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A PRODUCT OF THE BUHLMANN GROUP

# B GLOBAL

- > **WELCOME TO THE FAMILY: R-S MATCO**
- > STRONGER THAN EVER: DYLAN
- > EXCITING AND DELICIOUS: DYLAN BELGIE
- > AND MUCH MORE



EXCITING AND TREND-SETTING:  
**DIGITIZATION**

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EDITORIAL

# DIGITAL AND INTERNATIONAL



**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

The digitization of trade processes is a dominant issue – its importance for the future development of companies all over the world is emphasized everywhere. But what exactly does this term mean? And how does it influence the working world? To clarify this somewhat vague concept, we spoke to the labor market and career researcher Dr. Florian Lehmer, who explains the theoretical aspects of digitization. And to be able to understand the practical changes it causes in BUHLMANN's working world, we take a look at our Automated Small Parts Warehouse in Duisburg. One thing can be said already: The BUHLMANN GROUP must and can keep up regarding the future challenges of digitization.

Another future-oriented issue is internationalization, a strategy that the BUHLMANN GROUP keeps pursuing successfully. As the youngest addition to the BUHLMANN GROUP we welcome the U.S. American company R-S Matco, who joined us in June. We introduce the Boiler Tubing experts from Oakboro on pages 8 and 9. From North Carolina we travel on to the heart of Europe, where we visit DYLAN Belgie in Lint in the vicinity of Antwerp. And our **B GLOBAL** trip ends in Germany, where we take a look at the warehouse in Bremen – the place where key parts for the ocean giants built by the Meyer Werft are sent on their way to enable others to travel around the world.

Since this is the last issue of our customer magazine for this year, I'd like to wish all readers a peaceful Christmas holiday and a happy New Year. 2020 promises to be exciting, not merely because of the global challenges which await us, but also because BUHLMANN is going to celebrate its 75th company anniversary. Three quarters of a century lie behind us, and we're more than ready for the future. I'm looking forward to it!

Yours sincerely,

Jan-Oliver Buhlmann

INTERVIEW WITH DR. FLORIAN LEHMER, FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

# THE FUTURE OF WORK

Everyone is talking about digitization and how important it is for the future of business. It is often said that German companies are a step behind in the development. We asked Dr. Florian Lehmer, head of the working group "Work in a Digitized World" at the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) in Nuremberg, Germany, how he sees the developments and what exactly is meant by the term.



ABOUT THE PERSON

## DR. FLORIAN LEHMER

Dr. Florian Lehmer gained his PhD on the subject of "Interregional Wage Differentials and the Effects of Regional Mobility". Since May 2008 he has been a scientific staff member at the IAB. Dr. Lehmer is currently researching the effects of the digital transformation on working processes. He has headed the working group 'Work in a Digitized World' since October of 2015.

**GLOBAL // Dr. Lehmer, digitization is one of the biggest issues in the German economy. What exactly does this diffuse term mean?**

**Florian Lehmer //** *The term is actually misleading because digitization initially only means presenting everything analogue in terms of 0 and 1. What is actually meant is the digital transformation - that is the digital interconnectivity of devices. That means, for example, that it is possible for parts and robots to communicate during the production process. The key word is industry 4.0. Individual production parts communicate with each other via ID chips and sensors. The working processes are not merely digitized, they are digitally networked – that's the novelty. This causes the value chain to become increasingly tighter and new business models evolve in certain areas: For example, when the customer can trigger supplier processes by the push of a button. The result is a heap of data that can be evaluated by algorithms and allows certain conclusions.*

**Can you give us an example?**

*Regarding logistics, this means that things are no longer carried from point A to point B. Instead we direct a robot by tablet. What job market researchers observe is that people are no longer involved in every step of production and that machines are increasingly working autonomously. And in a totally different fashion than 30 years ago, where an industrial robot was programmed and then performed the same production step over and over. Robots today no longer work through the same routine but have sensors which react and can vary and adapt the steps of a work procedure. The robot recognizes and learns during the production process because it is able to communicate with other parts and humans.*

**Like the automated small parts warehouse that was established a short while ago at the BUHLMANN site in Duisburg ... And what else do modern companies need?**

*A webshop is an example, especially when not a person works on the order but instead the system recognizes potential needs and automatically adds to the order. If humans do not need to intervene in a process, we have reached the world of 4.0.*

**Many people are afraid that digitization will cost jobs. How much human can the work of the future bear?**

*Indeed, some fields of work are being replaced by machines. But we often see that only certain steps of a working process are replaced, the employee does not become completely redundant. People who had to transport a lot in a warehouse for example are now doing other things.*

**Like what?**

*Like controlling and surveilling the robots. Or they take over completely different jobs within the company. This has always been the case when technological progress was made – working processes were adapted, chores were distributed differently. But when you look at the last ten years you'll discover that more jobs were created than dropped. The scientists here at the IAB expect the numbers to be evenly balanced. The digital transformation will cost about 1,5 million jobs within the next years, however, about as many will be created. We observe a steady surface with a lot of bubbling beneath it. Qualifications and job profiles will change. A number of people will have to change from one job to another. But the greatest change will take place within the respective professional profiles. This presupposes the employees' willingness to change.*

**Many people feel enormously pressured to keep digitally up-to-date ...**

*That's certainly true. Further qualification is the most important answer to this pressure to change. Every company has to find a way to sensitize and qualify its employees. That changes are happening and will always happen is something that employees are aware of. In my opinion it is important to have a corporate culture that permits an admission of knowledge deficits and mistakes. And how the company looks at further training – is it the employee's responsibility to extend his or her qualification, or is the company active in this regard? An affiliated progress is important here to make certain that the company's and the employee's interests are in harmony. Then the employees will feel comfortable with the changes and go along.*

**Continued on page 6 ...**

**It is often said that Germany is too slow when it comes to digitization. Are other countries progressing faster?**

*Not in my opinion. It is, of course, difficult to compare digital transformation. There is no such thing as "the digitization" with comparable processes. The large companies in Germany know exactly where they're heading. And we have many mid-*

*size companies which are aware of the challenges and are ready to meet them – the "hidden champions" are using digital technologies. I don't believe Germany is generally left behind in this regard. But in some aspects, for example broadband expansion and 5G, other countries have taken the lead.*

Questions by Gabriele Wiesenhavern

PRACTICED DIGITIZATION:

# GOODS TO MAN INSTEAD OF VICE VERSA

**The theory of digitization is one thing, but what does this mean for BUHLMANN in practical terms? We talked to Head of Warehouse Michael Thölken and Head of Logistics, Thorsten Hofmann, and asked how the Automated Small Parts System (AKL) has changed work in the warehouse in Duisburg.**

The Automated Small Parts System (AKL) in Duisburg is unique in the industry. Exotic, so to speak, and perfectly adapted to BUHLMANN needs. The robots which move the content of the 50,000 plastic boxes run on top of the construction instead of within the aisles, as in other automated warehouses. The speedy movement of the boxes evokes images of the computer game Tetris – at least on the displays on which progress is monitored. A YouTube clip provides a visual impression: Flanges, fittings, joints, and bends take a ride on the IT rollercoaster.

Where several employees from different departments used to have to collect and distribute information and commission the goods until ready for shipment, now information is digitally transmitted and the goods sent on their way. This has consequences for the overall processes: Where two or may-

be three departments used to be involved, IT support now means bundling and centralization into one working step. This means changes for all departments, especially for the working processes in the warehouse. "Before, someone with a forklift drove through the aisles and picked the goods from the lattice boxes. This principle was 'man to goods'. In the AKL we've changed the process around: Now it's 'goods to man'", explains Michael Thölken.

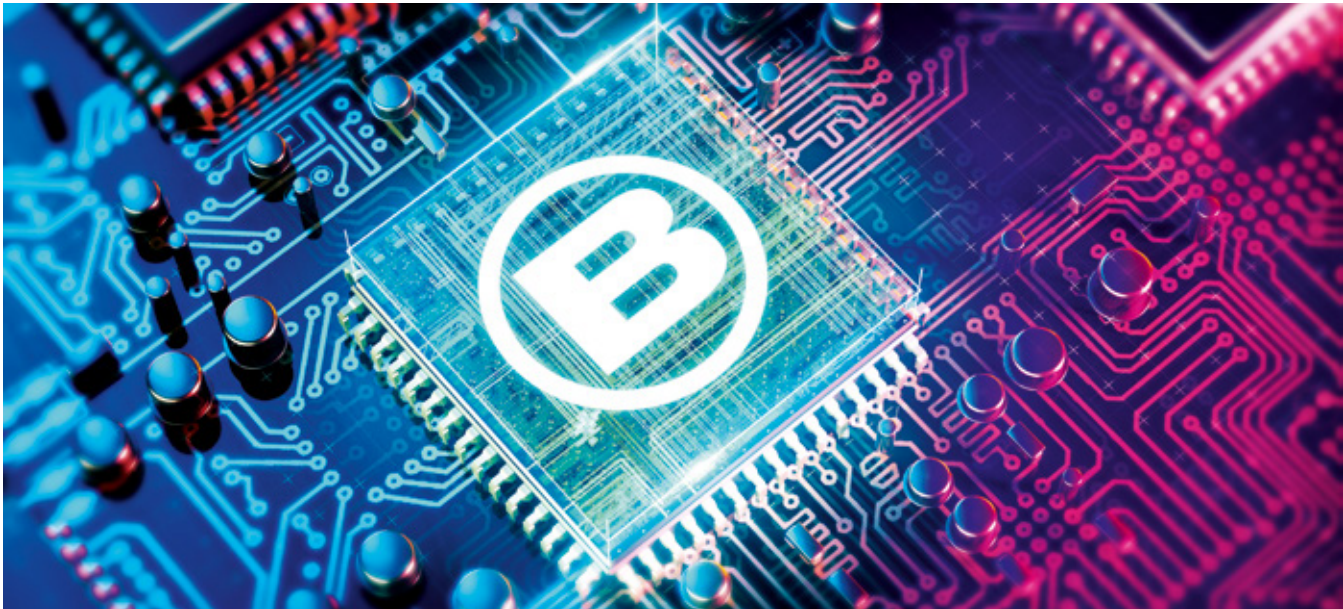


Michael Thölken



Thorsten Hofmann

This seemingly unspectacular inversion brings severe changes to the job description, as Michael Thölken explains: "In the past, the work in the warehouse did not always have a good reputation. Today the image of the profession and training has been vastly improved because other issues have become important". The job is changing because digitization processes have been integrated into the training, says Thölken. "Where lateral entrants have to learn by doing, young people today get a good general training in their vocational colleges. For our special system in Duisburg we have worked out a detailed processing description together with the project team. It begins with the order and ends with the pick-up by the parcel service provider. All employees receive the relevant training so they are completely informed about how to work with the system".



That digital processes change working conditions is evident and not only in terms of efficiency. Other very tangible effects are welcome, too. "One example", says Thölken, "is the fact that our warehouses are not heated. Just image going through the aisles with a forklift when it's a mere 5 degrees Celsius in winter ... Or, instead, image sitting in the AKL on a position with a heater". Also, the reduction of physical labor is a positive factor. "Instead of having the second herniated disc at 45, you're very happy about the robot who does the hard labor. Automation helps to keep you fit for the job even at an advanced age. Staff are tasked with new, exciting duties which make the job more interesting and the company saves time and costs and can provide better service", Thölken concludes.

Head of Logistics, Thorsten Hofmann, explains the bundling of working processes at the AKL and the opportunities offered by digitized information flow: "An example is the automated goods issue at the AKL in cooperation with parcel service providers. Before, shipping data had to be entered manually into external input masks in the office and the corresponding shipping labels were then brought to the warehouse. We've eliminated such manual activities as far as possible, so that the shipping employees are able to do more important work which is more suitable to their qualification. Our aim is to make the best possible use of the special skills of our employees and to fulfil the requirements and wishes of our customers in a solution-oriented manner".

Hofmann sees the great task of digital transformation as being particularly important within the entire supply chain: "Digital networking not only affects internal processes. Especially the interfaces to suppliers, customers and strategic partners like employees, transport service providers etc. are the big challenge for us, because essential information and data are transferred there. If these are automatically transmitted in digital form, processed accordingly and made available, the

processes and activities of the employees also change. If, for example, the status of a shipment was queried by telephone via several contacts or stations, such information can now be viewed directly in the ERP system. In addition to such simple examples, which positively change and simplify daily work, there are of course also more complex topics such as the integration of bin-picking systems, which fundamentally change activities.

Thorsten Hofmann and Michael Thölken are not at all worried that jobs could be lost. To reassure employees regarding this concern, their participation in the working group coordinating the development of the AKL was very important. "We made a point of integrating our shift supervisor Michael Jennert into the process to counter potential fears about job losses. He's the one with the direct link to the warehouse employees", explains Thölken. "We discovered that it wasn't so much the fear of job losses that was at issue, but a certain fear of contact with the new system. Maybe more so the fear of not being able to operate the new system. But that was only the case in the beginning – by now, everyone is working very professionally with the new system. And we certainly don't have any redundant workers".

**Text:** Gabriele Wiesenhavern

The film about the AKL on



YouTube



[www.youtu.be/  
Fj-UfCZD6TI](https://www.youtube.be/Fj-UfCZD6TI)

WELCOME R-S MATCO FROM NORTH CAROLINA

# SERVICE IS THE TOP PRIORITY

It was hot in June in Oakboro, North Carolina. The thermometer rose to a stifling 33 degrees Celsius, laced with a humidity of over 70 percent. It's a good thing that the negotiations on the acquisition of the youngest subsidiary of the BUHLMANN GROUP, R-S MATCO LLC, were anything but a sweaty affair.

Marcel Schneider



The night skyline of Charlotte, about 50 kilometers from Oakboro.





When the BUHLMANN management, among them Oliver Buhlmann and Jörg Klüver as well as BUHLMANN North America President Marcel Schneider, came over earlier this year, it only took one day for the general agreement to be reached. "The final consultation was cordial and took place in a very easy and agreeable atmosphere", said Marcel Schneider. The employees as well as the management of the company consider the takeover as another step in in the development of the business. "It's an opportunity to join forces and increase buying and selling capacities", Schneider says about a deal which was quickly decided on.

R-S Matco, one of the largest suppliers of boiler tubing in the United States, has a history that goes back several decades. In its present form, the family business was founded by Ron and Susan Church – which, by the way, also provides the explanation of the initials in the company name. The company was called Matco when the Church family took over. Since June 2019 R-S Matco has been part of the BUHLMANN GROUP and with the same values, the same approach to customer service and the all-important issue of being a family-owned company and the responsibilities that go with it, there wasn't much to disagree on.

R-S Matco's customers include coal and gas fired powerplants, pulp and paper industries, petro-chemical industries, industrial and commercial boilers, sugarmills, waste heat boilers and package boilers. At R-S Matco we put our customers first – on the company's website this as a clearly defined testimonial. And the company emphasizes: "We are available anytime; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That's what makes us special: We are always there for our



> View of the warehouse of R-S Matco

customers and have actually acquired a lot of business from competitors because they are not always available and too slow to respond."

With speed being an essential issue, the location of R-S Matco is an advantage that is not obvious at a first glance. Oakboro is a beautiful, small and very rural American town. However, it is not at all remote: Charlotte, the largest city in the state of North Carolina with 2.5 million inhabitants, is less than 50 kilometers away, and it's a hub of trade and shipping activity. The Interstate I-85 from northeast to southwest USA and the I-40 which runs from the east coast all the way to California. That and R-S Matco's reliable shipping partners make the logistics very manageable from Oakboro.

The reactions to the takeover by the BUHLMANN GROUP are positive, Marcel Schneider says. "The employees – and thus ultimately also the customers – know that our philosophy won't change. That's the most important thing." This down-to-earth-attitude, premium service and reliability, as well as the common approach that good business people focus on the human factor make it so easy to welcome R-S Matco warmly.

**Text:** Gabriele Wiesenhavern



## FACTS ABOUT R-S MATCO:

### > Industries served:

Heat Recovery Steam Generation (HRSG), Power Generation, Industrial & Commercial Boilers, Pulp & Paper Industry, Sugar Mills, Petrochemical

> More than 2,000 meters tubes in stock

> More than 8,000 square meters storage space

> Carbon steel, alloy steel, stainless steel

### > Most important customers:

Duke Energy, Xcel Energy, First Energy, Dominion Power, AEP (American Electric Power), PacifiCorp, Mid American, Exelon

# “DYLAN IS STRONGER THAN BEFORE”

The BUHLMANN subsidiary DYLAN, based in Oud-Beijerland in the Netherlands, has been through eventful years and structural changes since its integration in 2015. Jean-Philippe van den Berg, for example, took up the position of Director Sales at DYLAN at the beginning of 2018. In an interview he tells us about the changes which have occurred in recent years and why the Dutch subsidiary has emerged significantly stronger.

**B GLOBAL //** Mr. van den Berg, you have been with DYLAN for almost two years now. What have you experienced so far, and what makes DYLAN a special company?

**Jean-Philippe van den Berg //** You can still feel the DNA of the founder Roland Brix, a great entrepreneur whose market and client approach continues to be an example for many with regard to creativity and client focus. As a result, DYLAN

**Stronger in which way?**

*DYLAN has belonged to BUHLMANN for almost five years. The advantages as a group member are huge and in the meantime the improvements have been noticed. Just a few examples: We used to have our own in-house machine shop, but now we can also access a coating shop, a test laboratory with numerous possibilities, and, above all, a huge stock in the Netherlands and Germany. Daily shuttle services also guarantee fast track deliveries. In addition, the group is very healthy and strong and is headed by a young and very ambitious CEO: A Buhlmann of the third generation.*

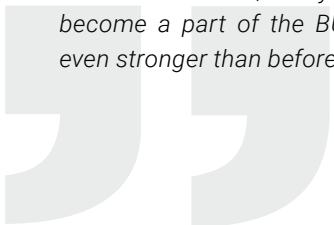
**What are the major changes?**

*First, at the beginning of the year, we introduced a Central Backoffice, where all sales-supporting activities are concentrated. We talked for a long time with all parties involved in order to obtain broad support for the project. The department is now fully established and operations are running smoother with each day. It goes without saying that all changes lead to efficiency improvement and thus to happier clients.*

*Secondly, DYLAN has always had their main focus on the Off-shore and Oil & Gas market. Due to the energy transition, we had to reconsider our strategy and adapt to the current and future market requirements. We are now acting proactively. Many customers and competitors were not prepared for this change and have already disappeared from the market in the last years. This will not happen to us.*

*Last but not least, we have intensified our efforts towards a more sustainable way of entrepreneurship. An exciting development is the focus on Operational Excellence. Roughly speaking, this means that the corporate strategy optimizes its processes in a customer-focused way. Here, for example,*

*is still as passionate, professional and flexible as ever and is able to adapt to the increasing market demands. The company has always aimed to be more than just a firm bringing a pipe from point A to point B. We develop and deliver value added services throughout the entire logistics process. That makes DYLAN a complete business partner. We want to be where the client is, always and everywhere. And since we've become a part of the BUHLMANN GROUP, DYLAN grows even stronger than before.*





*we faced the challenge of handling the increasing number of small orders with a minimum of logistic movements. Together with our customers we want to tackle this problem. Quite a challenge, since interests do not always correspond with each other.*

### **What other strategic and internal changes were there?**

*We are aiming for sustainable growth and new options. We want to be where our clients are and act as a responsible partner for them – but also for our suppliers, employees and their families, in fact society as a whole. We, for example, cooperate with universities in order to create an exchange of knowledge and to learn what is important for younger generations. So we are open to young people, their ideas and ambitions.*

*In addition, we at DYLAN created small groups with young people who meet every two weeks for brainstorming – without managers. This allows them to create new ideas unhindered. One of the things we want to show is that the piping industry is not boring. On the contrary, the challenging circumstances appeal to the creativity of people and make our business very exciting.*

### **A lot of very interesting changes – is there room for more plans and goals?**

*Yes, I want to continue to use all the potential that we have here at DYLAN. By this I mean not only by means of our warehouses and infrastructure, but also our human capital. We remain a trading company and it is mainly people that make the difference. You see I am still eager and very determined to reach certain goals with DYLAN – despite of the fact that I turned 60 last year and have completed most of my professional career. Nevertheless, I would like our clients to regard DYLAN as an undisputed business partner. That we are a responsible member of our society with our focus on sustainable entrepreneurship, that our colleagues start their working days with a smile and find enough challenges to explore their creativity, and that the BUHLMANN shareholders regard acquiring DYLAN as their best decision ever. Then I will be a happy man and can prepare myself for retirement. But not today!*

A strong team that is responsible for many positive changes: Harm-Jan Ruit, Strategy & Company Development Manager, Jean-Philippe van den Berg and Yvonne Kraak, Human Resources Team Manager.



Questions by Malte Addiks

# HEAVY METAL WITH HEINO AUGUSTIN

The Lord of the Tubes welcomes us in his office, where he is simultaneously concentrating on his computer screen, making a phone call, and rummaging in the closet to find safety shoes for us. Heino Augustin's middle name could be "multi-tasking" – even while he is explaining his kingdom to us, he is continuously observing the proceedings and shouting directions through the warehouse.

"Claas", he calls in mid-sentence at full blast – not to reprimand someone, but to answer the questioning look of one of the drivers, who is searching for someone to load his truck. The huge vehicle from the freight company Bunte protrudes far into the hangar, cranes are moving above our heads, forklifts are whirring back and forth. The Meyer Werft, a shipyard for cruise ships in Papenburg in the Northwest of Germany, needs more welded pipes, like every day. "Just in time is what counts", explains Augustin. He and his ten colleagues as well as two apprentices have about one hour to load three trucks. Each truck is handled in a separate warehouse to avoid waiting times. Commissioning the supplies completely and as ordered calls for a logistic masterstroke. "If things run smoothly, the firms order a day ahead. But sometimes orders come in at 10 a.m. on the same day", says Heino Augustin. When the paperwork which is handled in Duisburg is ready, the goods are commissioned and prepared for loading. The time that remains for loading is from 12:30 to 13:30 – a very tight squeeze.

Afterwards, day-to-day business continues. The trucks from Brinker Fette Logistik have to be loaded so they can deliver to customers located all over Northern Germany. Work continues



Explanations for the new colleague: Heino Augustin talking with Gabriele Wiesenhavern

without any big breaks, the orders that came in until 2 p.m. are processed. The pipes and fittings have to be loaded between 2 a.m. and 6 p.m. An eight-hour workday is not sufficient to handle everything: The first shift works from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., the second from 9:15 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"Some of the colleagues have been here for over 20 years. And we all feel very committed to BUHLMANN". However, the warehouse team members are seldom seen in the restaurant. "That's because many of us want to eat at home with our families and don't take a long lunch break", explains Augustin and dabbles with a grinding tool which is usually handled by his colleagues Henry von Salzen and Holger Bauer to smooth the raw edges of the cut pipes. "Worse than at the dentist's", he laughs over the loud screeching sound, "but important so that nobody gets injured by sharp edges".

Approximately 2000 pipes per month are cut to length. And not merely that: The stainless steel pipes are also polished with a cloth and then wrapped



Strict supervision during loading

in foil. The motto of the vintage sign on the warehouse wall that proclaims "cleanliness, order, and punctuality" is still very up to date - even after almost 75 years of company history.

"Mother Teresa", grins Heino Augustin, is what his team sometimes calls him because he is all over the place and always ready to help out. Presence of mind and farsighted thinking as well as

the will to work hard are the key to success, he says: “Brains and brawn is what we need”, when it comes to the young people who apply as apprentices for warehouse operations. Augustin himself has never had any professional training: “I started here in 1981 and worked my way up. I kept writing reports to the management and made so many suggestions for improvements, that one day they asked me to head the warehouse”. Not long ago, Heino Augustin took part in a management training course. “That was really helpful and interesting, even if the warehouse cannot be compared to any other department. It’s a world of its own”, says the enthusiastic cyclist. Twice a week he tackles the 45 kilometer drive to work from Oldenburg on his E-bike – respect!

**Text:** Gabriele Wiesenhavern



The team of the warehouse: (f.l.t.r.): Lars Vägler, Heiko Düser, Henry von Salzen, Teoman Ercel, Heino Augustin, Holger Bauer, Rüdiger Jonitz, Sven Wagener, Asem Mohammad, Claas Fischer, Birol Derin

# INNOVATION COMPETITION: ASPSS AMONG THE TOP 3

**The Automated Small Parts Storage System in Duisburg is a milestone in the company’s recent history – and not just for the employees. Our customers have also perceived the great advantages behind the innovative project. At the start of 2019, the colleagues of BUHLMANN Spain managed to reach the final of the innovation competition “WePioneer” of its customer Cepsa with the project.**



Lorena Romero Martin, Sales Manager, and Werner De Saedeleer, Managing Director, (2nd and 3rd from left) represented BUHLMANN Spain at the final in Madrid. To the right of Werner De Saedeleer: José Antonio Valgañón, Head of Procurement at Cepsa.

**Text:** Malte Addiks

“We are the only supplier from the piping area to be among the final three,” reports Lorena Romero Martin, Sales Manager of BUHLMANN Spain and part of the project team. Unfortunately, it was not enough for first place: “We came up against a virtual reality project and a photovoltaics petrol station in the final in Madrid and lost,” she reports, adding, “However, we are proud to have performed so well among 47 participating companies, especially as we were the only company from the piping sector.” The participation and the good final position showed how well the BUHLMANN GROUP works on a cross-area basis: “With the support from Bremen and Duisburg, we in Spain participated in a competition that highlights a project based in Duisburg from which all BUHLMANN customers benefit,” says Werner de Saedeleer, General Manager of BUHLMANN Spain.

In the competition, Cepsa wants to reward customers for innovative projects. The company is an integrated global energy company that operates across all stages of the hydrocarbon value chain. In addition, it manufactures products from plant-based raw materials and it also has a presence in the renewable energy sector. It has 90 years of experience and a team of some 10,000 employees, who combine technical excellence with adaptability. It is present on all five continents through its Exploration and Production, Refining, Chemicals, Marketing, Gas and Electricity, and Trading business units.

A CLOSER LOOK AT DYLAN BELGIE

# IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

A small oasis is located between the UNESCO World Heritage City of Antwerp and the busy metropolis that is Brussels: The sedate town of Lint. The Lindeboom – lime tree – was the inspiration for to the village name Lint in Flanders back in the 13th century. And the town with its population of 9,000, home of DYLAN Belgie, is a very green place. A real contrast to the two main cities of Belgium which shape business life. The port of Antwerp is the cornerstone for DYLAN as Senior Manager Karen Berghmans explained.

> The city hall of Antwerp

Let's get one thing straight right away, says Karen Berghmans, Senior Manager at BUHLMANN's subsidiary DYLAN and in the company for 24 years: "Belgium's Red Devils are and will remain number one in the FIFA world ranking". Painful as that may be for one or another soccer nation, it can't be denied. And it shatters the author's meek attempt to sidestep the subject by asking if cycling isn't the number one sport in Belgium since the great Eddy Merckx. Not that Lint's inhabitants don't like cycling: "Our colleagues immediately embraced the idea of BUHLMANN's company bike leasing", says Karen Berghmans, who also takes her bike to work and back. She as well as half of her colleagues in Managing Director Wim Verheyen's team ride between three and 44 kilometers on their bikes or E-bikes to get to DYLAN at Lerenveld 20.

Even if Antwerp with its 500,000 inhabitants has an enormous cultural and economic charisma, Lint – which is a mere 12 km away – offers a good social climate with many nice shops and restaurants. Like in any other town, Belgians here live up to their reputation as food-lovers: "Pommes Frites, beer, waffles, and chocolate – that's not a cliché", Karen Berghmans laughs and points out the considerable number of Michelin Stars that the gourmet bible has awarded in Belgium through the years.

You don't have to go to Antwerp to find amusement. However, her and her colleagues work for DYLAN demands Karen's attendance there quite frequently. "Antwerp is very important to us. Our warehouse is located in the port which gives us direct access to the flow of goods and our main customers from the chemical industry. Four of our colleagues work directly on location. In addition



The team of DYLAN Belgie

to the preparation of transport to our end customers, we also do our customer imposed marking and inspections there." Commissions from other BUHLMANN sites, such as DYLAN Netherlands, BUHLMANN France and Spain, are also processed from this logistic nodal point by DYLAN Belgie. If liquid goods handling is taken out of the equation, says Karen, Antwerp is the European port with the largest turnover rate.

Speaking of Europe: Brussels, Belgium's capital and, so to speak, the heart of the continent, is merely 32 kilometers away. The Council of Europe is located here and its central theme, "United in Diversity", is also true for Belgium. The kingdom with 11.3 million inhabitants is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe. It's current form of government is still relatively young: Since the declaration of independence from the Netherlands in 1830, the Dutch-speaking Flanders and the French-speaking Wallonia together form the state Belgium. The city of Brussels is bi-lingual, and there are a few small German-speaking regions in the east of the country.

Cooperation with the other BUHLMANN GROUP sites is excellent, say Karen Berghmans. There's just one thing she finds somewhat unsatisfactory: Not being able to meet with the colleagues from other sites more often. "We speak on the phone, do business together, but



Waffles, chocolate, chips, beer: It's not just the food that makes Belgium worth the trip.

the faces are not really familiar". The distance to Lint in the north of Belgium is 554 kilometers from Bremen, about 260 kilometers from Duisburg, and a mere 106 kilometers from Oud Beijerland. Not far away when you're thinking globally. And if you should consider a trip to the home of Peter Paul Rubens or to one of the UNESCO world heritage sites in Antwerp, you might want to take a small detour to see lovely Lint – Belgian waffles and chocolates are waiting for you.

**Text:** Gabriele Wiesenhavern

# BETTER PERFORMANCE THANKS TO MODERN TECHNOLOGY

MOBILE DATA COLLECTION IN FIGURES:

## 73,000

**relocations to the automated  
small parts storage system**

Nearly a quarter of all storage relocations, around 73,000, have so far been for the automated small parts storage system – and that only since January 2018.

## 55

**devices**

A total of 55 devices from Honeywell are currently in use at four locations. Most of them, by the way, are located in Duisburg, where 25 units are used.

## 25 – 30%

Thanks to the introduction of the mobile data collection, picking performance has increased by 25 to 30 percent since 2017. More than a quarter of the previous performance has been achieved in the same time.

## 320,000

**storage bin relocations**

Since April 2016, more than 320,000 products have been moved from one storage location within the hall to another using the terminal equipment. This is done, for example, to reach deeper-lying pipes, for reasons of re-organization or to refill the automated small parts storage system.

## 20,700

**test features for almost  
2,200 test orders**

In September 2019, 2,200 new products were received in the four warehouses. These were tested for a total of 20,700 features such as dimensions, markings or visual conspicuities using the devices.

## 14,500

**packaging lines for 7,600  
transport containers**

In September, 14,500 products were packed with the devices in 7,600 consignments, for example in cartons or pallets, for outgoing goods.

