

LIPPSTADT (GERMANY)

11 June 2024

125 years of FORVIA HELLA: from a lamp manufacturer in Lippstadt to a global technology leader

- 11 June 1899: Foundation of the "Westfälische Metall-Industrie Aktien-Gesellschaft" and start of the company's rise to an industrial enterprise
- Technological strength as a common thread: from the "System Hella" acetylene lamp as the first pioneering innovation to the digital headlamp SSL | HD
- The electronics business: Launched with the first fully electronic indicator unit in 1965, today a leader in many products for autonomous driving and electromobility
- Since 2022: company of the FORVIA Group, the seventh largest supplier of automotive technology worldwide

FORVIA HELLA is celebrating its 125th anniversary today. The company was founded in the Westphalian town of Lippstadt (Germany) as a specialized manufacturer of lamps, lanterns and ball horns for carriages, bicycles and the first automobiles. Today, FORVIA HELLA is a global automotive supplier with around 37,500 employees at over 125 locations worldwide, which generated sales of €8 billion for the first time last year.

"125 years of FORVIA HELLA is something we can be very proud of together. We are very grateful to all current and former employees for allowing us to celebrate this milestone in our company's history. They have all played a key role in supporting, shaping and developing the company," says Bernard Schäferbarthold, CEO of FORVIA HELLA. "At the same time, the anniversary is an obligation for the future and motivation for us to remain at the forefront of mobility in the coming years and to shape it from a leading position."

1899: The foundation and start of the rise to an industrial company

It was the 11th of June 1899 when the entrepreneur Sally Windmüller registered the "Westfälische Metall-Industrie Aktien-Gesellschaft (WMI)" in the business register of the Lippstadt district court. It was barely more than ten years since Gottlieb Daimler and Karl Benz undertook their first test drives with a motorized carriage and motor car. Although WMI's roots go back a few years further, the company's official history began on this day in June – exactly 125 years ago today.

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"Two things have always characterized FORVIA HELLA," says CEO Bernard Schäferbarthold. "Firstly, our innovative strength is the common thread that links the WMI of the past with the company of today. Secondly, we are constantly adapting to changes in our industry environment. This has always made us strong, and only in this way have we been able to become what we are today: a leading supplier in automotive lighting technology and vehicle electronics."

From the "System Hella" acetylene lamp as the first outstanding innovation to the digital headlamp SSL | HD

In 1908, just nine years after WMI was officially founded, the first outstanding product innovation was launched on the market. The 'System Hella' acetylene lamp was included in the sales catalogue – the brand name that was also included in the official company name some eighty years later. The acetylene lamp developed by WMI was not only far superior to the candle or paraffin lanterns in use at the time in terms of light intensity and range. Above all, it represents the beginning of a development that started with lamps and lanterns and has reached the latest milestones with the SSL | HD digital headlamp system and the FlatLight | μ MX, for example.

Entering the electronics business

FORVIA HELLA grew up with lighting technology, but the company has also been active in the electronics business for almost sixty years. FORVIA HELLA's entry into the electronics area was obviously with lighting electronics, when production of a fully electric flasher unit started at the plant in Hamm (Germany) in 1965. FORVIA HELLA was one of the very first automotive suppliers to venture into the electronics age. The product range from the very beginning also included electrical switches as well as plugs and sockets for trailers. Today, FORVIA HELLA generates sales of more than €3 billion in the electronics business and is a leader in many products for autonomous driving and electromobility.

[ABOUT FORVIA HELLA](#)

FORVIA HELLA is a listed, internationally positioned automotive supplier. As a company of the FORVIA Group, FORVIA HELLA stands for high-performance lighting technology and vehicle electronics and, with the Lifecycle Solutions business group, also covers a broad service and product portfolio for the spare parts and workshop business as well as for manufacturers of special vehicles. With currently around 37,500 employees at over 125 locations, the company is active worldwide and generated adjusted sales of €8.1 billion in the fiscal year 2023 fiscal year. www.hella.com

[ABOUT FORVIA](#)

FORVIA, the seventh largest supplier of automotive technology worldwide, combines the complementary technological and industrial strengths of Faurecia and HELLA. With around 260 industrial sites and 78 R&D centres, over 150,000 employees, including more than 15,000 R&D engineers, in over 40 countries, FORVIA offers a unique and comprehensive approach to the automotive challenges of today and tomorrow. FORVIA consists of six business groups and a strong portfolio of over 13,000 patents. FORVIA endeavours to become the preferred innovation and integration partner for automotive manufacturers worldwide. FORVIA sees itself as a pioneer of change that anticipates the transformation of mobility and turns it into reality. www.forvia.com

Since 2022: company of the FORVIA Group, the seventh largest supplier of automotive technology worldwide

The course for the future was set on 31 January 2022. On 14 August 2021, FORVIA (formerly: Faurecia) announced the acquisition of a majority stake in FORVIA HELLA, the transaction was finalized a good six months later. As a legally independent company, FORVIA HELLA became part of the FORVIA Group, the world's seventh largest supplier of automotive technologies with more than 150,000 employees across the globe.

CEO Bernard Schäferbarthold: "Thanks to the cooperation within the FORVIA Group, we are significantly larger, more broadly positioned and exposed to fewer risks. We can improve our processes because we learn from each other and can act together with more strength in the market. This gives us even more opportunities for the future as FORVIA HELLA. With FORVIA as a new majority shareholder and strong partner at our side, we have therefore opened a new chapter in our long-standing, successful company history."

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