

# FORUM

The Stieglmeyer-Group's company magazine



## Strong in Germany, on the up worldwide

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### **Anja Kemmler and Georgios Kampisiulis Kemmler on 120 years of Stieglmeyer and a future full of opportunities**

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### **Mrs Kemmler, Mr Kampisiulis Kemmler, what do 120 years of Stieglmeyer mean to you?**

**Anja Kemmler:** For us, 120 years of Stieglmeyer are bound up with a feeling of great gratitude and pride. We're grateful to our customers and employees, since the company's many years of success are largely due to them. Our customers have recognised our good products and our philosophy, and many have remained loyal to us for years. Our employees ensure that the strategy developed by the management is successfully implemented. We as owners are proud to be part of the whole and to contribute to the success of the company with our foresight.

**If you look back on the history of Stiegemeyer, you'll notice that many decades in the course of Stiegemeyer's history exhibit a constant upward trend. There were no serious slumps.**

**AK:** We did also have difficult years in terms of personnel and organisation, but we successfully weathered these crises. Fortunately, there were no major or seriously impactful breaks in the company's development.

**In 2015, we conducted the last big interview with you. What changes over the past five years are particularly important?**

**Georgios Kampisiulis Kemmler:** We've implemented an investment strategy at all locations which has paved the way for our current successful products. We have invested in factories and people - by hiring new staff and creating new skills. We have established modern IT systems and made work processes more efficient. All this has also helped to change our corporate culture. Think of our vision and mission: we've defined clear goals to improve people's health and well-being and always be positive, helpful and reliable in our approach to our customers.

**The main location in Herford has developed increasingly into a thinktank and centre of excellence.**

**GKK:** Customer proximity plays a central role in Herford. That's why we need the expertise here to establish even closer contact with customers and be even closer to market requirements in our product development.

**Which new products in recent years were particularly important and successful?**

**GKK:** The Evario hospital bed and the Vario Safe modular system for care beds are two outstanding examples of our innovative strength that equate precisely with market requirements.

**AK:** With the Evario, we took a huge leap that was definitely necessary. We developed a hospital bed featuring high-quality plastic safety sides that is geared aesthetically and functionally not only to Germany and Europe, but also reflects the requirements and preferences of international markets.

**GKK:** Plastic safety sides had already been available at Stiegemeyer some years ago, but at the time the subject was a no-go as there was no call for them on the German market. However, our competitors were successful on a global level with these beds. Now, with the Evario, we have a very good, internationally marketable bed.



The Evario hospital bed meets the requirements of international markets with its split plastic safety sides and innovative operating panel.

**You also mentioned the Vario Safe system, which makes it possible to remove and replace the safety sides, panels, headboard and footboard on a care bed without the use of tools.**

**AK:** With this flexibility and easy operation, we're currently unrivalled on the market. The system has been very well received by customers since its launch at the Altenpflege 2019. Vario Safe is also a feature of our new Libra partner double care bed. Being easy to separate and join together again, this bed gives older couples the choice of whether to sleep together or separately. It's the ideal bed for a changing care environment that offers more and more individual freedom.

**Proximity or distance – that's a subject that's now on everybody's minds because of the coronavirus. How did you experience the outbreak of the pandemic from the company's perspective?**

**GKK:** Nobody saw it coming, but we were indirectly well prepared for it since we had already done our homework beforehand. For example, the modernisation of our IT in recent years has made it much easier for us to introduce working from home. It was only a small step from there to equip administrative staff with laptops and let them work from home using secure connections. We've followed the outbreak of the pandemic in China closely since December 2019. The Stiegmeyer-Group is working with a number of suppliers from China, and we ensured in good time that these deliveries will continue to reach us. In some cases, we had to use other channels for this, such as air freight instead of rail and ship. Our supply chains are working well at the moment. Compared to other industries, we have come out of this situation stronger.

**In spring, Stiegmeyer equipped several Covid hospitals in Germany with beds - the national press reported closely on our contribution to the treatment centre in the Berlin Messe exhibition halls, for example. Was there also increased demand from other countries?**

**AK:** Yes, we were able to open up new markets due to the pandemic. We made a positive impression by offering good products and smooth handling of orders. We were able to present ourselves to new customers as a competent partner and have already generated follow-up business.

**GKK:** We were fast, reliable and kept our promises. This is not a matter of course - in South Africa, competitors made promises but were unable to deliver in the end.



The Stiegmeyer-Group bears a great deal of responsibility in the Corona crisis. The speedy and competent furnishing of the Berlin Covid Centre with beds is an outstanding example.

**Which countries have we been particularly successful in?**

**GKK:** In the UK and Denmark, for example. We've always been interested in Denmark, but we haven't had access to the market up to now. Our first delivery of hospital beds to the country opened a few doors for us. Then we won a tender for 480 beds for the region of southern Denmark.

**AK:** In the UK, we were already successful in the homecare sector, but now the hospital sector also looks promising.

**Are relations with Britain threatened by the possibility of a no-deal Brexit?**

**GKK:** No, I don't expect any problems there. After all, we also deliver to other non-EU countries without any problem.

**What do you think the ratio of domestic business to exports will be like at Stiegmeyer in future?**

**AK:** Germany is and remains the most important market for us, and we will continue to nurture and cultivate it in future. There are great opportunities for growth in exports, but the market environment is more difficult. We will keep a close eye on this, of course – and maintain a long-term approach.

**Are there also opportunities for growth in Germany? As the baby boomers get**

## **older, aren't more care beds likely to be needed?**

**GKK:** We are indeed expecting demand to increase in the care and homecare sector. But there's great competition, of course, in this sector.

**AK:** And there's a further risk: how big will the role of caring for the elderly be in future? How will care be financed? These questions will decide whether we can seize the demographic opportunity for Stieglmeyer and Burmeier. We will closely observe the development so that we can offer the right products. A major advantage is that we are equally strong in the three different hospital, nursing home and homecare divisions and so can react particularly flexibly to any requirements.

**GKK:** I'm concerned, in fact, about the impending poverty of many people in old age - a problem that could be exacerbated by the coronavirus economic crisis. There is too little discussion about pensions and provision for retirement in Germany. The state suggests to people that it will take care of them, and people are lulled into a false sense of financial security.

## **Digitisation offers opportunities for economic growth and maintaining prosperity. Stieglmeyer is also working intensively on smart solutions for the healthcare sector. Our new connectivity lab in Herford offers ideal conditions for this. How do you see the digital future of our products and services?**

**GKK:** Digitisation is a topic that's gaining in importance in many areas of the healthcare system. But the market is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, I'm confident that beds will be able to offer so many digital benefits in the future that our customers will benefit considerably from them. We must now prepare the field. Our connectivity lab is a test lab where new technologies can be tried out in a real-life environment. This lab replicates the premises of a ward with patient and resident rooms, a duty room and a hygiene area for reprocessing the beds. We're certainly not sitting in an ivory tower but are testing our digital solutions under our customers' working conditions. Stieglmeyer is aiming to be a system provider for beds, bedside cabinets, furniture and digital networking.

## **There's also interesting news from Burmeier.**

**GKK:** With the relocation of the Burmeier logistics centre from Lage to Hiddenhausen, the digital age has also taken off there. The digital operation of the new warehouse is state of the art. It's all about increasing efficiency and product traceability – we're aiming to create a showcase logistics centre.

## **What are the plans for our Polish sites?**

**GKK:** At our site in Stolno, we have acquired the neighbouring plot of land for our plant with an area of over 50,000 sqm. If it continues to grow, the plant in Stolno will soon reach the limits of its capacity again, despite repeated expansion. The land that's held in reserve will then be available to us for new builds. At Stolno, too, the primary concern is logistics. We're investing at all locations - in Kepno in southern Poland, things have changed beyond recognition, from the machinery to the canteen - that's shows just how much we've modernized the technology there. We're planning to continue this commitment in future, since we're aiming to grow and we need to do our bit to make this happen.



For our ultra-modern plant in Stolno, the neighbouring plot of land was acquired as a land contingency.

**The year 2020 is not only the 120th anniversary of Stieglmeyer but also the 100th**

**anniversary of the Kemmler family of shareholders. Mrs. Kemmler's great-uncle Dietrich von Hollen married Grete Dörnte, the daughter of the then company owner Albert Dörnte, in 1920 and shaped the fortunes of the company for half a century. This October, your eldest son completed a student internship at Stiegmeyer for the first time. What does Stiegmeyer mean to the Kemmler family today and in the future?**

**AK:** For my husband, and my father and I, the company is very close to our heart and we're pleased to be involved in its development and success. Stiegmeyer is still ever-present in our family. As far as our children are concerned, it's very important to us that they develop a relationship with the company and gain an insight into it. But we also consider it important that they have the opportunity to pursue their own interests and develop as a person. Their own interests will ultimately determine where their journey takes them.

**GKK:** Our son lived with me in our Herford flat during his internship, and we talked about his day at the company every evening and looked back on what he had experienced there. But having done that, it was then time for Netflix or some other entertainment programme.

**Let's finish by venturing a look into the distant future. What will the hospital bed or care bed of the year 2050 be able to do?**

**GKK:** When I hear this question, a story comes to mind that our managing director Ralf Wiedemann told me after a conversation with a chair manufacturer. "Chairs have been around for 3,000 years," the manufacturer said, "and they still fulfil the same function today as they did then". That applies for us in exactly the same way as a bed manufacturer. Even on our 150th anniversary, a patient will still lie in a bed and not float in the air. Of course, our beds have evolved, and they have become electric and increasingly modern. This is an evolution that will continue - but I don't see a revolution that questions the role of the bed itself.

**AK:** I agree, but it would of course be desirable for the bed to become more important in the healthcare and care sectors due to helpful new functions. People say "I'm lying in hospital" and not "I'm standing in hospital". People should become more aware of what this actually means.

**GKK:** Whether we're in good health or bad, we spend a third of our lives lying in bed. So it really should be a good bed. We want to do our best to make it so.