Austria’s mining history stretches back nearly 3,000 years. Today the country may not be renowned as a mining nation, but some of its mines have an extraordinary position in many areas of mining, notably in Europe but worldwide.

For example, Austria is home to one of the largest tungsten mines in the world, as well as three magnesite mines and the headquarters of the global market leader for refractory, Austria’s high-quality micaceous iron oxide is also used worldwide.

MINERAL COMMODITIES

Developments in the Austrian mining industry in 2009 were mainly determined by the economic positions of its customers, in particular for those delivering to the steel, machinery and automotive industries.

Mining in Austria (including industrial minerals and dimension stones) has an impact on business representing more than 30% of the country’s GDP through its wide range of customers in down-stream industries.

The main commodities produced are: ores (iron ore, micaceous iron oxide and tungsten); industrial minerals (including magnesite, talc, leucophyllite, salt and kaolin); solid rock; unconsolidated rock; crude oil; and natural gas.

VA Erzberg GmbH owns and operates the Styrian Erzberg iron-ore mine, the largest open-pit mine in central Europe. The company extracted around 6Mt of material in 2009, to produce 2Mt of iron ore. Sales were €30 million (US$38 million) in 2009.

In May this year the company extracted a landmark 250 millionth tonne from the mine, but says the deposit has a further 150Mt of mineable reserves.

VA Erzberg also plans to build a pelletising plant, at a cost of €180 million, that will begin production in 2013. The company anticipates making a decision regarding construction of the plant in the current quarter.

From its mine in the Carinthian Twinberg, Kärntner Montanindustrie GmbH is the world’s largest producer of magnesite ore, and is focusing its strategy on strengthening its raw material position in many areas of mining, not only in Europe but worldwide.

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