

Media Release**75 years of Oerlikon Balzers: endless passion for sustainable surface solutions**

Balzers, Liechtenstein, 9 July 2021 – **Oerlikon Balzers, one of the world’s leading providers of surface solutions for metal and plastics processing, is celebrating its 75th birthday. In 1946, Professor Max Auwärter had an idea for how to make the then largely unknown vacuum thin-film technology usable on an industrial scale. Since the 1980s, the Liechtenstein-based company has taken his idea and focused on its passion for sustainable innovations which significantly improve the performance and service life of tools and precision components in a wide range of industries.**

75 years ago, an idea was born: to protect the surfaces of tools and components from long-term wear by applying coatings which don’t just extend their service life but also enhance their performance. To that end a new business, the “Gerätebau-Anstalt” (“Equipment Engineering Institute”) in Balzers, was entered in Liechtenstein’s commercial register in 1946. The founders – Professor Max Auwärter, Franz Josef II of Liechtenstein and the entrepreneur Emil G Bührle – had a revolutionary plan to develop manufacturing processes for thin surface coatings and to construct the necessary equipment themselves in order to implement these processes on an industrial scale. As a result, the process and the equipment became a single unit for the first time and were offered and sold together – a business model that has enjoyed exceptional success for over 75 years. The former “Gerätebau-Anstalt” is now called Oerlikon Balzers and is part of the Surface Solutions Division of the Oerlikon Group.

75 years of entrepreneurial spirit and science

“From the beginning, our company philosophy has been to find solutions to questions the industry has often been unable to answer and to have the courage to turn ideas into reality”, says Dr Wolfgang J Schmitz, Head of Business Unit Balzers Industrial Solutions, of the company’s 75-year history of innovation.

“We pioneered high vacuum evaporation technology in Liechtenstein and we’re proud of the services we offer, which have made us one of the world’s leading providers of surface technologies. Our pedigree also comes from never standing still, and from continuously rethinking our future while always putting our customers first. The vision we have is to give our customers sustainable coating processes which help them conserve resources and achieve their environmental goals.”

Development work on PVD (Physical Vapour Deposition) coatings began in 1974. The breakthrough came in 1978 with the BALINIT brand of coatings, which remains an important mainstay of Oerlikon Balzers

alongside further ground-breaking developments. The BALINIT family alone now comprises around 30 coating solutions, and it has been joined by seven more families which are used in a wide range of applications in numerous markets. “Essentially, our solutions are about combining reduced wear with increased efficiency, whether for vehicle or aircraft engine components, precision instruments or tools used by the plastics or metal processing industries. Higher efficiency and reduced wear ultimately keep emissions of harmful substances low and help conserve resources – these are important aspects of our work. We’re proud that what we do every day is based on values such as sustainability, tradition and innovative drive”, says Dr Schmitz.

As a leading global provider of surface technologies, for 75 years Oerlikon Balzers has developed coating solutions and systems, provided expert consultation for its customers and coated millions of tools and components every year. With over 110 customer centres in 36 countries across Europe, North and South America and Asia, Oerlikon Balzers is closer to its customers than any other coating provider and has more than 1,300 coating systems in use.

Milestones in the company’s history can be found here:

<https://www.oerlikon.com/balzers/global/en/our-company/our-history-and-milestones/>



For 75 years, Oerlikon Balzers has been a byword for pioneering developments and global market leadership in surface solutions for metal and plastics processing.

Oerlikon Balzers coatings improve the performance and service life of tools and components.

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About Oerlikon Balzers

Oerlikon Balzers is one of the world's leading suppliers of surface technologies that significantly improve the performance and durability of precision components as well as tools for the metal and plastics processing industries. Extremely thin and exceptionally hard coatings, marketed under the BALINIT and BALIQ brand names, reduce friction and wear. The BALITHERM brand opens up a broad range of heat treatment services, whereas BALTONE comprises coatings that are available in a full range of elegant colours, perfectly suited for decorative applications. BALIMED ThinFilm coatings, with wear-resistant, biocompatible, antimicrobial and chemically inert properties, have been developed especially for medical applications. Under the BALIFOR technology brand the company has introduced technologies which provide tailor-made solutions for the automotive market, while ePD allows the metallisation of plastic parts with a chrome look.

Worldwide, more than 1,300 coating systems are in operation at Oerlikon Balzers' facilities and its customers. Equipment engineering and assembly of Balzers' systems are processed in Liechtenstein, in Langenthal (Switzerland) and in Bergisch Gladbach (Germany). Oerlikon Balzers operates a dynamically growing network of more than 110 coating centres in 36 countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia. Oerlikon Balzers is – together with Oerlikon Metco and Oerlikon AM – part of the Surface Solutions Division of the Switzerland-based Oerlikon Group (SIX: OERL).