



BIBUS METALS: Solid as a rock

Currently celebrating their 30th anniversary, **BIBUS METALS** are active in ten European countries as well as in China and Russia as a stockholder and trader of nickel alloys, titanium, high-end alloys, special materials and stainless steel. The company is part of **BIBUS HOLDING AG**, a family-held company headquartered in Fehraltorf, Switzerland. By providing high quality products and exceptional service, **Martin Vonmoos (CEO)** and **Philipp Bachmann (Managing Director Switzerland)** explained that the company is focused “on making the impossible possible” for its customers. *Stainless Steel World* was keen to find out more.

By John Butterfield and Joanne McIntyre

BIBUS METALS is part of the Materials group of its parent company, BIBUS HOLDING. Although the Materials Group only employs around 140 of the more than 700 employees in the holding, it generates over half of the entire company’s turnover and has achieved impressive year-on-year growth since BIBUS METALS was founded in 1979 as the exclusive distributor of Inco Alloys International (Special Metals Corporation since 1999). It is also distributor and stockist for Fondinox (Italy) and Titania (Italy) among many other large brand names.

The company stocks and distributes nickel-based alloys, titanium and special materials, and has large stocks of semi-finished products. With the large warehouse located in the Basle region of Switzerland, BIBUS METALS expanded steadily, adding a service centre to its facilities. After gaining the right to become Inco Alloy’s exclusive distributor for Germany and Austria in 1990 the company soon became the leading supplier and distributor for alloys and stainless steel in the region. By 1995 the company had expanded into the Czech Republic and within a

few years BIBUS METALS had set out on its path of expansion into Eastern Europe.

Steady expansion, clear goals

The company has followed a steady expansion plan, building and enlarging its warehouses for large stocks in nickel alloys and titanium in the forms of bar, sheet, plate, tube & pipe, wire, strip and welding material. “Having outgrown the local and surrounding markets we expanded into Eastern Europe after obtaining exclusive rights from Special Metals Wiggins in 2000” explains Mr.



Vonmoos. "In that year the first daughter company of BIBUS METALS AG was founded in Poland. Our Polish facilities have a large warehouse and a service centre which includes a 3x6 metre water jet cutting machine."

"In 2001 our next step was to set up a company with warehouse in Budapest (Hungary), followed by Bulgaria in 2004, Romania in January 2005, and Kiev (Ukraine) in November 2005. The most recent additions were Hong Kong (China) in May 2008 and Russia last December."

"It's fairly obvious that our goal is to establish an office or at least an agent in every important European country, with the ultimate aim of becoming the market leader in distributing special metals and titanium in these regions. Our plan is to be the first, second or at least third most important customer to our main suppliers. We always aim to achieve an annual growth of 10% and we have easily achieved this every year in the past decade."

Mr. Bachmann adds; "We were the first

company in our field to be ISO certified in Switzerland. BIBUS METALS products are used in every industry from aerospace to chemical processing, pollution control and waste processing, electronics to marine engineering, petrochemical processing, oil and gas extraction and power generation to the nuclear industry. We have the ability to fill huge orders or produce single pieces, and even very thick tubes with diameters up to 1200 mm and walls up to 150 mm thickness in nickel alloys and austenitic, superaustenitic, duplex, superduplex and martensitic steels."

Providing excellence

"Our objective is to concentrate on our core competencies; providing quality products, outstanding service, efficient logistics and professional consultation to satisfy our customers" continues Mr. Vonmoos. "It is the policy of BIBUS METALS to only supply very high quality products. All of our products are accompanied by copies of the original mill test reports, which are sent to our clients free of charge. Long term agreements with our suppliers ensure that we are able to provide consistent quality to our customers."

"The services we provide include promptly supplying material not only from the wide range of products we keep stocked on hand for rapid delivery, but also fulfilling special requests. Material can be supplied sheared, sawn or water-jet cut, and re-forged on request."

For its logistics activities the company has centralised purchasing and material stocks where possible, and works with just a few efficient, reliable carriers to



Mr. Philipp Bachmann, Managing Director Switzerland (left) and Mr. Martin Vonmoos (CEO) of BIBUS METALS (right)

minimise freight charges. BIBUS METALS also has contracts with its key customers to stock items in its warehouses to supply just-in-time delivery.

"We have a very experienced team here at BIBUS METALS which is able to provide expert consultation" adds Mr. Bachmann. "For complex applications our mill metallurgists will generally provide on-site consultation. We believe we are fairly unique in that we have no problem keeping our staff which remains loyal to us throughout their careers. For instance in our Polish office, which was established in 2000, we have never lost a member of staff, only added to them! We provide fair working conditions for all of our employees wherever they may be located, and most employees have been with BIBUS METALS for ten years or more. This means we keep our expertise in-house, and continue to expand our





Rolls of metal awaiting to be shipped off to customers.

outstanding knowledge base.”
 “Any of our long term customers will tell you that we are a very stable company” says Mr. Vonmoos. “This year we are celebrating our 30th anniversary and are in a very good market position. In some ways we are very conservative, for instance we are self financed and have a very powerful parent company which means we have the power and finance to grow. Over the years we have become expert at exploring new market areas and developed the skills to set up daughter companies in new countries. The fact that we have increased our turnover by 10% every year for the past decade demonstrates our success”.

Problem solvers

“Under the motto ‘supporting your success’ we aim to help our customers to gain competitive advantages” explains Mr. Bachmann. “To this end, we create pre-requisites internally which are shown externally in a high degree of competence, a high degree of delivery willingness, and an above average degree of services. We help our customer in every possible way so that he in turn can fulfil his duties to his customers. We advise customers on how best to use metals, helping them solve their problems. In addition we are able to supply material very quickly, particularly if it is on stock in our warehouses. Customers can literally order material today and have it tomorrow.”

“If customers need an exotic material we will find out why they need it, what the best product is, then add it to our

product portfolio or source it for them to create a complete package so that they can buy everything from one supplier.”

“The range of solutions that our clients need varies widely” continues Mr. Vonmoos. “Recently a customer who normally used a certain alloy told us that they needed to find a cheaper alternative due to the current economic crisis. They know we can solve this type of problem for them.”

“Another customer was occasionally using a highly specialised alloy which had a very long lead time. Together we made an agreement with him whereby he provides us with a forecast and we

guarantee to maintain a stock of it for him in Switzerland. He simply calls us and we can ship it to him within 24 hours. This is the type of very close working relationship we like to develop with our customers. We’re very successful in finding time saving solutions. Delivery times are one of the most important factors, both for us and for our customers.”

The company’s relationship with its suppliers is one of the key elements in its success to date. Mr. Vonmoos explains: “We aim to establish long lasting relationships. For instance we won’t switch suppliers just to get a slightly cheaper product. Our aim is to be one of the most important customers for our suppliers, as this will ensure we get premium service from them. Today we work with less than ten main suppliers; being fairly conservative we won’t work with just anybody, and are very careful who we choose to work with. Quality is more important than price, and supplying material on time is one of the most important guarantees we make, and one which differentiates us from our competitors.”

Future plans

“Looking to the future we plan to maintain our rate of growth, despite the shrinking economy” says Mr. Vonmoos with confidence. “Russia and China are rapidly developing markets where we are confident of attaining growth. Our expertise in dealing with developing markets is demonstrated by our successes in the past ten years. As the



There is a vast storage space for stock in their extensive warehouse in Fehrltorf.

economic situation becomes more difficult we have the expertise to deal with this situation. This is not the first recession we have encountered and in the past we have always been able to adapt fairly well. Our conservative decision making stands us in good stead for this situation."

"Our future targets for growth include moving into new regions such as the Middle East and Vietnam. We will continue to add products to our range of products; last year we added duplex and super duplex to our portfolio in Poland, and these materials together with nickel based alloys and titanium remain our key portfolio materials. Having come so far in thirty years, we're looking forward to helping find solutions to 'impossible' problems for our customers in the decades to come" he concludes with a smile.



The Polish facilities have a large warehouse and a service centre which includes a 3 x 6 metre water jet cutting machine.

Milestones

- 1947 Founding of the individual company Dipl. Ing. Hans BIBUS
- 1968 Move to Zumikon
- 1979 Founding of BIBUS METALS AG, Switzerland
- 1990 Founding of BIBUS METALS GmbH in Germany
- 1995 Founding of BIBUS Metals Division, Czech Republic
- 1996 Move to Wallisellen
- 2000 Founding of BIBUS METALS Sp.z o.o. in Poland
- 2001 Founding of BIBUS METALS Kft. in Hungary
- 2004 Founding of BIBUS METALS BULGARIA EOOD in Bulgaria
- 2005 Founding of BIBUS METALS S.R.L. in Romania
- 2005 Founding of BIBUS METALS TOV in the Ukraine
- 2006 Move to Fehraltorf
- 2008 Founding of BIBUS METALS Ltd. in Hong Kong
- 2008 Founding of BIBUS METALS O.O.O. in Russia



The BIBUS METALS headquarters in Fehraltorf, Switzerland.



The BIBUS METALS Poland offices and warehouse.

Facts and Figures

Name:	BIBUS METALS Group
Headquarters:	Fehraltorf, Switzerland
Founded:	1979
Employees:	140 +
Products:	Nickel and nickel alloys; titanium and titanium alloys; welding consumables; centrifugal castings, duplex and super duplex, stainless steel.
Product forms:	Cold rolled sheet and strip, hot rolled sheet/plate, seamless and welded tubes/pipes, wire and wire rods, welding wire and electrodes.
Services:	Cut to size service, shearing, sawing, cutting by plasma/laser, cutting by water jet, heat treatment, hammer-forging, supply of machined components