

Styria Print Group (Graz / St. Veit, Austria)

## Facing the future with optimism and new Ferag technology

***Styria Media Group AG is Austria's third largest media group and successfully operates across all media channels. Styria has singled out print production as a segment for further growth and there is a major offensive under way here. To better meet the demands of the market, the group is currently investing 30 million euros in new production technology – an investment that also includes three complete Ferag finishing lines at two locations.***

Styria's leading print product is the *Kleine Zeitung*, one of Austria's most successful regional newspapers, with over 300,000 copies printed seven days a week. Two printing plants located in Graz and St. Veit (near Klagenfurt) deliver a wide spectrum of information to readers in the provinces of Styria and Carinthia.

As for the title, that derives not from the handy 225 x 300 mm format but rather the publication's goal when it was launched in 1904: to be a newspaper for "kleine Leute" - ordinary people. To this day, there has been no change to that recipe of success of maximum closeness to its readership. Christian Wilms, one of two CEOs heading up the Styria and Carinthia printing operations known collectively as Styria Print Group also praises the publisher's instinct for its audience and the effective work done by the marketing department. The result: extremely stable circulation, over 90 per cent to subscribers, every day of the week including Sunday. As Wilms says, "You couldn't imagine anyone sitting down to breakfast in south-eastern Austria without their *Kleine Zeitung*."

Such high market penetration and the brand's success across all distribution channels, especially as a print product, gave Styria the steady assurance they needed to announce an investment of 30 million euros in new production technology

in 2017. This included ordering three complete new mailroom lines from Ferag to replace older Ferag technology that has been operating well in Graz and St. Veit since 2002.

### **“Print and digital complement each other”**

The project could never have been tackled without a clear strategy. And for the two Austrian printing companies that strategy means: growth. The company aims to grow both with products from its own publishing houses and from outside orders. When Kurt Kribitz, the board member responsible for the business area in question announced the investment in May 2017, he declared: “For Styria this move signifies a clear commitment that we will continue to support the success of all our print products. [...] We do not view print and digital as mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they make a promising complement to each other.”

Like almost every newspaper printer worldwide, Styria was facing more and more uncertainties with regard to its production technology. Furthermore, it was evident that the current technical possibilities in Graz no longer matched the needs of the market or the salespeople at their own publishing house. Take the 16-year-old mailroom technology, for example: until recently, all inserts were fed via manual hopper stations. A controller retrofit and a purely mechanical overhaul would not have changed any of that.

Technical circumstances like these were first looked into by working groups. Styria Group management then needed to weigh up their recommendations against the needs of the market and the bounds of economic feasibility. The outcome was a new concept based on revamped technology where that made sense, but essentially meant new investment.

## **Insert business increasingly matters**

While the daily basic workload comes from the *Kleine Zeitung*, with around 230,000 copies in Graz and 110,000 copies in Klagenfurt, Styria Print Group's two newspaper printing plants turn out numerous other products. These include weeklies from Regional Medien Austria, a joint venture with Innsbruck-based Moser Holding, and the publishing house's own weekly, *Die Furche*. In addition, a number of independent local newspaper publishers use the plants' capacity for a variety of weekly, bi-weekly and monthly titles. Moreover, Styria Print Group's activities do not end with third-party items: as well as its own "Druck Styria" printing plant, there is already a Printing Competence Centre where the in-house print experts act as a production agency.

The new printing press in Graz was quickly installed thanks to the reactivation of a printing hall on site that had lain idle since 2002. Both the spaciouly planned foundations and the channels for the conveyor chain guides are now being used again. The fact that these UTR single copy conveyors lead to completely new Ferag mailroom systems has to do with the increasingly important insert business: the *Kleine Zeitung* is published with twelve local editions in Styria and seven in Carinthia and of course, each of them can be separately filled with inserts.

The new finishing lines – two in Graz, one in St. Veit – not only incorporate state-of-the-art Ferag RollStream precollecting systems but also broader feeding options in the form of eight JetFeeders and several MultiDisc winding systems. Whereas the feeders, the precollecting system and the MSD-M inserting drum are all brand-new, parts of the existing MultiDisc winding and unwinding system were given a total overhaul at Ferag headquarters in Hinwil (Switzerland). The managers at Styria perceived this as a section of technology that could continue operating in its current configuration for many years to come.

## **Drag & drop thanks to Navigator**

In postpress processing too, Styria aimed to implement further specialised modes of advertising and expand its production options. One example of this was the purchase of a Ferag TriLiner, which can directly apply MemoSticks and cards to newspaper

products in the UTR conveyor. Everything is controlled via Ferag's Navigator control software, which includes drag & drop assignment of inserts to feeders among its many features. This is why CEO Christian Wilms speaks of a “quantum leap” in postpress processing, and looks to the future with great optimism.

Yes, of course the young generation in south-east Austria are no exception in having high online affinity, he says. Yet he agrees with Styria CEO Markus Mair and his evident conviction at the time of the investment announcement, when he says that “printed newspapers will continue to have significance and a function in the future.”

## Captions



*Christian Wilms is CEO of Styria Print Group and together with Alexander Marko manages the Austrian printing plants. He is responsible for production, technology, all core processes and sales.*



*The new finishing lines – two in Graz, one in St. Veit – incorporate state-of-the-art Ferag RollStream precollecting systems and broader feeding options than before: eight JetFeeders and several MultiDisc winding systems. Parts of the existing MultiDisc winding and unwinding system were given a total overhaul at Ferag in Hinwil.*

**Please send proof copies to:**

- Ferag AG, Kommunikation, Industriestrasse 1, CH-8340 Hinwil, Switzerland

**About Ferag AG:**

Ferag AG, with its headquarters at Hinwil in Switzerland, has for 60 years been known and respected in the printing industry for high quality, absolute dependability and perfect customer support. The traditional, family-owned company is seen as the undisputed market and technological leader in the development, manufacture and marketing of postpress processing systems. Ferag is also a specialist in innovative conveyor and processing technology for the most varied industrial applications and goods distribution systems. For example, with its innovative Skyfall and Denisort systems, the company has in recent years become very successful in sectors like e-commerce and intralogistic materials flow. Like its affiliate companies Denipro AG, WRH Global AG with its 20 subsidiaries, and PMC Print Media Corporation, Ferag is part of the WRH Walter Reist Holding AG corporate group, which employs a staff of more than 800 worldwide.

Ferag AG

Zürichstrasse 74

CH-8340 Hinwil

Phone +41 44 938 60 00

Fax +41 44 938 60 60

[info@ferag.com](mailto:info@ferag.com)

[www.ferag.com](http://www.ferag.com)