Limberg II: Start of operations at pumped storage power plant

After five and a half years of construction work, the pumped storage hydropower plant Limberg II was started up in an inauguration ceremony on October 5th 2011.

The inauguration opened with a musical performance by the local brass band Musikkapelle Kaprun, followed by celebratory addresses by Verbund CEO Wolfgang Anzengruber, Governor of Salzburg Gabi Burgstaller and Austrian Vice Chancellor Michael Spindelegger. After blessings had been pronounced by suffragan bishop Andreas Laun and protestant dean Luise Müller, the pumped storage hydropower plant (PSP) Limberg II was officially put into operation. The guests at the ceremony witnessed the startup via a live link that impressively demonstrated how fast the PSP can feed power into the grid. With 144 m³ of water per second driving the two turbines, output jumped from zero to 480 MW within just three minutes.

The PSP is able to generate or store energy, as required. Its power storage capability helps to even out the fluctuations in power generation by wind and solar energy plants. Thanks to this load balancing effect, Limberg II supports the increased utilisation of these renewable energy sources.

The addition of the PSP Limberg II brings the total turbine capacity of the Kaprun hydropower cluster up to 988 MW and increases its pumping capacity approximately fivefold to 610 MW; overall, Kaprun will deliver about 10 % of Austria’s peak-period power demand in future.

The PSP is a fully underground structure whose completion required total investments of EUR 405 m. Optimised project management and outstanding progress in the excavation phase enabled the project to be completed and started up six months ahead of schedule.

The next project for the Kaprun hydropower cluster is already under preparation. This will be the PSP Limberg III, for which the environmental impact assessment is currently under way. On the technical side, the only precondition still to be met will be closing the gap in the 380-kV connection in Salzburg.