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Panel technology: HELLA develops new design concepts for the vehicle front end

- Highly integrated, multifunctional, individualized panels for electric vehicles combine radomes, sensors and innovative lighting technologies for a distinctive brand identity and a safe driving experience

Soft, flowing, futuristic - if there's one feature by which you can immediately recognize an electric car, it's the design of the front end. Unlike a conventional car with an internal combustion engine, an electric vehicle does not require active engine cooling. "This means that the classic radiator grille can be dispensed with. This opens up completely new design possibilities for designers of e-vehicles," says Dr. Frank Huber, Managing Director responsible for the Business Group Lighting at the internationally positioned automotive supplier HELLA. "The entire area can therefore be freely designed. HELLA is developing large-area panels for this purpose. Special attention is paid not only to the design, but above all to the integration of further functionalities."

Based on the company's distinctive lighting and electronics expertise, HELLA integrates front radar covers, so-called radomes, radar sensors, lidar, cameras for driver assistance systems and headlamps into the covers. "We act as an innovative system integrator. Vehicle manufacturers benefit from this because they have to coordinate fewer sub-suppliers," says Dr. Huber. In addition, HELLA ensures that the individual components are compatible with each other. The result is highly integrated, multifunctional panels that also feature a distinctive design.

To give the panel an attractive day and night appearance, HELLA uses different manufacturing processes. For example, structures such as hexagons can be introduced into the surface with a laser. Manufacturers can individually choose whether panels are implemented in the vehicle's color, a homogeneous black or chrome look. HELLA masters new technologies such as injection stamping, film back injection and others to produce highly decorative components according to customer requirements. At night or when switched on, the light exits are illuminated and structures and animations become

visible. "Within the framework of the respective legislation, many things are possible in terms of design," explains Dr. Huber. Another advantage is that the panels can be quickly customized, for example for different model variants, by simply adjusting the design or styling of the surface. "This eliminates the need for costly mold adjustments, resulting in a faster return on investment for automobile manufacturers."

In addition to the design aspect, the panel also has an important safety function. It serves as protection for sensitive systems such as parking assistants or automatic distance control. If desired, the panel can also be heated, which ensures reliable functionality even in bad weather. This aspect is becoming increasingly important, especially in view of autonomous driving.

HELLA continues to drive forward the development of its own panel technology. The company's first highly integrated panel went into series production at a European vehicle manufacturer in the third quarter of 2021. HELLA is also currently working on a panel over one meter wide for a European e-vehicle brand, which is expected to go into series production in the third quarter of 2022. The panel requires the highest surface quality and is also "radar-permeable" in order to be able to implement the automatic distance control (ACC) function.

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About HELLA

HELLA is a listed subsidiary of Faurecia. Together they operate under the overarching umbrella brand FORVIA. Within the factual group, HELLA stands for high-performance lighting technology and automotive electronics. At the same time, the company covers a broad service and product portfolio for the spare parts and workshop business as well as for manufacturers of special vehicles with its Business Group Lifecycle Solutions. HELLA has 36,000 employees at more than 125 locations worldwide and generated currency and portfolio-adjusted sales of € 6.5 billion in the fiscal year 2020/2021.

About FORVIA

FORVIA comprises the complementary technology and industrial strengths of Faurecia and HELLA. With over 300 industrial sites and 77 R&D centers, 150,000 people, including more than 35,000 engineers across 40+ countries, FORVIA provides a unique and comprehensive approach to the automotive challenges of today and tomorrow. Composed of six Business Groups with 24

product lines, and a strong IP portfolio of over 14,000 patents, FORVIA is focused on becoming the preferred innovation and integration partner for OEMS worldwide. FORVIA aims to be a change maker committed to foreseeing and making the mobility transformation happen. www.forvia.com

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