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Despite difficult conditions last year

Viessmann Group has further expanded its market position

Allendorf (Eder), February 29, 2016 – Although conditions on the market did not make it easy, the Viessmann Group has nonetheless been able to further expand its market position in 2015. This international manufacturer of heating, industrial and refrigeration systems increased total sales by 4.1 percent, and in Germany by as much as 5.9 percent. Company head Prof. Dr. Martin Viessmann announced the figures at this year's press conference at company headquarters in Allendorf (Eder) in northern Hesse.

Increases in turnover and number of employees

Professor Viessmann also announced an increase in turnover. Following 2.18 billion euros in 2014, a turnover of 2.22 billion euros was generated last year; this equals an increase of 1.8 percent. The number of employees in the group grew by around 1.5 percent to 11,600. Expenses for research and development remained unchanged at four percent of turnover; a total of around 100 million euros were invested. The investments focused on building the Viessmann Innovation Center (VIC), a new research and development center that will be up and running next year, on setting up new sales branches, as well as on projects related to the digital transformation.

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“Satisfied with the figures”

Professor Viessmann called these figures satisfactory, bearing in mind developments on the market. After spending a long time focusing almost exclusively on the expansion of renewable energy sources in the power supply, policymakers have declared energy efficiency to be the second pillar of the energy transition, thus giving the heating market the attention it deserves considering its immense efficiency potentials. Resolving the modernization backlog of existing heating systems has not yet really started, he said, which is due not only to the currently prevailing circumstances, but also to low energy prices.

Markets showing uneven growth

Although the German market for heating technology registered industry-wide quantitative growth of four percent in 2015 as the number of heat generators rose to 710,000, this growth was based entirely on gas- and oil-fired boilers. Biomass boilers lost 18 percent, heat pumps two percent and solar heating systems nine percent of their market volume. The remaining West European markets grew by 1.6 percent to a total of 5.1 million heat generators. Market growth in parts of Eastern Europe is proving to be particularly difficult – especially in the Ukraine and in Russia, where a sharp downturn was experienced. While the North American market has shown itself to be decidedly stable, the dynamic in China has noticeably regressed.

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Digital Energy Solutions

In the course of the press conference, Professor Viessmann also presented the “Digital Energy Solutions” joint venture that the company recently entered into with BMW. “Digital Energy Solutions” bundles the expertise of BMW and Viessmann, the innovation leaders in their industries. The joint venture will help SMEs digitally analyze their energy consumption in production and administration to make it more transparent, reduce CO₂ emissions through optimizations and, not least, save energy costs.

This will be achieved by intelligent load management, by using more renewable energy, generating power for self-consumption as well as by integrating electric vehicles into their fleets. In addition, IT-based identification, creation and marketing of energy flexibility are also on offer. A key component used by the joint venture is a recently developed IT system for the intelligent digital management of energy systems.

Digitalization in the company

Apart from this joint venture, digitalization is also a key issue for Viessmann, said the company head. Following the energy transition, this is the second big challenge preoccupying the company, he said. Together with market partners, Viessmann is now pursuing new approaches and further developing its business models on the basis of its own core competence.

For instance, the process of digitalization has already begun on all levels of the company. This refers for one thing to the corporate organization, which is not only being digitally transformed, but also strengthened with digital talents. Furthermore, the work environment is being adapted with the goal of enhancing the agility

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and entrepreneurial spirit of the employees. In this way, the company intends to successfully cope with the cultural change that digitalization brings with it.

Connectivity – one of the key product features

For another, connectivity is going to be one of the key product features of all Viessmann heat generators, as was already announced at the 2015 ISH in Frankfurt, the industry's leading trade fair. To this end, the company will be offering a solution that allows market partners to use a simple plug-and-play installation to connect their heating systems to the internet by means of WLAN. This will enable homeowners to set temperatures or individual heating periods quite easily with their smartphone. Once the owner grants clearance, the heating engineer will be able to see the operating parameters of the system, thus letting him identify a need for service early on and plan his work accordingly. In addition, Viessmann is offering new software for visualizing the status of the heating systems under his care and giving him access to their operating data.

“Heizungsprofi.de”

While 80 percent of decisions to invest in a new heating system used to be controlled by local heating engineers, consumers are now increasingly turning to the internet, where they can find information and seemingly attractive offers in a very short time. To meet this challenge, Viessmann introduced the “heizungsprofi.de” web platform early this year. This platform enables the company to use its online media coverage of its strong, well-known brand to win over potential buyers and steer them to capable heating contractors nearby. At the same time, the site features a heating calculator that generates an individual offer for Viessmann

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products suited to the specific case of application, based on the data of the respective specialized company and without losing any time, while also taking account of the requirements of the energy transition.

“Taking an active part in shaping the ongoing change”

To sum up, Professor Viessmann explained that the company will be taking an active part in shaping the ongoing change in the industry and working together with its market partners to consistently seize the related opportunities.

Inauguration of the power-to-gas plant

Following the press conference, the world’s first power-to-gas plant making use of a biological process of methanation was inaugurated at Viessmann headquarters in Allendorf (Eder). Along with a large number of other honoured guests from politics and business, the Minister-President of Hesse, Volker Bouffier, attended the event.

“This company is one of the visible international figureheads for Hesse; it is a part of Hesse that’s coming on strong,” said the Minister-President in his welcoming speech. Bouffier also said that not only the new power-to-gas plant marked the company’s commitment to Hesse as a location for doing business, but also the planned Viessmann Innovation Center, in which the company is going to invest 50 million euros.

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New microbiological process

While other power-to-gas concepts achieve methanation by means of chemical catalysis, MicrobEnergy – a company of the

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Viessmann group – has developed a biological process that has been in use in Allendorf for a year now.

This biological methanation is distinguished by its high degree of flexibility, and is therefore ideal for absorbing fluctuating energy quantities. Using available biogas and sewer gas plants can substantially reduce the level of investment needed for power-to-gas, since transformers are often already in place, as well as connections to the gas and electric power grid.

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