission of CO₂ is reduced by up to 25% and other emissions are lowered significantly. This is an important contribution to the mobility of the future and to more environmentally compatible navigation for the protection of the oceans. "There are only a few manufacturers worldwide that produce steel with 9% nickel alloy," says Jens Spanger, authorised signatory for the sale of heavy plate. "With plate of this quality, we occupy a niche in a future market."

With the Johan Sverdrup project in Norway, ILG is involved in another success story. It is the world's largest oil rig in jacket construction with a height of 140 metres. The 26,000 tonne colossus consists largely – approximately 20,000 tonnes – of Ilseburg heavy plate in offshore qualities with single-piece weights of the plate of up to 28 tonnes. 75,000 tonnes of quarto plate from Saxony-Anhalt are also built into the world's largest natural gas field, the South Pars Field in the Persian Gulf.

Metal processing with tradition

For centuries, Ilseburg at the foot of the Brocken has been known for its iron and steel industry and metal processing. What began in the 16th century will be continued in future as well by innovative companies such as ILG. In 1992, following an extensive modernisation in the 1980s, the Ilseburg rolling mill was acquired by what was then Preussag Stahl AG, the predecessor to today's Salzgitter AG, as one of Europe's most modern plants. The aim was to consolidate heavy plate production and to bundle it at one location. With investments of over EUR 400 m in the last few decades, the market position has been further strengthened and expanded. The latest and so far biggest individual project is the construction of a complete heat treatment line, the heart of which is a roller chain for plate refinement. The facility is to be commissioned in spring 2020. With an investment volume of EUR 150 million, the production quantity of the heat-treated plate is nearly doubled to 150,000 tonnes. More efficient production processes and the saving of logistics expenses provide for higher economic efficiency and significant shortening of delivery times. An investment that also secures the future of the over 600 jobs at the Ilseburg location.

The company impresses above all through the variety of the plates in the delivery programme, which are produced in thicknesses of 6 to 175 mm, in widths of 80 to 350 cm, with maximum lengths of 24 m and single-piece weights of up to 28 tonnes. Approximately 120,000 pieces of plate are produced per year. Both the production of single pieces and small batches and additional services such as blasting and priming, chamfering, bending and the preparation of welded joints are part of the company's range of services.

Attractive location thanks to short routes and close connection with the region

For production, Ilseburg is an ideal location. The plant in Salzgitter is just 45 kilometres away and very well connected by motorways. Only slabs from Salzgitter are processed in Ilseburg, so short delivery times of the primary material allow orders to be processed quickly. One of the many advantages of being part of a large group.

The shortcommunication paths in Saxony-Anhalt are also helpful when it comes to consultations, approvals and funding opportunities. The competent contact persons are known and fast support from the municipality, the district or the state in a wide variety of matters facilitates company activities.

With regard to specialists, ILG makes provisions for itself with its own up-and-coming talent. Approximately 15 trainees are trained here every year as industrial mechanics and electricians for automation technology in the company's own training workshop. The connectedness of the people in the region with the company is impressive. Employees from several generations of a family are no rarity and the high attendance rate emphasises the commitment of the employees. "We are important for Ilseburg; however, Ilseburg is just as important for us," says Dr Christian Boppert, Managing Director of ILG, stressing the importance of the location. Oliver Laubner of Export Sales adds with a wink: "We are the only plant in a place where visitor's tax is collected." International customers in particular, he says, are repeatedly impressed by the Harz and the Brocken mountain, which can always be seen from the company's premises.

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