

## Press release

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### AIT: SOLID BALANCE SHEET RESULT PROVIDES BASIS FOR CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

The 2022 annual financial statements demonstrate the excellent development of the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology into an authoritative Austrian research institute at the top international level - specialising in infrastructure topics, climate protection and digitalisation.

#### Solid balance sheet 2022

The AIT Austrian Institute of Technology closed the 2022 business year with a solid balance sheet. Operating performance grew by 6.4 % to EUR 182.9 million, while operating income of EUR 5.1 million was at a comparable level to the previous period. External revenues (from co-financed projects and contract research) exceeded the EUR 100 million mark for the first time in AIT's history, at EUR 103 million. Base funding from the Ministry of Climate Protection rose by 5.7 % to EUR 53.7 million. The order backlog grew by almost a fifth to an all-time high of EUR 231.1 million. Investments in cutting-edge research were increased by 58 % to 16.3 million EUR in the previous year.

"Since the new start in 2008, the AIT has developed excellently and is writing a success story," commented the Chairman of the AIT Supervisory Board, Peter Schwab, on the annual results at the annual press conference on Tuesday. He thanked the current managing directors, Anton Plimon and Wolfgang Knoll, who "built up the AIT in its current form and developed it excellently along strategic guidelines". "Anton Plimon and Wolfgang Knoll took over the Institute 15 years ago in a very difficult situation and turned it into a top research institute. That is an outstanding achievement," said Schwab. The terms of office of Plimon and Knoll end on 30 June 2023.

Today, the AIT is excellently positioned financially and organisationally and is established in the European league in the central research fields. "This is due first and foremost to the 1,465 highly qualified and motivated employees who make top-level research possible. Together with AIT's unique research infrastructure, they form the basis of success for our partners and customers," says Schwab.

Climate Protection Minister Leonore Gewessler: "The AIT Austrian Institute of Technology supports business and society in sustainably shaping the green and digital transformation. We have to push ahead with the energy transition and resolutely stand in the way of climate change. This transformation applies to us in Austria, in Europe and in the world. As the largest non-university research institution in Austria, the AIT is a central institution when it comes to researching the big

questions of our future. For our path to climate neutrality in 2040, we will need innovation and future technologies. I am pleased about the excellent development of the AIT."

Isabella Meran-Waldstein, Vice Chair of the AIT Supervisory Board and Head of Research, Technology and Innovation at the Federation of Austrian Industries: "Industry is confronted with enormous opportunities as well as challenges of the Twin Transition and at the same time faces high international competition. With its excellent research on key technologies and future topics and its systems competence, the AIT, as a technology flagship, is a particularly important strategic partner for society and industry to develop robust solutions and to accelerate their industrial implementation and positioning on the market. I am delighted about the AIT's top international position, which of course needs to be further expanded."

### Scientific excellence

As the Institute's Scientific & Performance Indicators for 2022 show, the AIT remains true to its Commitment to Excellence. The impact factor of scientific publications has reached the record value of 1,517. "More and more papers by AIT researchers are appearing in high-ranking journals," explains Wolfgang Knoll, the AIT's scientific director. The number of registered patents (82) has also reached a new high.

An evaluation of the "Web of Science" shows that scientific papers from the AIT were cited a total of 15,628 times between 2017 and 2022. "The list of these organisations reads like a 'Who's Who' of the global science scene - from Harvard and Stanford University to ETH Zurich," says Knoll. An impressive example of the excellence achieved is that AIT microbiome researcher Angela Sessitsch is now in the top one percent of the world's most cited scientists for the fifth time in a row and is now also involved in one of the FWF's five Clusters of Excellence, which were awarded for the first time this year.

### External evaluation gives AIT centres excellent marks

The AIT's successful course was also recently confirmed by the independent external evaluation panels that put the AIT's seven centres through their paces. "The international evaluators awarded the AIT excellent research performance overall," reports Knoll: "The AIT's research infrastructure was described as "very good". The topics of the AIT were rated as contemporary and highly relevant - in the eyes of the evaluators, they cover "a broad spectrum of needs of industry, public institutions and authorities".

### Successes in EU programmes

The AIT's great expertise is also reflected in its growing success in the EU research framework programmes. In the completed EU programme HORIZON 2020, the AIT was able to secure a total of EUR 106.4 million in funding with 197 project participations. "The start into the current EU programme HORIZON EUROPE was even better: With EUR 38.2 million awarded to date for 60 participations in EU projects, the AIT ranks second among Austrian research institutions," explains Anton Plimon, the AIT's commercial director. Among them are many large-scale projects with the participation of top international research institutes and renowned industrial groups.

As a current example, Plimon mentions the EU project EMPOWER, in which zero-emission trucks with electric drive trains are being developed under the leadership of the AIT with a budget of 18 million euros.

The AIT is also very successful in EU initiatives in the field of quantum encryption for tap-proof communication. Since 2003, the institute has been working on translating the findings of the Nobel Prize winner in physics, Anton Zeilinger, on the entanglement of particles into practical applications. These activities include the miniaturisation of components, the construction of quantum communication networks (terrestrial and via satellites) and the development of the necessary software. Currently, the AIT is involved in numerous projects in the European Quantum Technologies Flagship Program as well as in the EU's EuroQCI initiative, in which autonomous and secure European communication systems are being built.

The AIT is also a sought-after partner in battery research: here, work is being done in several Europe-wide research projects on the development of new materials and manufacturing processes - especially on cobalt-free batteries and the replacement of toxic substances in production.

### System competence and key enabling technologies

"These successes are possible because AIT consistently focuses on a deep understanding of systems as well as on the further development of key technologies, so-called key enablers," says Anton Plimon. He cites artificial intelligence (AI) as an example: AIT is not concerned with the general development of AI, but focuses on Vertical AI: In this concept, AI is used as a tool for solving a defined problem; the weaknesses of AI are remedied by embedding it in an overall system that ensures, for example, that "first principles" (such as laws of physics) or other constraints cannot be violated. "This approach enables the successful use of AI not only in research, but also in industrial projects under real conditions," says Plimon. This applies, for example, to the automation of complex processes, the evaluation of biomedical data or the automatic detection of fake news.

### Successful exploitation of know-how

Spin-offs are an integral part of AIT's strategy. Two years ago, a start-up and entrepreneurship programme was launched to promote the commercial exploitation of research results through companies founded by AIT researchers. "On the one hand, this is a contribution to Austria as a business location, and on the other hand, spin-offs offer a real career opportunity for researchers," explains Alexander Svejkovsky, CFO of AIT. "This chosen path is now bearing more and more fruit; since then, five exciting start-ups operating in different domains have already been founded."

- ENSEMO deals with the use of natural microorganisms in plant cultivation in order to reduce the use of plant protection products and fertilisers.
- VIRIDAD offers companies expertise in sustainability and the EU taxonomy.
- TELBIOMED is active in the field of telemedicine and operates telehealth solutions for heart failure or diabetes, among others.

- CELLECTRIC launches an innovative analysis platform for the rapid diagnosis of sepsis (blood poisoning).
- IKNAIO is active in the field of blockchain analytics.

For some of these start-ups, it has already been possible to bring venture capital providers and potent partners on board. The founding of further start-ups is in preparation - these come from the fields of urban research and planning, smell sensing ("artificial nose") and the design of biomolecules (e.g. as drug delivery systems). "We continue to work intensively on scouting interesting topics and personalities for further spin-offs and offer comprehensive support for the process of founding a company," says Svejksky.

#### New three-way management

As the terms of office of the current management - Anton Plimon and Wolfgang Knoll - will end on 30 June 2023 after 15 years at the helm of Austria's largest research and technology organisation, the AIT Supervisory Board began a process in autumn last year to find a successor. In accordance with the Federal Act on Transparency in Appointments to Government-Related Positions, this was done through a public call for applications. After appropriate hearings, a new three-member management team was appointed in April of this year. "The future three-member management team is characterised by shared leadership and concrete responsibilities," emphasises AIT Supervisory Board Chairman Peter Schwab.

Brigitte Bach was appointed as the future "Spokesperson of the Executive Board". The physicist, who is currently still a board member at Salzburg AG, will be responsible for the strategic positioning of the AIT as well as for external relations and the product portfolio. From 1999 to 2018, Bach played a key role in the development of energy research at the AIT, most recently as head of the Center for Energy, and helped establish the European Energy Research Alliance.

The future "Managing Director Scientific Excellence" Andreas Kugi shapes the scientific profile in the research focus areas and is responsible for the successful positioning in research and technology development at the top international level. Kugi is Professor of Complex Dynamical Systems at TU Wien and has headed the AIT Center for Vision, Automation & Control together with Andreas Vrabl since 2017.

The future "Managing Director Finance, Processes, Administration" Alexander Svejksky is responsible for all business management matters, real estate and digital infrastructure. In addition, Svejksky, who has deep knowledge of the domestic RTI scene thanks to his many years as CFO of the AIT, ensures embedding in the framework conditions of Austrian and international research funding. He has recently distinguished himself in particular through the end-to-end digitalisation of all business processes at the AIT.

#### Top management for cutting-edge research

The new challenges and the ubiquitous disruptive transformations require new responses from research, development and innovation. "Top research needs top management at the top. These three renowned personalities combine concentrated and diverse competences. I am convinced that valid answers to the major challenges will be found under their leadership," says Schwab.

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