

“A strong chemical industry in Germany is the right response to global competition.”

These days, many are asking questions. About BASF. About Evonik. About the future of the chemical industry in Germany. And especially in the Ruhr region.

I was born in Dinslaken and studied in Essen. My father worked underground for 35 years in the mines. I come from North Rhine-Westphalia. So, I understand the questions people are asking when they hear that BASF wants to join forces with Evonik. For employees, the most important question is, of course: What does this mean for my job?

And I can assure you that: First: BASF would take over the existing site agreements. This means that compulsory redundancies, would remain ruled out until 2032. Collective bargaining agreements and the social partnership would remain untouched. And we would continue to invest in training young people.

Second: Essen and North Rhine-Westphalia would remain important locations. With at least one Board member based there, as well as the leadership of business and functional units. We would look at which joint activities could be managed from Essen. And we want to strengthen North Rhine-Westphalia as a location for research and development.

Third, Evonik plans to sell Syneqt, the chemical park operator. Our approach is more open: We believe that we could continue to operate the parks in Marl and Wesseling ourselves as well. The sale currently planned by Evonik will affect approximately 3,500 jobs in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The Ruhr region has been through many transformations before. The mines are gone. The steel industry has become smaller. And yet the region has constantly reinvented itself. This is exactly the kind of ability the chemical industry needs today and in the future.

Our industry is changing faster than ever before. In particular, competitors from Asia and the Middle East are becoming stronger and stronger. The Evonik team is doing an excellent job. But our industry has been facing strong headwinds for years. And those headwinds are getting stronger.

At BASF, we also have to deal with these difficult conditions. We are doing our own homework. Since two years, our “Winning Ways” strategy takes effect. Now we want to take the next step. Together with Evonik.

Both BASF and Evonik are strong players in specialty chemicals. In innovative, customer-focused solutions with global market access. But BASF's strengths also lie in its Verbund. In integrated value chains with access to key building blocks in every region of the world. The products and strengths of both companies complement each other extremely well.

Evonik currently has to purchase certain feedstocks. Through BASF's Verbund, these could be sourced more cost-effectively, more directly, and more reliably from within the company. On top of that come advantages in procurement, infrastructure, and research. Size and financial strength are real advantages, including for the sites in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The chemical industry is consolidating, one way or another. The question is: Do we shape this ourselves? As German companies, with our values, our model of co-determination and our social partnership? Or do we wait until European chemical companies are overtaken in global competition or increasingly acquired by foreign investors? A combination of BASF and Evonik would be a strong German response to global competition.

The coalition agreement of the federal government sets out the goal of making Germany the most innovative chemical industry location in the world. This is the opportunity. This is also an opportunity for the RAG Foundation. It has already announced that it intends to reduce its stake in Evonik. This is important in order to continue to fulfill the foundation's purpose as effectively as possible in the future.

The Foundation is responsible for securing the long-term funding of the perpetual obligations of the mining industry. In concrete terms: making sure that water will still be pumped out of old shafts in the future. And that no home in the Ruhr region will subside.

Above all, however, this is an opportunity for Evonik to create value for all shareholders. And together with us, to build a globally successful chemical company that is even stronger. One that preserves jobs in Germany. One that is better equipped to compete globally.

We are ready to enter into talks. Because we want to shape the future together. However, we will not pursue a merger at any price. We owe this not only to our shareholders but also to our employees. But we're approaching this with the confidence that, together, we can build something that is stronger than the two companies on their own.

This is what it comes down to: Think smaller alone, or think bigger together. A strong chemical industry in Germany is the right response to global competition. Let's make it happen together. It's worth it.

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