INNOVATION AS A WAY TO OVERCOME THE CRISIS: HOW CONSTANT INVESTMENT IN R+D+I HAS RELAUNCHED AN ENTREPRENEURIAL PROJECT BY DEVELOPING A NEW COPPER RECYCLING TECHNOLOGY

Research Group DIOPMA – La Farga Lacambra

The ongoing collaboration (since 1996) between the company La Farga Lacambra and the Research Group DIOPMA, affiliated to the Department of Material Science and Physical Chemistry of the Faculty of Chemistry, UB, has allowed the company (whose corporate purpose is the manufacture and sale of semi-finished copper products) to develop both a worldwide innovative production process and the use of microalloyed copper as high-tech material for the rail sector.

The researchers have worked in close cooperation with the R+D+i staff of the company, a combined effort that has yielded important results in the recycling process of copper, the field of environmental technology and the design of new materials, thus resulting in economic and energy savings and environmental improvement. This long history of collaboration has led to the publication of four papers in high impact journals, 7 Spanish patents and also an American patent.

The manufacture of a high conductivity wire by means of this process has enabled the company to open up new domestic as well as international markets, expand its product portfolio and broaden the range of possible applications of the product.

The technology and knowledge transfer carried out by the research group has decisively contributed to La Farga Lacambra becoming one of the worldwide top companies in its sector, and the first one to produce high performance copper wires from secondary raw materials.

“So far, the company has opened thirty plants throughout the world (USA, China, Cuba, Italy, Korea, Iran, Mexico...) and has created more than fifty jobs between 2008 and 2011, in the grip of an economic crisis.”

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