

ID.5 in series production: Volkswagen successfully transforms Zwickau site into an electric vehicle production plant



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Dr. Christian Vollmer, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen Brand responsible for Production: “Volkswagen will continue to increase the pace of e-mobility in 2022 with its ACCELERATE strategy and the expansion of the model portfolio. The Zwickau production plant has paved the way for the Group to do this with six ramp-ups from three brands in just 26 months. The knowledge and experience gained will help us to continue to electrify our production network quickly and efficiently.”

Dr. Stefan Loth, Chairman of the Board of Volkswagen Saxony: “After Gläserne Manufaktur Dresden, we have now converted a second Volkswagen factory in Saxony to dedicated electric vehicle production. The start of production of the ID.5 and ID.5 GTX marks the successful transformation of the Zwickau plant on the product side. Our focus now – depending on how the semiconductor situation pans out – will be on achieving full capacity. This year we aim to exceed the 180,000 vehicles Volkswagen Saxony built in 2021.”

Jens Rothe, Chairman of the General Works Council at Volkswagen Saxony: “Switching over to electric vehicle production was exactly the right decision for the Zwickau plant. Demand for our models is booming, and our team’s jobs will be safe for years to come. We are a trailblazer of change and have repaid the Group’s trust in us. This is first and foremost a fantastic achievement by our workforce.”

Since 2018, around 1.2 billion euros has been spent on converting the Zwickau plant from ICE vehicle production into a digital, flexible, highly efficient showcase factory for the manufacture of electric vehicles. Increasing use is being made of technology such as smart Industry 4.0 robots and driverless transportation systems that take

components to the assembly line completely autonomously.

Close to 40 percent of the investment volume went into the enhancement and expansion of the body shop alone. This area's already high level of automation now reaches nearly 90 percent, and the number of state-of-the-art robots has risen from 1,200 to 1,625. Automation in the assembly line has also been almost doubled to 28 percent, and production ergonomics have improved significantly. Only jobs involving monotonous or physically strenuous work have been affected, such as working with one's hands above one's shoulders or overhead work.

In total, more than 50,000 square meters of new building space have been created, such as for the expansion of the press shop, which is where all shell body parts for the electric models are now pressed on site – saving 9,000 truck trips per year. Other major projects involved construction of a new logistics building as well as a battery sequencer, which is now the tallest building at the Zwickau site. The volume of investment for these three projects alone is around 115 million euros.

The transformation to electric vehicle production in Zwickau has created enduring, future-proof jobs. The some 9,000 permanent staff working at the site received training in the new technology as part of a major training initiative. For example, all employees attended information events on electric vehicles. A total of 3,000 production workers completed the training center's e-mobility program to prepare them for the new production requirements. By the end of 2020, the Zwickau team had put in a total of around 20,000 days of training.

In Zwickau, six models from three brands will leave the production line – the Volkswagen ID.3, ID.4 and ID.5 plus the Audi Q4 e-tron, Q4 Sportback e-tron and CUPRA Born. The production capacity corresponds to an annual output of more than 300,000 vehicles, making the Zwickau plant currently the most efficient electric vehicle manufacturing facility in Europe.

With the models produced in Zwickau, Volkswagen only delivers vehicles to customers that are produced in a carbon-neutral manner throughout the entire supply and production chain. In the manufacturing process, carbon generation is avoided or reduced as far as possible – and any unavoidable emissions are offset through climate action.

The carbon avoidance measures in manufacturing also extend to energy-intensive production of battery cells. Here, it was agreed that suppliers would use green electricity from renewable sources in cell production. The life-cycle assessment of electric vehicles can be improved further with this important tool.

At the Zwickau plant, the external power supply was switched over to 100 percent green electricity as early as 2017. Since production of the ID.3 began in November 2019, any remaining emissions from the site's highly efficient cogeneration unit and the entire upstream chain have been offset for all models manufactured in Zwickau through certified climate projects implemented in accordance with officially recognized standards.

At the heart of the "Way to ZERO" decarbonization program is the brand's ACCELERATE strategy aimed at stepping up the pace of the electric offensive. Volkswagen intends to be net carbon neutral by 2050 at the latest. The interim target is to cut CO emissions per vehicle by 40 percent in Europe by 2030 (baseline: 2018). The production, including supply chains, and operation of electric cars are to be made net carbon neutral.

Added to this is the systematic recycling of the high-voltage batteries from old electric vehicles. The goal is the full electrification of the new vehicle fleet. By 2030, at least 70 percent of all Volkswagen's unit sales in Europe will be all-electric vehicles – i.e. substantially more than one million vehicles. In North America and China, the share of electric vehicles in unit sales is expected to reach at least 50 percent. In addition, Volkswagen will be launching at least one new electric car each year.

Video:

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