

Press Release

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AIT BALANCE OF 2019 PROVIDES NECESSARY BACKING FOR FUTURE CHALLENGES

AIT's technology development in the areas of digitalisation, decarbonisation and the challenges of climate change supports the economy and society.

For the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT), the business year of 2019 was once again characterised by an expansion of sales and revenue development. Revenue increases in both, contract research and co-funded research, staff growth and a positive earnings trend characterised the 2019 reporting year. With a pre-tax result of EUR 4.3 million and an order backlog of EUR 183.2 million, the AIT has a solid foundation for current (Corona pandemic) and future challenges.

The AIT innovation powerhouse provides a stable foundation that has been built over eleven years through a solid research strategy, a continuous growth course and successful business management. In the hotly contested market for funding and contracts, Austria's largest non-university research institution has been particularly successful: the AIT ranks among the top three in Austria in terms of funds raised from Europe, together with the University of Vienna and the Vienna University of Technology.

Operational performance maintained during the pandemic

"During the Corona pandemic, we managed to maintain operational performance. Our laboratories were in operation throughout and we were fully accessible. If you like, the very good result in the reporting year 2019 and the high order backlog at the beginning of 2020 will help us to keep the innovation powerhouse AIT safely on course in the current challenging year 2020 despite choppy seas," says AIT Managing Director Anton Plimon on the occasion of the balance sheet conference.

Research and innovation competence

In these challenging times, AIT is focusing on its strength, research, development, and innovation competence in the future topics of infrastructure. "It is about the necessary fitness in the key technologies of digitalisation, artificial intelligence, decarbonisation and in the further challenges of climate change. All of these topics also form the core of the AIT research strategy," summarises Plimon. In order to be able to effectively work on all these topics, the number of employees has increased by around 50 in 2019, which is almost exclusively due to new additions in the technical-scientific area. At the end of 2019, the AIT Group had more than 1,400 employees.

Strong partner for industry

"We are a strong partner for industry research, development and innovation and this partnership is particularly important and significant now," explains Plimon. This applies to immediately needed projects carried out in contract research for industry - for example, the use of large-scale industrial heat pumps for industrial electricity from renewable energies. This also applies in the medium term when Next Generation Technologies are developed together with partners - such as advanced

robotics in the factories of the future. "And also, in the long term, the AIT is strategically well positioned and can rely on its great system competence, for example in quantum communication and encryption, where we are considered a prime player in Europe," says Plimon.

Fundamentally solid balance sheet 2019

For the AIT, the 2019 financial year was once again characterised by an expansion in sales and revenue development. Revenue increases in both contract research and co-funded research, staff growth and a positive earnings trend characterised the 2019 reporting year.

"In the reporting year 2019, a very good pre-tax result is again reported, EUR 4.3 million. Group operating revenue in the past financial year was around EUR 162.9 million, which is EUR 4.2 million, or 2.66%, more than in the previous financial year of 2018," explains Chief Financial Officer Alexander Svejkovsky.

Increased orders as a basis for this year's business year

Orders for the year under review increased again to EUR 183.2 million compared to the previous year's EUR 179.2 million (+2.2 %). "In recent years we have always emphasised how important the order backlog situation is for the company. Because: today's order backlogs are tomorrow's sales. This is particularly significant in a challenging year like 2020," emphasises Svejkovsky.

Strongly anchored in the market

AIT is strongly anchored in the market. CFO Alexander Svejkovsky explains:

"Business is developing stably in those industrial domains in which we support our customers in their ongoing research and innovation topics and in which we have access to our specific laboratory infrastructure. Examples are laboratories in energy technology, for electric drive technology, for battery technologies. Business in the healthcare sector is developing in a largely stable manner. In all other business areas, we are proactively in constant contact with our customers and project partners.

Hannes Androsch: Recovery programme for the economy

"After the Corona crisis, we need a recovery programme for the economy. This is also important for applied research. Because it will depend on industry how research is doing. The supporting measures must be quick, limited in time, targeted and structurally improving," demands AIT Supervisory Board President Hannes Androsch.

High-tech location "Vienna Innovation Area" in Floridsdorf

As an example of how quickly structures can be improved, Androsch cites the high-tech location "Vienna Innovation Area" in Floridsdorf. In the immediate vicinity of the AIT there are Siemens City, the companies Atos and Lunatone, the Climate-Wind-Tunnel, the A1 Next Generation Datacenter and the Technikum University of Applied Sciences.

"The synergies and joint projects that already exist could grow significantly if the Vienna Innovation Area is expanded to critical size and thematic breadth in the areas of digitalisation and artificial intelligence. For example through establishing additional partners, setting up a "Digital School" together with the German Helmholtz Association, relocating the Complexity Science Hub (CSH)

Vienna and establishing an Innovation Park for start-up companies," Androsch outlines the vision for the Vienna Innovation Area for the federal government and the city of Vienna.

Thanks to the owner representatives

The President of the Supervisory Board, Dr. Hannes Androsch, thanked the two owner representatives of the AIT, the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK), which holds a 50.46% stake, and the Federation of Austrian Industries, which together with the Association for the Promotion of Research and Innovation holds a 49.54% stake in the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology.

Scientific performance at a high level

"The scientific performance of the AIT is subject to certain fluctuations, but overall, it is at a very satisfactory level. The number of Invited Lectures, which increased from 293 to 351, deserves special mentioning. Or the number of publications in scientifically relevant journals with an impact factor, which at 203 is at a high level. The same applies to the fact that the AIT was able to publish 330 times at conferences with a review process." says Wolfgang Knoll, scientific director of the AIT. In 2019, 33 dissertations (+5) and 70 diploma theses (+6) were completed at the AIT. At 43%, the proportion of doctoral candidates from international countries remained at a high level.

Centre evaluations completed positively

"We have long been established as a TOP Research and Technology Organisation (RTO) of European format in Europe and far beyond its borders. This is not self-praise, but we are referring to the centre evaluations that have just been completed. The results of the eight international evaluation panels are available and give the AIT an excellent report card. We are even more pleased about this because this year, in addition to the economic aspects, the panels paid a great deal of academic and scientific attention to the achievements of the AIT.

For example, the orientation and quality of the project portfolio, the strong anchoring of the AIT in the European Framework Programmes, the balance between science and application orientation and the strong cooperation of the AIT with national and international universities were rated very positively. Knoll: "We are maintaining the scientific flying height and are fit for the company's next strategy period."

Digitalisation, decarbonisation, and climate change challenges

AIT's unique selling point is its systems view - because innovations can only be effective if the entire chain is considered. This requires continuous work on many levels - from basic research to the development of market-ready technologies.

"We have a long history of research in the area of environment and climate," explains Knoll. This concerns topics such as energy efficiency in industry as well as integrated transport and urban planning or the adaptation of plants to climate change. The scientific director cites an example: "By researching the interplay between plants and microorganisms, plants should be strengthened, better supplied with nutrients and more stress-resistant, so that the use of pesticides and fertilisers in the field can be greatly reduced in the future."

AIT reaches out to the general public with a blog

In order to communicate the importance and direct benefits of science, research, innovation and technology development to the general public, the AIT launched the AIT blog in February 2020 (www.ait.ac.at/blog). It regularly addresses socially relevant topics, reports on current contributions by the AIT on solving future challenges - most recently, for example, on securing "smart grids" against cyber attacks with the help of artificial intelligence methods.

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<https://www.apa-fotoservice.at>

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