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Subject: Customers save time, money and space with the KHS Innokeg X

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Number of characters: approx. 10,300 (with spaces and without boiler plate).

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## **Title**

Premiere in Altötting in Bavaria

## **Subtitles**

Hell Brauerei opts for a washing and racking module designed as a single handling station with the KHS Innokeg X

## **Teaser**

It was the missing piece of the puzzle needed to complete a modernization process lasting many years, with Hell Brauerei KG in Altötting, Bavaria, the first customer in the world to opt for the Innokeg X. With this semiautomatic module that washes and racks kegs in just one operating step, KHS provides a space-saving system for the low-capacity range and thus for quality-conscious family firms such as Hell Brauerei. Not only are operating processes much simpler and faster since installation of the new technology: the brewery also appreciates the simple operation and flexibility they now have, enabling them to react accordingly to short-term orders and produce seasonal beers efficiently, for instance.

## **Main text**

In Altötting, approximately 80 kilometers east of Munich not far from the Austrian border, tradition is writ large. Hell Brauerei, founded in 1890, still racks beer into wooden barrels that are expertly pitched<sup>1</sup> every two years. This is an ancient craft the small family business claims it is one of the last to practice. However, for the brewing process itself state-of-the-art technology is now increasingly being used, with the brewery gradually having renewed its equipment over a prolonged period, starting

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<sup>1</sup> In the brewing industry, 'pitching' means treating wooden barrels with pitch to seal the pores and joints in the wood, prevent carbon dioxide from escaping and create a smooth surface on the inside of the barrel that is easy to clean.

with the fermentation cellar, then moving on to the bright beer tank cellar and finally the piping and filling. KHS has been largely instrumental in helping to bring these modernization measures to a close. Georg Hell, who now runs the brewery in its fifth generation, recently invested in a second-hand machine for glass filling as his output is still too low for a new one. However, with the Innokeg X the systems provider has now developed a system for barrels and kegs that is perfectly tailored to the requirements of craft beer producers and small and medium-sized companies such as Hell.

### **Traditional brewery attaches great importance to product quality**

“As a traditional family business, we attach great importance to product quality in all of our processes,” explains Hell. The brewery uses regional ingredients, such as hops from the Hallertau, the largest area of hop cultivation in the world, Bavarian barley malt and deep spring water from Altötting. Its eight beer styles – including seasonal beers such as *Altöttinger Dult Märzen* and various other festival beers – are brewed from old family recipes. At the moment, the company fills 80% of its produce into glass bottles and 20% into barrels; until recently, it had a deficit with the latter, as Hell puts it. “We had to have the barrels washed in a neighboring brewery before we then racked them by hand. This took a lot of time; it was also difficult to handle the tap head properly. In summer especially, when demand is particularly high, we need to use modern technology,” Hell states. A new kegging system was thus the missing piece of the puzzle needed for the brewery to complete its modernization drive – with KHS the trusted partner chosen to realize the project. “We immediately realized that we’d work well together. KHS gives us the full package of decades of expertise, reliable service and pioneering machine systems,” smiles Hell. The recent investment is now helping to improve product quality and takes barrel racking up to a new level.

With the Innokeg X the turnkey supplier from Dortmund is focusing specifically on markets and businesses such as Hell Brauerei, where small batches are especially relevant. “Up to now, KHS equipment simply wasn’t an option for us as the amounts of beer we produce were just too low. This has all changed with the new kegging module,” Hell declares. “The quality was paramount, with KHS transferring its

technological expertise from the high-capacity range to the compact, space-saving system. The parameters and consumption values speak for themselves here.” The new setup provides clear benefits when it comes to investment and overall costs compared to the use of separate modules for washing and racking. The amount of compressed air used has been reduced by 32%, with sterile air consumption down by 5%, caustic by 45% and hot water by 8%.

### **Less time and wear**

The KHS Innokeg X can process up to 25 returnable kegs or barrels an hour holding up to 58 liters. The brewery boss is particularly enthusiastic about the multiple processing head that washes and racks his containers in a single step. “This is a huge advantage, for with comparable systems on the market you have to move the barrel to a second station and then position it.” The simplified handling makes for much more efficient operations. “You pick up the barrel and place it on the machine that then presses it against the valve. This process starts fully automatically; all steps in the process from emptying to prewashing to washing with hot caustic and racking are perfectly coordinated with one another,” Hell states. This not only saves time but also reduces wear on the fittings, the filling and tap valves on the kegs. “At the end of the process you have a ready-to-sell barrel that can be distributed immediately.”

This is particularly beneficial to the seasonal or event-related production of small batches of beer to meet the growing demand in the summer, for instance. “We supply fairs and festivals such as the Altöttinger Hofdult plus various clubs in the region and run our own beer tent hospitality service as our second line of business,” says Hell. This often calls for special beers in barrels. Hell can now perfectly cater for this demand and for spontaneous requests.

Moreover, the experienced master brewer appreciates the compactness of the Innokeg X – it fits onto a single euro pallet – and thus the small space needed to accommodate it. This allowed the system to be quickly and easily installed in the production shop without any constructional changes having to be made, such as removing side walls. It now stands where the wooden barrels used to be processed.

At just 1.8 square meters in size, about a third less production space is needed than for a semi-automatic system with separate washing and racking stations.

### **Easy connection to other components**

Following ingress, the new keging system was easily piped and connected up to other components, such as the hot and cold water, compressed air, CO<sub>2</sub> and steam supplies. During development, the engineers at KHS consciously focused on achieving this level of simplicity and designing intuitive processes. The plug-and-produce system can be used immediately following delivery with very little effort required for installation. Installation was completed in two days at Hell Brauerei – to Hell’s utmost satisfaction. “KHS provides all-round service. It specifically accounted for our individual conditions on site to ensure that the new machine could be smoothly integrated into our existing production environment. KHS demonstrated its great expertise in this area, too.”

With an eye to hygienic design, all previously horizontal surfaces have now been slightly sloped to facilitate the runoff of liquids. The media valves have also been positioned so that they are readily accessible from all sides. Another advantage lies in the keg platform that can be quickly removed without the need for any tools. Furthermore, the engineering company has gone for an easy-clean cylindrical tank with no corners or edges. “Accordingly, the time needed for sanitizing has been considerably reduced by this smart construction,” claims Hell.

### **Touch screen display with an HMI panel**

Further pluses of the Innokeg X are its simple operation and universally logical design. “The system is labeled in great detail; during commissioning, it was immediately apparent where media and piping had to be connected.” The machine also features smart technology: KHS has integrated an HMI panel with a touch screen display for operators at eye level and equipped the machine with sensors and actuators for measuring pressure, for example. At the same time, the cost of investment is lower than that for larger or specialized modules and less maintenance

and fewer spare parts are required, which in turn saves time and – above all – rules out any unnecessary expenditure.

### **Subsequent expansion to up to four stations possible**

If breweries need to adjust their capacities as demand increases, they can subsequently expand the Innokeg X to up to four stations so that it can fill up to 100 returnable kegs an hour holding a maximum of 58 liters. These can all be easily managed by a single operator. This is what the “X” for “expandable” refers to in the product name. With this modular approach KHS gives their customers flexibility when it comes to filling capacity. The media tank on the first Innokeg X can supply three further modules, making a retrofit both simple and cost-effective.

Expansion is not an issue at the moment for Hell and his brewery, even if he is aiming for further growth. He and his brothers – one a butcher, the other a hotel administrator – are planning on opening their own guesthouse on the premises – and if production capacities then need to be increased sometime in the future, Hell knows that in KHS he has a company at his side that provides its clients with close, holistic support during this process. “I appreciate our cooperative partnership and know that you can rely on technology from KHS.”

**For more information go to: [www.khs.com/media](http://www.khs.com/media)**

## **Pictures and captions**

(Source: Frank Reinhold)

**Image download:** <https://KHS.dphoto.com/album/v66eb3>

### **Innokeg X**

Hell Brauerei KG in Altötting is the first customer in the world to opt for the Innokeg X. With this semiautomatic module that washes and racks kegs in just one operating step, KHS provides a space-saving system for the low-capacity range and thus for quality-conscious family firms such as Hell Brauerei.

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### **Hell Brauerei**

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### **Georg Hell**

Brewery boss Georg Hell is pleased with the result – and their cooperative partnership.

## About the KHS Group

The KHS Group is one of the world's leading manufacturers of filling and packaging systems for the beverage and liquid food industries. Besides the parent company (KHS GmbH) the group includes various subsidiaries outside Germany, with production sites in Ahmedabad (India), Waukesha (USA), Zinacantepec (Mexico), São Paulo (Brazil) and Kunshan (China). It also operates numerous sales and service centers worldwide. KHS manufactures modern filling and packaging systems for the high-capacity range at its headquarters in Dortmund, Germany, and at its factories in Bad Kreuznach, Kleve, Worms and Hamburg. The KHS Group is a wholly owned subsidiary of the SDAX-listed Salzgitter AG corporation. In 2023 the KHS Group and its 5,400 employees achieved a turnover of around €1.517 billion.

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