

Centravis: 5 years with the new name, over 70 years in the industry



In November 2012 Centravis, one of the world's top ten producers of stainless seamless tubes and pipes*, began celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Centravis brand. A new international brand, incorporating the Latin words for "centre" (centrum) and "power" (vis), was officially unveiled on November 6, 2007 at The Stainless Steel World Conference in Maastricht, The Netherlands. Over the last five years a lot has been happening in the Centravis camp and continues to happen, ensuring that tremendous progress has already been made towards achieving the company's goals.

In March 2010 Stainless Steel World magazine featured Centravis in a cover story and we recently visited them again to learn what accomplishments, improvements and innovations have taken place since the rebranding and, particularly, in the last two years.

By Gillian Gane

*according to SMR, Steel & Metals Market Research, Pflach, Reutte, Austria



Hot shop: Cutting the tube after pressing.

operations under the new international brand, CentraVis puts special emphasis on long production traditions spanning over 70 years of experience, which has been passed on from generation to generation of professional pipe manufacturers.

Getting back to basics, the outlook for CentraVis at the end of 2007 was promising. The company started its conquest of new markets from a large-scale \$130 million investment project aimed at modernization of production facilities. Through 2008-2010 it installed a new high-productive extrusion line with units from leading European vendors in the hot shop, while in the cold shop new cold-rolling mills, U-bending machine and continuous finishing line for heat exchanger tubes processing were put into operation.

New equipment combined with the efforts of professional crew and technical consultants have borne fruit over the last five years. The company has considerably increased its product portfolio, which now includes over 1,000 reference sizes of more than 100 types of corrosion and heat resistant steel grades in 7 segments: general tubes and pipes, heat exchanger tubes, hollow bars, boiler tubes, instrumentation & furnace tubes, and Ni-alloys.

The range of sizes, currently offered by CentraVis, varies from 4 to 245 mm in diameter with wall thickness 0.2-35 mm, and tube length reaching 27 metres.

Tradition enhanced by modern technologies

The international holding CentraVis Ltd emerged in 2007 as a result of the integration of manufacturing, service and trading assets owned by the UVIS group of companies, based in Dnipropetrovsk district, Ukraine. Its manufacturing unit Nikopol Stainless Tube Mill, now known as CENTRAVIS PRODUCTION UKRAINE, developed in 2000 from the two shops of the former Nikopol Yuzhnotrubny Plant, an industrial giant founded in 1935. Summarizing the results over the five year period of



Cold shop: Tubes on the grinding machine loading table.

Size Range of hot extruded tubes:

OD – 57-245 mm; WT – 3.05-35 mm;
Length – up to 15,000 mm.

Size Range of cold rolled tubes:

OD – 4-114 mm; WT – 0.2-12 mm;
Length – up to 27,000 mm.

Business development

Though the first steps of this ambitious player overlapped with world economy turbulence, wiping out part of what otherwise might have been achieved, the company rightfully holds its place among leading technically developed suppliers of stainless seamless tubes and pipes.

Constant technical improvements and the forward thinking business strategy focused on development in high-tech segments, allowed the company not only to survive the crisis times, but to lay a solid foundation for future development. Following a sharp drop in production in 2009 on the back of the economic downturn, in 2011-2012 the shipment volumes surpassed the pre-crisis level, also showing a sales spurt across all strategic markets.

For many years the company has remained a leading supplier of seamless stainless tubes for nuclear and thermal power engineering in CIS. Recent example includes a trial run of bi-metal heat-exchanger tubes for the AKME Engineering's SVBR-100 nuclear project in Dimitrovgrad (Russia).

With the growth of business in CIS, Centravis maintains its sales momentum in the EU. In 2008-2012 the company secured some major projects in the nuclear industry which included the supply of heat-exchanger seamless tubes to the joint AREVA-ENSA project for the Jules Horowitz reactor in Cadarache (France) and production of heat-exchanger U-bend tubes to ADF for AREVA's 1650 MWe project in Flamanville (France). The company has also made big progress in supplying instrumentation tubes for European automotive projects.

"During the last five years we have witnessed an eightfold growth of

the company's project business", comments Igor Marfut, Centravis Sales Coordinator in Europe. "Successful implementation of these projects means we remain committed to widening our capabilities in complex segments for a wide range of industries with aggressive and critical production environments. Through the projects we mastered the requirements of such specific nuclear standards as RCCM (France), ASME Section III (USA), KTA Standards (Germany) and automobile standard such as ISO TS 16949 (Germany). Certification according to these standards is planned for 2013".

In addition to nuclear, thermal power and automotive industries, Centravis' products are widely used in aircraft and shipbuilding, chemical and petrochemical industries, machine building, oil & gas, the non-ferrous industry and others. So the company is highly active in many areas, with regard to both sales geography and product portfolio.

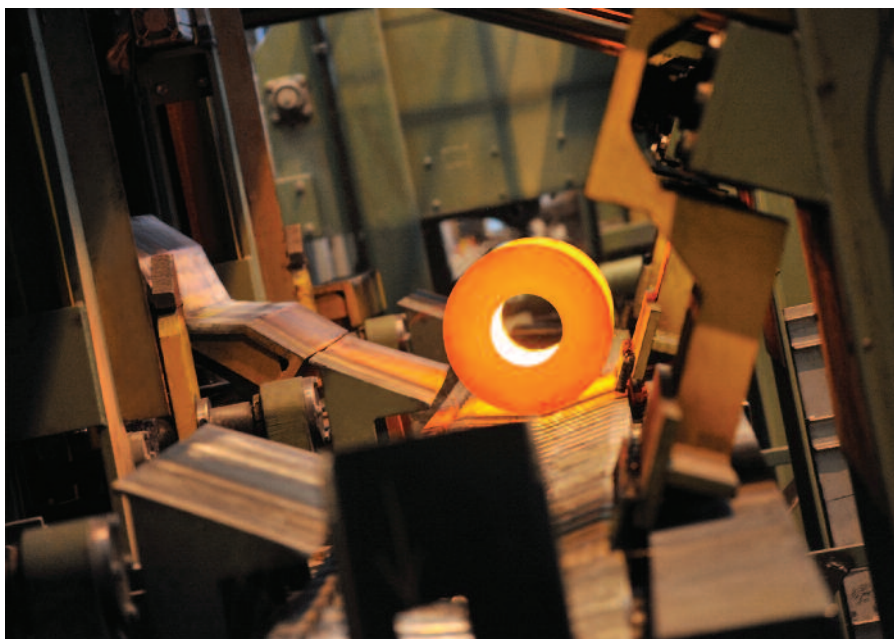
"Recent developments have shown that our product is accepted as an industry standard by a growing number of Western & CIS customers. From the moment we started operations in the market, we managed to prove that the quality of Ukrainian stainless seamless pipes meets the highest international standards. In fact, we are the only company in the world in our field, largely present in two such different markets, meaning Western and CIS, in terms

of product standards, steel grades, technical requirements and business habits", says Centravis CEO Yuriy Atanasov.

Standards & certification

A special contribution to the most important accomplishments belongs to Centravis' Quality Management Unit. Having initially obtained all formal industry certifications such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, within five years Centravis made substantial advances in the sphere of customers' approvals and certifications. Through 2008-2012 Centravis has been successfully certified and granted the status of approved supplier from major global players in the chemical, petrochemical, oil & gas, power and automotive industries, namely Exxon, Petrobras, Shell, Saudi Aramco, WackerChemie, Fluor, Benteler Automotive, Ti Automotive, BalckeDurr, Daewoo, Larsen & Toubro, to name but a few.

On top of this the company has all key industry-based certifications, namely the Pressure Equipment Directive (97/23/EC), Lloyd's Register, Det Norske Veritas, Aviation Register of Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC), Russian Maritime Register of Shipping and many others. With regard to product standards, the company product range covers over 100 international standards including GOST and TU in CIS, and such western standards as ASTM, DIN, NF, UNI, and others.



Hot shop: Heated billet pushed from the furnace to extrusion line.

Recent upgrades and improvements

In a highly competitive environment CentraVis focuses efforts on the improvement of technologies and operational processes to offer its customers high-end products and solutions. Recent advances in this area worth mentioning include:

- Development of thin-wall hot extruded large diameter tubes (OD 219 mm/WT 6 mm; OD 168 mm/WT 4 mm; OD 159 mm/WT 3.5-4 mm).
- Extension of U-bend radius (min 1.5 mm – max 1,100 mm) and length (up to 25 meters) together with deployment of heat treatment of the inside and outside surfaces of the bend area in a protective nitrogen atmosphere.

“Much attention is also paid to supplies of long hot finished products for pipelines. Clients expect constant improvements in this area as, the longer the pipe is, the fewer welded joints are required”, adds Yuriy Atanasov.

Other upgrades include but are not limited to, an extension of the high-tech products range for the nuclear and thermal power industries, particularly, the development of difficult-to-form Ni-alloys like XH65AABY, 46XHM, XH60BT, UNS NO6600, UNS NO8825 and their equivalents, and widening the automotive product range by EN 10305 standard with special requirements to internal diameter and CFA surface.

Customer relations

CentraVis aims at creating added value for clients across the production chain starting from the order processing and ending with the supply of solutions tailored for customers' needs. The company has invested in a CRM system and additional service options, including key account managers and sales engineer support.

Its close geographical location to the main markets contributes to effective logistics and supply management, while an experienced and skilled sales team makes sure that clients' needs are treated in a timely and proper fashion. Besides this CentraVis has developed an online system, granting access to original product certificates. Using individual login



Cold shop: Finished products transported by a crane to the packing area.

details, any client can download all product information and make sure that he receives exactly what he pays for, no matter whether he buys tubes direct from the manufacturer or from the stockist. Moreover, the company's IT department is currently working on the development of e-document flow with key customers based on ERP SAP.

“Within five years CentraVis has become a truly international company. We can

speak the same language with any of our partners, no matter in which country he operates or which industry he represents”, notes Mr. Atanasov. “This is something really valuable in the current context of globalization and fast-changing market environment”.

What the future holds

In the mid-term, CentraVis is aiming to further increase its sales volume. The key focus markets for this target will include Russia and NAFTA. Major growth is expected in instrumentation tubes and hollow bars, especially in mechanical engineering and the automotive industry; furnace tubes for the petrochemical industry;

specialty heat-exchanger tubes for the nuclear power generation industry; boiler tubes for thermal and nuclear power generation, and general tubes and pipes for the oil & gas industry, together with other applications.

There would seem to be no doubt whatever that CentraVis will continue its development and achieve the goals it has set itself earning its place as a major player on the global stage.



Seamless stainless steel pipes – CentraVis products.