

# When tradition and progress complement each other

## Böllinghaus celebrates its 125th anniversary

**Hilden/Vieira de Leiria.** The year when the Eiffel Tower was completed and opened for the public, when the Great Exhibition was inaugurated and Hermann Hollerith laid the corner stone for the automatic data processing, the »Remscheider Walz- und Hammerwerke Böllinghaus GmbH & Co. KG« was founded by Johann Ludwig Härtel and Hermann Böllinghaus. It was in 1889, when the newly established company started its production of carbon tool steel. Today Böllinghaus Steel GmbH looks back on a tradition of 125 years.

■ In 1889 Hermann Böllinghaus, a wealthy master butcher, became aware of the signs of the time and decided to found a factory in Remscheid/Germany with the aim to produce tool steel. The technical expertise was contributed by his partner Johann Ludwig Härtel. When Böllinghaus died in 1912 the Härtel family took over the

business and controlled the company until today with great success – meanwhile in the 4th generation.

### Success cannot be taken for granted

As early as 1920 the management of the company proved its clear-sighted expertise

and began to concentrate its production on drill steel and other products, which the mining industry was in need of. That soon emerged to have been a wise decision.

The 2nd World War did not spare the tool manufacturing industry – also not those in the Remscheid area. After the war the destroyed Böllinghaus steel mill was rebuilt with the exemption of the forge. Instead, the production concentrated again on file steel, carbon tool steel and drill steel.

Always looking for lucrative market niches, Böllinghaus took up the production of stainless steel in the early 1980s. This should also turn out to have been a wise strategic decision.

A further remarkable date in the history of Böllinghaus was the acquisition of a steel mill in Portugal in 1996 and the foundation of Böllinghaus Portugal Aços Especiais LDA in Vieira de Leiria. Thus the first stainless steel producer was born in Portugal. Until 2001 Böllinghaus produced in both locations. In the middle of 2001 Hartwig Härtel, CEO of Böllinghaus Steel, came to the decision to close the works in Remscheid and to transfer the entire production to Vieira de Leiria, Portugal. The headquarters and the



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In the four years to come Böllinghaus intends to increase its production capacity to some 15,000 tonnes annually (photos: Böllinghaus Steel GmbH).

administration offices of the company remained in Germany.

In 2010 Böllinghaus expanded its product portfolio by hot rolled and drawn flat bars, square bars and hexagon bars. Thus Böllinghaus definitely improved its range of hot rolled and cold drawn standard profiles and met the current demand in large part. Nowadays the clearly structured production programme of Böllinghaus Steel is geared to the current market trends for stainless long products, which does not imply that the company ignores future developments.

At the end of 2012 Böllinghaus closed its premises in Remscheid and moved to Hilden near Düsseldorf. At the same time the company adopted the registered trade mark Böllinghaus Steel GmbH as its official name.

### From Portugal into the world

With an average annual production output of 12,000 tonnes, of which round about 99.5 % are assigned to export, Europe with a share of some 58 % is and remains the strongest selling market. Within Europe Germany with a share of 19 % of the entire production is the biggest buyer followed by the UK with a 14 % share. Europe will also

in future remain the most important market for Böllinghaus.

Outside Europe the USA with a 31 % share of the entire production output represent the biggest selling market. Northern America buys some 36 % of the Böllinghaus output and is thus the biggest non-European market for Böllinghaus. Compared with other regions in the USA the company shows a relatively strong presence and is well established there. That in turn means that Böllinghaus has to always strive towards defending its position on the American market and to expand the same, respectively, but also to improve its efforts in other NAFTA markets. In order to achieve these targets Böllinghaus consistently develops new marketing strategies.

In Asia Böllinghaus also seeks to improve its sales figures. The company's product range shows a great diversity of various dimensions for hexagon profiles. The rapidly growing market for hexagon profiles offers especially in Taiwan, China and South Korea great opportunities. In the long term Böllinghaus plans to have a presence in these markets with the help of sales representatives or strategic distribution partners.

### Böllinghaus has an eye to the future

Aside from the well-known quality, which Böllinghaus delivers day by day, there are the hand tailored solutions, which have established the good reputation of the company all over the world. The professional experience of 125 years, the continuous tests through specialists that result from it, the many personal face-to-face encounters with customers as well as the ability to develop new products have established Böllinghaus' reputation as a reliable partner.

As mentioned before, the average annual production capacity of Böllinghaus steel accounts for 12,000 tonnes. But that shall not remain so forever. In the four years to come Böllinghaus intends to increase its production capacity to some 15,000 tonnes annually. Therefore CEO Hartwig Härtel plans to invest several million euros in the expansion of the production works in Vieira de Leiria. Additionally, Böllinghaus Steel will again extend its product portfolio.

 [www.boellinghaus.de](http://www.boellinghaus.de)

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**Böllinghaus' work in Vieira de Leiria is not far away from the sea.**