

A Conversation on Sustainability

David Bečvář, Chief Strategy Officer and Vice-Chairman of the Board, MTX Group



ESG Series

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Cultivating “Green Talent”: a €3 Billion Group’s Strategy for Building a Workforce to Drive Sustainable Transformation

By Marek Petruš, Client Partner, Pedersen & Partners: We sat down with Chief Strategy Officer and Vice-Chairman of the Board, David Bečvář, to discuss MTX Group’s approach to transforming its business model and transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables.

David, thank you for joining us today! To start, could you tell us a little about MTX Group and what you focus on in your role as Chief Strategy Officer?

Of course, Marek. MTX Group is a privately-owned conglomerate in the Czech Republic, comprising 26 companies, generating around €3 billion in annual revenue, and employing 2,500 people. We’re heavily focused on sustainability, modernisation, and green transformation. Our business lies in energy commodities such as coal and metal processing; one of our key subsidiaries is AL INVEST Břidličná, a major European producer of rolled aluminium products. Recently, we’ve been investing profits from traditional energy commodities into renewable energy projects as part of our efforts to transform and modernise the company.

I understand that MTX Group operates on a strategic framework. Could you elaborate on the pillars of your ESG strategy, and how these pillars translate into your business?

Certainly. Our strategy is built on seven pillars, with a focus on people and business landscapes. It’s all about having motivated employees and maintaining strong relationships with the communities around us. The strategy is customised for each company; for instance, AL INVEST is targeting energy efficiency and a circular economy, while Strojmetal, our aluminium forger for the automotive sector, focuses on automation and renewable energy use.

We aim to replace fossil fuel energy commodities with renewables while maintaining our portfolio balance between metals and energy commodities. We are also committed to keeping ESG as a core part of our business, making sure every company within our group operates with these principles.

Let’s dive into ALFAGEN—the multi-year investment program at AL INVEST Břidličná. What are its main goals, and how will it support MTX’s green ambitions?

ALFAGEN—which stands for “Aluminium for Future Generations”—is focused on two critical areas: modernising technology to reduce energy consumption and incorporating recycling into our processes. Much of AL INVEST’s equipment dates back to the 1970s, so the first goal is to update it, which will help us significantly cut electricity use.

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The second key objective is to enhance recycling; we aim to use 100% scrap material in our aluminium alloys, in order to support sustainability. This provides a huge opportunity to reduce our CO2 footprint! Recycling has always been economically beneficial for us since recycled material is cheaper than prime metals; aluminium is great for recycling—it retains its properties no matter how many times you reuse it.

That's impressive. What challenges are you facing with this focus on recycling, and how does it fit into the broader market?

Our biggest challenge is maintaining consistent alloy compositions. To a non-specialist, all aluminium may look the same, but the alloys differ in their chemical makeup, especially for packaging where any inconsistency can affect varnishing and painting processes. Industries such as packaging are advanced in recycling; others, such as the automotive industry, are only just starting out. Our goal is to educate our customers about the benefits of recycled aluminium and offer cost-effective, lower-carbon solutions. However, the market is still adjusting. Customers often prefer their familiar standardised alloys, but we're developing new environmentally friendly and cost-competitive alloys that fit their needs.

And how has the ALFAGEN program impacted your workforce and KPIs?

We've already seen positive cultural shifts. Announcing and implementing ALFAGEN has improved our ability to retain and attract employees by creating a sense of trust and commitment to our green goals. For instance, our KPI for employee fluctuation has improved; previously, we had budgeted for turnover costs, but now it's no longer needed. This in turn has boosted productivity and absenteeism rates; essentially, our people feel motivated by the project, and the results are visible even before the full implementation of ALFAGEN.

It sounds like the focus on sustainability is paying off. Let's talk about your investments in renewable energy. Could you share more about these efforts, particularly your work in Spain?

Sure. We're investing profits from fossil fuel trading

into building renewable resources, both for MTX Group and third parties. Initially, our goal was to cover our energy needs without diverting our core focus on industrial manufacturing companies, but we've found opportunities to invest further. We've partnered with Aquila Capital on a Mimosa hybrid project, located near Baza, a town in the province of Granada in Andalusia, southern Spain. This project will see the installation of 520 megawatts of renewable energy—primarily wind, with some solar. This will eventually be optimised with batteries and additional capacities for a total installed capacity of one gigawatt.

That's an ambitious plan! How does waste-to-energy fit into your sustainability efforts?

We view waste-to-energy as an important part of the circular economy. For example, plastics can only be recycled a few times before reaching the end of their lifecycle. With new regulations in the Czech Republic and the EU, we can no longer deposit this waste—it must be burnt. This opens up opportunities for selective use of materials, either in further processes such as our coking or as palletised sources of heat. While these processes are not the "greenest of the green," it is an effort to recycle and repurpose waste effectively.

Switching gears a bit, how do you see ALFAGEN affecting MTX's competitiveness in the market?

ALFAGEN and our overall ESG focus have essentially reshuffled the deck for the market. By combining vertical integration and localisation strategies, we're presenting clients with alloys made from 100% scrap content—products that are cost-effective and environmentally responsible. This has allowed us to open doors to new markets which were previously closed to us, such as North America.

Before we conclude, could you give us your long-term outlook for MTX Group and the industry?

By 2030, we aim for our processes to be free of fossil fuels, provided market conditions support this shift. We've invested enough in renewable energy sources to meet our needs, but whether it will be economically feasible depends on several factors, including energy infrastructure and market dynamics. For now, natural gas remains the cheapest source of heat, but we are ready to adapt as the market moves to greener energy.