



# INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS ON THE CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE OF THE STEEL SECTOR

## 2024 PHOENIX steel association meeting

**Dortmund, 25/09/2024 – Over 160 participants accepted an invitation from NORDWEST on 19 September to meet in Blankenfelde-Mahlow, located in the Berlin/Brandenburg metropolitan area. The occasion was a meeting of the PHOENIX steel association, where a variety of issues were on the agenda. The event, held at the Van der Valk Hotel, focused primarily on networking**

READING TIME: 8 MIN

## **and exchanging information.**

Currently, the German steel industry is facing significant challenges. The crisis in the construction industry continues to have a direct negative impact on the sector. Although this issue was very much front of mind for participants, NORDWEST successfully conveyed reasons for positivity and identified viable prospects for the future. NORDWEST CEO Jörg Simon greeted guests by saying: “We have chosen the right time for this event, giving us the opportunity to enter into an open and solution-oriented dialogue with our specialist trade and supplier partners regarding the challenges that the current situation poses. Everyone in the industry has issues that concern them and that they are currently working to manage. Accordingly, we all need to discuss our experiences, network, look for positive signals and motivate ourselves to handle this difficult economic phase – and come out of it even stronger than before. We as an association want to help our partners use this year’s steel meeting to accomplish those goals”.

To kick off the event, the Heads of NORDWEST’s Steel Division, Claudio Kemper, Dirk Held and Christopher Rüter, looked back at the development of the PHOENIX steel association, and illustrated future tasks and challenges for attendees. They focused specifically on growth potentials in Germany and throughout Europe.

Then, distinguished guest speakers provided plenty of input and inspiration for later discussions, covering a wide range of topics. Well-known keynote speaker Michael Heitkötter, a business expert in the innovative and successful use of technology, gave a presentation on artificial intelligence outlining in detail how applied AI, in the form of tools like ChatGPT, and effective corporate strategies can pave the way for companies to gain a competitive advantage, improve efficiency, generate higher revenues, and secure their future viability. He underscored this thesis with plenty of practical examples from real

READING TIME: 8 MIN

entrepreneurs.

Likewise, Heinrich Weitz from the Hauptverband der Deutschen Bauindustrie (HDB - German Construction Industry Association) provided valuable economic insights into the development of the construction sector. Corinna Krischker, Sales Director at Hochbau der Köster GmbH in Berlin, presented the viewpoint of a construction company regarding the issue of industrial construction. Oliver Ellermann, CEO of the Bundesverband Deutscher Stahlhandel (BDS - German Steel Sector Association) then gave attendees a glimmer of hope for the future in his presentation "The Steel Trade in Crisis! What Now?"

## **Sustainability prize honours outstanding commitment**

One unique highlight of the steel association meeting was the second annual awarding of the PHOENIX Steel Association sustainability prize. The award was created for outstanding supplier partners in light of the growing importance of sustainability in the steel sector. This positive approach to the issue also provides an outlook towards future prospects for the sector. Suppliers receiving the award were:

- **AFV Beltrame Group:** AFV Beltrame created Chalibria, a steel which is certified as carbon-neutral according to statutory standards, intended to accelerate the transition to climate neutrality. All AFV Beltrame Group products can be purchased in the Chalibria version in the same manner as usual, and via the same sales channels. It is a new vision for steel, encompassing the values of sustainability and circularity, along with full respect for the planet.
- **MARCEGAGLIA DEUTSCHLAND GmbH:** MARCEGAGLIA has always focused on ecological and social sustainability. As part of this focus, the company has invested in technologies like H2 Green Steel, the world's first truly emissions-free steel plant. MARCEGAGLIA is also a partner in a project to separate and store CO<sub>2</sub> in the Ravenna industrial area and is

**READING TIME: 8 MIN**

researching the use of green hydrogen. In addition, the company engages in further social initiatives such as the MARCEGAGLIA ACADEMY, an educational centre for the group's employees and partners and a site for promoting new talents and initiatives, as well as the FONDAZIONE MARCEGAGLIA, a charitable foundation that supports projects worldwide to fight social marginalisation, domestic violence and poverty.

- **Outokumpu Nirosta GmbH:** Manufacturer Outokumpu has been driving the transformation to sustainable steel production for many years. Outokumpu Circle Green® is the company's greatest success yet in this mission. Circle Green is the world's first carbon-reduced stainless steel. It has the lowest carbon footprint in the industry worldwide – a reduction of up to 92% compared to the average. The CO<sub>2</sub> reduction is achieved through real changes in production. Outokumpu utilises no external compensation or balancing.

## **Stunts and illusions part of the entertaining programme**

Despite involving serious discussions of the current situation in the steel market, the event also offered a variety of entertainment. In addition to a buffet of grilled foods, a cocktail bar, a photo booth and a relaxing lounge corner with deck chairs, a secret agent stunt show by the Stuntcrew Babelberg offered plenty of action. Illusionist Markus Gartzke captivated attendees with a fascinating show – ranging from mentalism and thought reading to card tricks. In addition, caricature artist Stefan Wein entertained guests with his skills in caricature drawing. Claudio Kemper, Head of Division Steel at NORDWEST, summed up the event in this way: "The intensity and quality we were able to bring to the event as we brought our specialist trade and supplier partners together at the PHOENIX steel association meeting, discussions, and networking, along with plenty of input on forward-thinking topics in the industry – like the CBAM or AI – all of it was truly valuable for everyone involved. Accordingly, feedback from our guests this time was once again extremely positive – which we are glad to hear, and which we find very encouraging.

READING TIME: 8 MIN

## Über die NORDWEST Handel AG:

Die NORDWEST Handel AG mit Sitz in Dortmund gehört seit 1919 zu den leistungsstärksten Verbundunternehmen des Produktionsverbundhandels (PVH) mit einem Geschäftsvolumen in Höhe von 4.801 Mio. Euro gesamt per 2023. Die Kernaufgaben des Verbandes zur Unterstützung der rund 1.255 Fachhandelspartner aus den Bereichen Stahl, Bau-Handwerk-Industrie und Sanitär- und Heizungstechnik (Haustechnik) liegen in der Bündelung der Einkaufsvolumina, der Zentralregulierung, einem starken Zentrallager sowie in umfangreichen Dienstleistungen. NORDWEST ist auch in Europa, insbesondere in den Schwerpunktländern Österreich, Schweiz, Frankreich, Polen sowie Benelux aktiv.

*Image Description: NORDWEST CEO Jörg Simon welcomes guests to the conference portion of the event.*

Herausgeber:

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