

**Media Release**

Vienna / Lustenau, Austria | 6 April 2022

## **Borealis and Grabher partnership gives used FFP2 face masks another life**

- **High-quality face masks made in Austria by Grabher contain fully recyclable meltblown polypropylene supplied by Borealis**
- **New collect-and-recycle scheme established by Grabher turns used face masks into value-added products**
- **Partnership is embodiment of the Borealis EverMinds™ spirit of taking action to accelerate the move towards plastics circularity**

Borealis, one of the world's leading providers of advanced and circular polyolefin solutions and a European market leader in base chemicals and fertilizers; and the Grabher Group, a leading manufacturer of high-tech textiles, are accelerating plastics circularity in a partnership that safeguards human health while helping minimise waste. The key component of the high-quality, filtering face masks produced by Grabher in Austria is made of fully recyclable meltblown polypropylene (PP) supplied by Borealis. To further drive circularity, Grabher has initiated a novel collect-and-recycle scheme for used face masks which turns them into new value-added products such as oil absorption fabrics.

### **Plastics circularity “made in Austria” through collaboration and innovation**

The Vorarlberg, Austria-based Grabher Group is a leading expert in nano-air and micro-liquid filtration and designs smart-textile systems for the manufacture of medical and healthcare products, among others. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) in Austria were imminent. Grabher acted by becoming the first Austrian company to establish a dedicated face mask assembly facility which included a state-of-the-art meltblown production system for the manufacture of high-quality face masks. These certified masks, including FFP2 filtration respirators, medical masks, and washable community masks, are marketed by Vprotect, a 100%-owned member of the Grabher Group. One essential component of the Vprotect masks – the filter made of densely spaced micron-sized fibres – is made of meltblown PP supplied by Borealis, a material which itself is fully recyclable.

Yet for obvious health reasons, even high-quality and more sustainable face masks are quickly disposed of. Far too many find their way into landfills or even natural environments. To combat the problem of growing volumes of mask waste, Grabher again took action by creating a new return and collection system for used masks in order to recycle them into new, value-added products. The scheme, which is to be rolled out across Austria in the near future, features clearly marked collection boxes into which all types of face masks may be deposited. After sorting, washing, sterilising and drying, the material is used as filler material for cushion and oil absorption applications. Development is currently ongoing to process the masks into granulate which may be turned into absorption fabrics using the meltblown process. These recycled fabrics may be used to absorb oil – for example due to a spill – or other liquids.

“Our partnership with Grabher is the embodiment of **EverMinds** circular thinking,” claims Vedran Kujundzic, Borealis Vice President Commercial Performance Materials. “Using our fully recyclable meltblown PP to manufacture high-quality masks helps protect human health, and finding a way to use them again protects our planet. Together, Borealis and Grabher have taken yet another step to closing the loop on plastics circularity by maintaining our focus on sustainable solutions which benefit society.”

“We are proud to have responded so quickly to the urgent need for PPE and FFP2 masks, in particular, at the start of the pandemic in Austria,” says Günter Grabher, Managing Director of the Grabher Group. “In the meantime, we are gratified that our collect-and-recycle initiative continues to attract numerous other participants, including OMV, a major food retail group, and several large hospitals. In Borealis, we have found a reliable partner who shares our commitment to both innovation and sustainability, and we look forward to continued collaboration.”



photos: The key component of the high-quality, filtrating face masks produced by Grabher in Austria is made of fully recyclable meltblown polypropylene (PP) supplied by Borealis.

photos: © Grabher

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### **About Borealis**

Borealis is one of the world's leading providers of advanced and circular polyolefin solutions and a European market leader in base chemicals, fertilizers and the mechanical recycling of plastics. We leverage our polymers expertise and decades of experience to offer value adding, innovative and circular material solutions for key industries. In re-inventing for more sustainable living, we build on our commitment to safety, our people and excellence as we accelerate the transformation to a circular economy and expand our geographical footprint.

With head offices in Vienna, Austria, Borealis employs 6,900 employees and operates in over 120 countries. In 2021, Borealis generated total sales and other income of EUR 10,153 million and a net profit of EUR 1,396 million. OMV, the Austria-based international oil and gas company, owns 75% of Borealis, while the remaining 25% is owned by a holding company of the Abu-Dhabi based Mubadala. We supply services and products to customers around the globe through Borealis and two important joint ventures: Borouge (with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, or ADNOC, based in UAE); and Baystar™ (with TotalEnergies, based in the US).

[www.borealisgroup.com](http://www.borealisgroup.com) | [www.borealiseverminds.com](http://www.borealiseverminds.com)

### **About Grabher-Group**

Grabher-Group GmbH is one of the leading companies in the field of technical and medical textiles, as well as the winner of a huge number of national and international innovation awards. The company portfolio covers the development and production of medical protective equipment, smart textiles sensors, nanotechnology and lightweight fiber composite materials. Grabher-Group was one of the first production company which was certified on Cradle to Cradle.

Grabher-Group also has its own research facility called V-trion textile research GmbH. One focus of the institute is the development of new circular economy methods. For that they hold a number of patents. Due to these research results, the current investment in a nano-filter fleece plant (meltblown plant) makes it possible to process plastic recycling granules into high-quality technical filter fleece – that's the first time in Austria!

The company's headquarter is in Vorarlberg, Austria. In total 6 subsidiaries are located on 3 different locations.

A-Lustenau: Grabher-Group GmbH (nano filter fleece production, recycling), Vprotect GmbH (production of medical products ), 24sens GmbH (vital data monitoring)

A-Hohenems: Dornbirn RAC GmbH (fiber composite production), V-trion textiles research GmbH (research and development)

A-Dornbirn: Fussenegger & Grabher GmbH (textile finishing)

[www.grabher-group.com](http://www.grabher-group.com)

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