INTERVIEW BEHIND THE CONSTRUCTION FENCES

Road construction: Szymon and the S 10

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Civil engineering/ Infrastructure

Szymon is a deputy foreman at PORR. Born in Poland, he completed his training at the Bautechnikum in Vienna with flying colours, even though German is not his mother tongue. Here, he explains how he managed to achieve this, what motivates him, and how he and his team are tackling the challenges of the S 10 Mühlviertel Expressway project.

You've had an impressive career so far – how did it all begin?

In 2013, I was working on ÖBB construction sites for PORR through a temporary employment agency. A year later, I was already a proper PORRian – a skilled worker at PORR Rail Construction. Over time, new responsibilities were added. In 2020, I took charge of my first team as a foreman.

What has changed since you started managing your own team?

As a foreman, you have significantly more responsibility. It's no longer just about your own work; it's about the team and the flow of the construction site. I led teams, organised and co-ordinated processes. I really enjoyed that. After three years, it was clear to me that I wanted to take the next step and develop my professional skills further.

You undertook your foreman training whilst working – what role did PORR's support play in this?

A very big one. The opportunity to combine work with further training isn't something to be taken for granted. The support and encouragement from my line managers were crucial, and I'm very grateful for that. In 2023, I started my foreman training at the Camillo Sitte Bautechnikum in Vienna; it lasted three years. I knew it would be a major challenge. But I always kept my goal in mind: if I stick at it, I can achieve anything. I've been a deputy foreman since 2025, and I completed my foreman training in 2026. That was – so far – my biggest challenge and one of my greatest successes.

It's particularly impressive that you managed to do that, even though German isn't your first language.

I come from Silesia. A few generations ago, German was still spoken there, and I learnt it at primary school. I taught myself the language first whilst working for the leasing company and then at PORR. However, the technical terminology and course content at the Bautechnikum did prove quite a challenge for me. I'm all the more delighted that I was able to complete the training with outstanding results. And I'm pleased with my career progression at PORR – from leasing clerk to skilled worker and foreman, right up to deputy site foreman. Every stage has helped me progress.

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What are you currently working on?

The S 10. Since 2024, as part of a joint venture, we have been carrying out the concrete, earthworks and asphalt works for the approximately 5 km-long northern section between Freistadt Nord and Rainbach Nord. I'm part of the concrete works team led by our chief foreman, Helmut, who has supported and mentored me for many years. The concrete works section involves the construction of five flyovers, an underpass, eight bridge structures and eight culverts. In total, we are using around 48,000 m³ of structural concrete and 5,300 t of reinforcing steel. Our team is responsible for several structures around the Rainbach West half-junction, most of which are interconnected. These include the underpass beneath slip road 4 towards Linz, the operations centre for the Rainbach enclosure, the approximately 250 m long enclosure itself, and the underpass.

What are the biggest challenges?

Precisely because so many structures are interlinked, we have to coordinate every stage of the work with precision. Added to this are the tight schedule, the technical interdependencies within the concrete elements, and the interfaces with the trades working in parallel, such as the relocation of utilities and traffic routes, concrete works and waterproofing works. For this reason, forward-looking planning and good communication with all those involved are crucial. We coordinate continuously with other trades and our consortium partner. We do this via the most direct route; for example, the foremen from the earthworks and concrete construction teams discuss the next steps directly with one another. And there are regular weekly programme meetings involving a wider group. This enables us to ensure we meet deadlines and maintain quality.

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What are your goals for the future?

I'd like to keep learning. The construction industry is constantly changing. New technologies, new requirements and new challenges are all part of it. That's exactly what makes my job so exciting and motivates me.