



## SEATING SOLUTIONS

## 80 Years of Bus Seating with Kiel



From its roots in post-war Germany to a global presence in the bus seating market, Kiel celebrates 80 years of engineering excellence, comfort and innovation.

When Franz Kiel founded his workshop in Nördlingen, Germany in 1945, he couldn't have imagined that eight decades later, the company bearing his name would be supplying bus seating solutions to operators around the world.

What began as a modest affair specialising in iron parts, is today globally recognised as a premium manufacturer of seating systems for buses, coaches and more. The Kiel Group has helped shape the evolution of bus travel from the post-war period to the smart, connected vehicles of today, and is trusted by leading OEMs and transport providers thanks to its blend of ergonomic design, durability and innovation.

As it marks its 80th anniversary, the company reflects on a journey shaped by engineering know-how, close customer relationships and a constant drive to move



the industry forward, with this timeline of defining moments.

## 1945

Franz Kiel GmbH is founded in Nördlingen, Germany, focusing initially on iron component construction before moving on to bus interiors and wood-based components.

## 1948

A new production facility is built to manufacture metal furniture and vehicle equipment. Clients include Mercedes-Benz, MAN and Magirus Deutz and truck and bus seating becomes Kiel's main line of business.

## 1950

1950 marks the production of the first rigid seat frame and Kiel, now boasting over 120 staff, begins manufacturing metal-framed seating systems for regional buses.

## 1955

Kiel launches the Greyhound seat – a landmark product that signals the shift toward greater passenger comfort. This is Kiel's first bus seat with a reclinable backrest and sideways sliding function.

## 1960

Kiel expands its product lines to include coach-grade seating comforts like armrests.

## 1965

Kiel upgrades its finishing capabilities, improving the quality and resilience of its seat components. The company opens a new powder-coating and wet-painting facility, also investing in durability-focused seating for long-distance travel and harsh use environments.



Kiel seats from 1965

## 1975

Kiel further expands its coach seating offerings, and builds new relationships with European transit operators.

## 1980

Kiel's major breakthrough in the passenger seating market comes with the development of noise-reducing seats featuring a durable, long-lasting adjustment mechanism.

## 1981

This year marks the development of the Kiel 1, the first one-piece, self-supporting plastic shell seat for city buses, manufactured via injection moulding. This modular, lightweight design becomes a milestone in bus seating technology, helping to meet fuel efficiency and cost targets.

## 1983

As seating components become more complex, Kiel begins developing and producing complete seat systems. The company invests in a high-bay warehouse, painting and powder-coating facilities.

## 1985

Kiel launches new signature seat models including the Avance for coach/intercity transport and Transit seating lines for European buses.

It also introduces the Kiel Line, the successor to the Kiel 1, featuring cushioned seat and backrest for greater rider comfort.

## Late 1980s

The company invests in robotic welding and CNC-controlled machines, boosting production capacity and quality.

In 1989 it expands production further, with the opening of a new administration building, warehouse and stamping plant.

## 1990s

Kiel begins its ambitious international expansion strategy, founding the Kiel Oto Kiltuk subsidiary in Bursa, Turkey in 1996 and launching the Kiel Polska subsidiary in Nowy Tomysl, Poland in 1997.

## 1993

Kiel establishes a dedicated upholstery department and surface technology unit.





## 1997

The company heavily invests in product development to maintain its position as a leader in seating solutions. By the end of the decade, it's transformed from a component supplier to a full systems provider, offering development production, delivery and installation of complete seating systems.

## 2000s

Expansion continues with the acquisition of Deco Seating in the Netherlands, renamed Kiel B.V., and launches – including but not limited to - Kiel France s.a.r.l, Kiel Seating in the UK, and Kiel N.A. LLC, which opens the door to the North American market. A new production site is built in Turkey and sales activities expand to include Scandinavia, Greece, Israel, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and North Macedonia. Kiel also signs a licence agreement for the production of bus seats in India, and founds joint ventures in both China and Russia.

In addition to this global growth, Kiel introduces a rigorous quality management system to further optimise products and production.

## 2016

Acquisition of Spanish partner Emar Kiel.

## 2017

Founding of Kiel Macedonia DOOEL, further increasing EU production capabilities.

## 2018

Launch of the Avance X, designed for premium coach travel, this seating product is known for its comfort, sleek design and modular components.

## 2019

Kiel enters a joint venture in China, launching the Jiangsu ARSALE Kiel Seat Co Ltd.

## 2025

Kiel marks its 80th anniversary with global operations, 1,500 employees and a footprint in Europe, North America, Australia, Asia and the Middle East.

## Looking to the Future

Kiel's journey from ironworks to international seat systems supplier has been defined by adaptability, craftsmanship and customer focus. Looking ahead it aims to strengthen its position as a leading seating system manufacturer while continuing to grow internationally.

As buses become more sustainable, connected and passenger-centric, the role of seating will only grow in importance. Whether it's through lighter materials, smarter ergonomics, reworkable components or built-in tech, Kiel is well-positioned to shape the next chapter in bus mobility.

[kiel-seating.com](https://kiel-seating.com)

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