



(86) Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date: 2015/06/30
(87) Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date: 2016/01/21
(45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2018/10/16
(85) Entrée phase nationale/National Entry: 2016/12/16
(86) N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.: EP 2015/064820
(87) N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.: 2016/008714
(30) Priorité/Priority: 2014/07/16 (DE10 2014 109 943.5)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *C23C 2/12* (2006.01),
C23C 2/02 (2006.01), *C23C 2/40* (2006.01)
(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
BLUMENAU, MARC, DE;
MOLL, OLIVER, DE;
PETERS, MICHAEL, DE;
WUTTKE, THIEMO, DE
(73) Propriétaires/Owners:
THYSSENKRUPP STEEL EUROPE AG, DE;
THYSSENKRUPP AG, DE
(74) Agent: KIRBY EADES GALE BAKER

(54) Titre : PRODUIT EN ACIER COMPRENANT UN REVETEMENT DE PROTECTION ANTICORROSION CONSTITUE
D'UN ALLIAGE D'ALUMINIUM AINSI QUE SON PROCEDE DE FABRICATION
(54) Title: STEEL PRODUCT WITH AN ANTICORROSIVE COATING OF ALUMINIUM ALLOY AND METHOD FOR THE
PRODUCTION THEREOF

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

The invention relates to a steel product, more particularly flat steel product, having a metallic anticorrosion coating of an aluminum alloy, and to a method for producing a steel product of this kind. So that such a steel product possesses high media resistance, more particularly high acid resistance and corrosion resistance, the steel product is immersed in a liquid-melt coating bath which comprises an aluminum alloy comprising in accordance with the invention, further to Al and unavoidable impurities, the following elements:

Mn 0.2-2 wt%
and/or Mg 0.2-7 wt%
Fe 0.5-5 wt% as obligatory element
Ti 0.05-0.4 wt%
and/or Zr 0.05-0.4 wt%.

The method of the invention is characterized by the following steps:

Provision of a steel product, more particularly flat steel product, in a hot-rolled or cold-rolled state, Activation of the surface of the steel product to remove passive oxides from the surface of the steel product, and
Coating of the surface-activated steel product by immersion in a liquid-melt coating bath which comprises an aluminum alloy having the composition specified above.

131320P10WO

Abstract

The invention relates to a steel product, more particularly flat steel product, having a metallic anticorrosion coating of an aluminum alloy, and to a method for producing a steel product of this kind. So that such a steel product possesses high media resistance, more particularly high acid resistance and corrosion resistance, the steel product is immersed in a liquid-melt coating bath which comprises an aluminum alloy comprising in accordance with the invention, further to Al and unavoidable impurities, the following elements:

	Mn	0.2-2 wt%
and/or	Mg	0.2-7 wt%
	Fe	0.5-5 wt% as obligatory element
	Ti	0.05-0.4 wt%
and/or	Zr	0.05-0.4 wt%.

The method of the invention is characterized by the following steps:

Provision of a steel product, more particularly flat steel product, in a hot-rolled or cold-rolled state,

Activation of the surface of the steel product to remove passive oxides from the surface of the steel product, and

Coating of the surface-activated steel product by immersion in a liquid-melt coating bath which comprises an aluminum alloy having the composition specified above.

**Steel product with an anticorrosive coating of
aluminium alloy and method for the production thereof**

The invention relates to a steel product, more
5 particularly flat steel product, having a metallic
anticorrosion coating of an aluminum alloy, and to a
method for producing a steel product of this kind.

Flat steel product is understood in the present context
10 to refer to steel products whose width and length are
each a multiple of their thickness. An example of a
flat steel product is a steel strip or steel blank.

The corrosion resistance of aluminum is influenced
15 substantially by the covering layer of Al_2O_3 which forms
on aluminum, and by the stability of this layer.
Aluminum corrodes only in strongly acidic media or
alkaline solutions. The service range for aluminum
alloys is therefore typically confined to the pH range
20 of 5-8. Exceptions exist, in this respect, in relation
to concentrated oxygen-containing acids such as nitric,
acetic, and phosphoric acid. Moreover, the resistance
of aluminum in NH_3 solutions is good to very good.

25 Aluminum coatings for steel products are employed
primarily in the form of AlSi alloys as a protection
from scaling in high-temperature applications. The
objective of AlSi coating, for example, is to prevent
the scaling of steel sheets in the process of hot
30 forming. As a result of hot forming (press hardening),
the coating becomes brittle and then no longer affords
satisfactory corrosion prevention.

However, coatings of AlSi alloys afford only moderate
35 corrosion protection even when they are not hot-formed.

Against this background, the object of the invention
was to provide a steel product, more particularly flat
steel product of the type specified at the outset,

which possesses high media resistance, more particularly high acid resistance and corrosion resistance.

5 This object is achieved by a steel product having the features as described herein and also by a method having the features as described herein. Preferred and advantageous refinements of the steel product of the invention and of the method of the invention are
10 specified in the following description.

The steel product of the invention, more particularly flat steel product, is provided with a metallic anticorrosion coating of an aluminum alloy, the
15 aluminum alloy comprising, further to Al and unavoidable impurities, the following elements:

	Mn	0.2-2 wt%
and/or	Mg	0.2-7 wt%
20	Fe	0.5-5 wt% as obligatory element
	Ti	0.05-0.4 wt%
and/or	Zr	0.05-0.4 wt%.

In one embodiment there is provided a steel product
25 having a metallic anticorrosion coating of an aluminum alloy, the aluminum alloy consisting of, further to Al and unavoidable impurities, the following elements:

	Mn	0.2-2 wt% and/or Mg 0.2-7 wt%;
30	Fe	0.5-5 wt%;
	Ti	0.05-0.4 wt% and/or Zr 0.05-0.4 wt%;
	one or more of the following elements:	
	Si	0.1-15 wt%;
	Ni	0.05-2 wt%;
35	Sb	0.05-0.4 wt%;
	Cr	0.05-0.4 wt%;
	Co	max. 0.4 wt%;
	Cu	max. 0.1 wt%;

5 Zn max. 0.1 wt%; and
one or more of B, C or N, wherein the individual
amount of each of the B, C and N is no more than
0.05 wt% and the total amounts of B, C and/or N
combined does not exceed 0.15 wt%.

The method of the invention is characterized
accordingly by the following steps:

- 10 - providing a steel product, more particularly
flat steel product, in a hot-rolled or cold-
rolled state,
- activating the surface of the steel product to
remove passive oxides from the surface of the
steel product, and
- 15 - coating the surface-activated steel product by
immersion in a liquid-melt coating bath which
contains an aluminum alloy which, further to Al
and unavoidable impurities, is composed of the
following elements:

20

	Mn	0.2-2 wt%
and/or	Mg	0.2-7 wt%
	Fe	0.5-5 wt% as obligatory element
	Ti	0.05-0.4 wt%
25	and/or	Zr 0.05-0.4 wt%.

In one embodiment, there is provided a method that
comprises the following steps:

- 30 - providing a steel product, more particularly
flat steel product, in a hot-rolled or cold-
rolled state,
- activating the surface of the steel product to
remove passive oxides from the surface of the
steel product, and
- 35 - coating the surface-activated steel product by
immersion in a liquid-melt coating bath which
contains an aluminum alloy which, further to Al

and unavoidable impurities, is composed of the following elements:

5 Mn 0.2-2 wt% and/or Mg 0.2-7 wt%;
Fe 0.5-5 wt%;
Ti 0.05-0.4 wt% and/or Zr 0.05-0.4 wt%;
one or more of the following elements:

10 Si 0.1-15 wt%;
Ni 0.05-2 wt%;
Sb 0.05-0.4 wt%;
Cr 0.05-0.4 wt%;
Co max. 0.4 wt%;
Cu max. 0.1 wt%;
Zn max. 0.1 wt%; and

15 one or more of B, C or N, wherein the individual amount of each of the B, C and N is no more than 0.05 wt% and the total amounts of B, C and/or N combined does not exceed 0.15 wt%.

20 The effect of manganese (Mn) is that iron-containing phases or needles are bound or converted into a less harmful morphology, thereby significantly boosting the corrosion resistance in comparison to other aluminum-based coatings. At an Mn content of less than 0.2 wt% in the liquid-melt coating bath, the inventors were
25 unable to find this positive effect. An Mn content of more than 7.0 wt% did not improve this effect further, instead leading to increased formation of slag in the coating bath (melt bath), which may adversely affect the quality of the coating. Starting from an Mn content
30 of 0.2 wt%, an increase in the hot strength was found with increasing Mn content. This may well be because of the recrystallization-inhibiting effect of manganese.

35 Magnesium (Mg) as an alloying element may have the effects both of solid solution hardening and, in conjunction with other alloying elements (e.g., silicon), of precipitation hardening. The inventors have found aluminum alloys having an Mg content of up

to 7 wt% to exhibit high corrosion resistance. From an Mg content of 5 wt% or more, however, intercrystalline corrosion was observed, but can be prevented by annealing the coated steel product in order to
5 homogenize the coating.

The inventors have additionally recognized that the combination of the alloying elements Mn and Mg in the coating bath leads to an increase in the mechanical
10 properties of the coating, with a further increase in strength during cold forming.

In accordance with the invention, the liquid-melt coating bath is to include 0.5-5 wt% Fe as obligatory
15 element. Iron (Fe) in the coating bath (melt bath) satisfies the bath relative to severe dissolution of Fe from the steel product immersed in the coating bath. At an Fe content of less than 0.5 wt%, this effect is inadequate; at an Fe content of more than 5 wt%, in
20 contrast, there may already be increased slag formation, which may adversely affect the coating quality of the steel product.

The alloying elements titanium (Ti) and zirconium (Zr)
25 of the coating bath of the invention may make a contribution, individually or in combination, to a fine-crystalline structure of the anticorrosion coating generated by hot dip coating on the steel product. As a result of the fine-crystalline structure, harmful
30 phases are finely distributed in the matrix of the anticorrosion coating, and hence the corrosion resistance is boosted. This effect can also be achieved by adding grain-refining prealloys. The inventors have recognized that with a Ti content or Zr content of less
35 than 0.05 wt% in each case, no positive effect can be ascertained in terms of an increase in corrosion resistance. Nor is it possible to raise the above-described positive effect further at a Ti content or Zr

content of more than 0.4 wt% in each case. Aspects of economics therefore set the upper limit here for the Ti content or Zr content of the coating bath. As well as boosting the corrosion resistance of the steel product, 5 the addition of titanium may further increase the resistance of the anticorrosion coating toward salt water and alkalis.

According to one preferred refinement of the invention, 10 the coating bath and/or anticorrosion coating further comprises one or more of the following elements:

	Si	0.1-15 wt%
	Ni	0.05-2 wt%
15	Sb	0.05-0.4 wt%
	Cr	0.05-0.4 wt%
	Co	max. 0.4 wt%
	Cu	max. 0.1 wt%
	Zn	max. 0.1 wt%.

20 Further accompanying elements, such as boron, carbon and/or nitrogen, may be present, likewise optionally, in traces in the coating bath and/or in the anticorrosion coating of the invention, in which case 25 their individual amounts ought to amount to not more than 0.05 wt% and their total ought not to exceed a maximum figure of 0.15 wt%.

Silicon (Si) in the coating bath of the invention 30 inhibits excessive growth of the reaction layer between the steel product and the anticorrosion coating applied to it, and is able accordingly to improve the forming capacity of the hot dip-coated steel product. The inventors have recognized that this positive effect can 35 no longer be ascertained if the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating applied to the steel product has an Si content of less than 0.1 wt%. Where the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating applied to the

steel product contains an Si content of more than 15 wt%, there may already be noticeable precipitation of silicon in crystal form, which may adversely affect the properties of the anticorrosion coating.

5

Nickel (Ni) in the coating bath and/or as alloying element of the anticorrosion coating applied to the steel product increases the latter's strength, especially its hot strength, by forming thermally stable precipitates. Nickel may be added at up to a maximum of 2 wt% to the coating bath of the invention.

Antimony (Sb), analogously to titanium, improves the resistance of the steel product of the invention toward salt water and alkalis. This positive effect was not observed by the inventors if the Sb content of the coating bath was less than 0.05 wt%. Nor was it possible, conversely, for this effect to be markedly further improved if the Sb content of the coating bath was more than 0.4 wt%.

Chromium (Cr) as an alloying element of the anticorrosion coating is able, at a level of up to 0.4 wt%, to bring about a reduction in the sensitivity of the coating to stress cracking corrosion.

Cobalt (Co) as an alloying element of the anticorrosion coating leads to an increase in the hot strength of the coating. Cobalt inhibits grain growth at higher temperatures. In particular, cobalt improves the hardness and ductility of the anticorrosion coating of the invention. Up to 0.4 wt% of cobalt is added optionally to the aluminum alloy of the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating.

35

Copper (Cu) as an alloying element of the anticorrosion coating leads likewise to an increase in the hot strength of the coating. Conventional aluminum alloys

will be admixed with copper up to a level of 5 wt%. Copper contents in the range of 1-3 wt%, on the other hand, result in increased propensity toward hot cracking. Up to 0.1 wt% of copper is added optionally
5 to the aluminum alloy of the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating.

Zinc (Zn) as an alloying element of the anticorrosion coating raises the strength and hardness of the
10 coating, especially in conjunction with magnesium. At high levels of Zn, however, the risk of stress cracking corrosion increases. Up to 0.1 wt% of zinc is added optionally to the aluminum alloy of the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating.

15 Another refinement of the invention provides for the aluminum alloy of the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating of the steel product to have an Mn content in the range of 0.2-1.5 wt%. Tests by the
20 inventors have shown that with an Mn content of this kind it is possible to achieve particularly high corrosion resistance, more particularly high resistance toward acids and alkaline media, and that as a result there is a significant reduction in slag formation,
25 which can adversely affect the coating quality. These benefits are the case more particularly when, in accordance with a further preferred refinement of the invention, the aluminum alloy has an Fe content in the range from greater than 1.5 to 5 wt%, very preferably
30 in the range from greater than 3 to 5 wt%.

One alternative refinement of the invention provides for the aluminum alloy of the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating of the steel product of the
35 invention to have an Mn content in the range of 1.5-2 wt%. Tests by the inventors have shown that with an Mn content of this kind it is possible in turn to achieve particularly high corrosion resistance, more

particularly high resistance towards acids and alkali media, and that likewise as a result of this there is a significant reduction in the formation of slag, which can adversely affect the coating quality. The Fe
5 content of the aluminum alloy in this case is preferably selected such that it is in the range from greater than 1.5 to 5 wt%, more preferably in the range from greater than 1.5 to 3 wt%. These limits lead in each case to reduced formation of slag.

10

Another advantageous refinement of the invention is characterized in that the aluminum alloy of the coating bath and/or the anticorrosion coating of the steel product of the invention, in addition to Mn with the
15 stated Mn content, has an Mg content in the range from 0.2 to less than 0.6 wt%. These limits also lead to reduced slag formation.

In order to obtain an optimum coating outcome it is an
20 advantage if, in accordance with one preferred refinement of the method of the invention, the coating bath is operated with a coating bath temperature in the range from 650 to 750°C, preferably in the range from 680 to 750°C. At coating bath temperatures above and
25 below these ranges, the coating outcome was occasionally not optimum, since in that case, for example, the reaction rate between the steel product and the liquid-melt coating bath was too low or the formation of slag was increased.

30

The surface activation of the steel product to remove passive oxides from the steel surface before immersion into the coating bath, causing the steel surface to consist very largely of metallic iron, can be
35 accomplished in a variety of ways. One reliable procedure or refinement of the method of the invention in this respect is characterized in that the surface of the steel product is activated by pickling, using

hydrochloric or sulfuric acid, for example. Subsequent rinsing, fluxing, and drying complete this activation and are intended to prevent reverse passivation by the ambient oxygen. The steel product thus treated is then
5 heated to a temperature which corresponds to the temperature of the coating bath or is at most 50°C above the temperature of the coating bath. This operational sequence is particularly advisable for hot-rolled starting material.

10

Another reliable procedure or refinement of the method of the invention with regard to the surface activation of the steel product is characterized in that the surface of the steel product is activated by pickling,
15 using hydrochloric or sulfuric acid, for example, rinsing, and annealing, the annealing being carried out in a hydrogen-nitrogen atmosphere at a holding temperature in the range from 500 to 900°C, and in that the steel product thus treated is heated or cooled to a
20 temperature which corresponds to the temperature of the coating bath or is at most 50°C above the temperature of the coating bath. In order to complete the surface activation and to forestall reverse passivation of the surface, the H₂ fraction ought to be greater than or
25 equal to 1 vol% H₂. With an H₂ fraction greater than 50 vol%, on the other hand, no additional positive effect is seen any longer, and so such high H₂ fractions should be avoided as uneconomic. For the same reason, the dew point of the H₂-N₂ atmosphere is to be in the
30 range from -60°C to 0°C. A dew point lower than -60°C is difficult to accomplish technically and would also not bring any positive effect. With a dew point greater than 0°C, on the other hand, it would not be possible to rule out the steel surface being reoxidized, and so
35 such high dew points should be avoided. This variant as well is advisable for hot-rolled starting material.

According to another variant of the method of the invention, the surface of the steel product is activated by annealing, the steel product being heated in a hydrogen-nitrogen atmosphere to a holding
5 temperature in the range from 600 to 1100°C. In order to reduce any surface oxides present and to prevent them being formed during annealing, the H₂ fraction is to be greater than or equal to 1 vol% H₂. At an H₂ fraction of greater than 50 vol%, conversely, no
10 additional positive effect is seen anymore, and so such high H₂ fractions should be avoided as uneconomic. For the same reason, the dew point of the H₂-N₂ atmosphere is to be in the range from -60°C to 0°C. A dew point lower than -60°C is difficult to realize technically
15 and would also not bring any positive effect. With a dew point greater than 0°C, on the other hand, it would not be possible to rule out the steel surface being reoxidized, and so such high dew points should be avoided. The steel product thus treated is then heated
20 or cooled to a temperature which corresponds to the temperature of the coating bath or is at most 50°C above the temperature of the coating bath. This variant is particularly advisable with cold-rolled starting material, since in this case the microstructure of the
25 steel can recrystallize at holding temperature. A holding temperature of less than 600°C should be avoided, since otherwise the resulting recrystallization may not be complete. At a holding temperature of greater than 1100°C, conversely, there
30 is a risk of coarse grains being formed. The residence time at holding temperature here is to be at least 30 seconds and not more than 90 seconds. If the residence time is less than 30 seconds, the resulting recrystallization may not be complete. At a holding
35 time (residence time) of greater than 90 seconds, there is a risk of coarse grains being formed.

In order to prevent reverse passivation of the steel surface after annealing, in the case of those abovementioned variants of the surface activation of the steel product that entail the surface of the steel product being annealed, a further refinement of the method of the invention provides for the annealed steel product to be introduced into the coating bath in protected form through a snout in which there is a neutral or reductive inert-gas atmosphere. The inert gas used here is preferably nitrogen or a nitrogen/hydrogen mixture, at a dew point in the range from -60°C to 0°C for the reasons stated above.

If alloyed steel products are to be coated, utilizing the abovementioned annealing gas activation, by hot dip coating with an aluminum alloy of the invention, it may be useful to operate the reaction between metal and annealing gas during the anneal in such a way as to prevent external oxidation of those alloying elements of the steel that have affinity for oxygen (such as, for example, Mn, Al, Cr, B, Si, etc.). "Alloyed" here is intended to denote that the fraction of at least one alloying element from the group of Mn, Al, Si, and Cr is greater than or equal to 0.2 wt%, with the Mn fraction being not more than 30.0 wt%, the fraction of aluminum or silicon not more than 10.0 wt%, and the Cr fraction not more than 5.0 wt%. In such cases, according to a further refinement of the method of the invention, the annealing of the steel product would preferably be carried out such that additionally preoxidizing of the steel product, surface nitriding of the steel product, controlled dew point working, or combinations of these measures are carried out. "Preoxidation" refers to an oxidation-reduction treatment of the steel surface. In this case, for example, in a first step, during the heating phase to holding temperature and at the start of the residence time at holding temperature, the steel surface is

exposed for at least 1 second up to a maximum of 15 seconds to an atmosphere containing at least 0.1 vol% up to a maximum of 3.0 vol% oxygen, in order deliberately to form FeO. If the selected preoxidation time and oxygen fraction are too low, this FeO formation cannot take place sufficiently. If preoxidation time and oxygen fraction are set at too high a level, too much FeO is formed, and can no longer be reduced back completely during the residence time in the hydrogen-nitrogen atmosphere at holding temperature. In the case of the "surface nitriding", during the heating phase to holding temperature and at the start of the residence time at holding temperature, the steel surface is exposed for at least 1 second up to a maximum of 15 seconds to an atmosphere comprising at least 3.0 vol% up to a maximum of 10.0 vol% NH₃, in order to effect deliberate near-surface formation of nitrides in the steel, which block oxidation pathways for the alloying elements exhibiting oxygen affinity. If the nitriding time and NH₃ fraction selected are too low, the level of such nitride formation may be too low. If nitriding time and NH₃ fraction are set at too high a level, no additional positive effect may be observed any longer. Controlled dew point working means that within the stated or preferred limits, within different furnace zones, the dew point is set deliberately for the particular steel alloy in order to cause the selective oxidation of the alloying elements in accordance with the Wagner criterion to proceed internally rather than externally.

A further advantageous refinement of the method of the invention provides for the annealing of the steel product to be carried out in such a way that decarburization is achieved, more particularly edge decarburization of the steel product. With edge decarburization, carbon is withdrawn from near the surface of the steel product through deliberate

annealing gas metal reaction, by reaction with gaseous H_2O . For this purpose, the dew point of the atmosphere is adjusted to a range from $-20^{\circ}C$ to $0^{\circ}C$, so that sufficient H_2O is present in the annealing gas atmosphere. Such edge decarburization is especially advisable if the carbon fraction of the steel alloy is in the range from 0.1 wt% to 0.4 wt%. By this means, the formability of the steel substrate is improved.

10 In a further refinement of the method of the invention, the step of coating the surface-activated steel product using a coating bath comprising an aluminum alloy of the invention may be followed by a thermal, chemical and/or mechanical aftertreatment. For instance, a further advantageous refinement of the method of the invention provides for the surface of the hot dip-coated steel product to be dressed. By dressing the surface it is possible to generate any desired roughness or surface structure on the steel product coated in accordance with the invention.

Another advantageous refinement of the method of the invention is characterized in that the surface of the hot dip-coated steel product is anodized. This allows the wear resistance of the anticorrosion coating of the invention to be boosted, while at the same time the coating can also be provided with decorative coloration. Anodizing leads to an increase in the abrasion resistance which is well above that of a conventional 1.4301-grade stainless steel.

The invention is illustrated in more detail below with working examples.

35 A steel product, typically a flat steel product, is coated with an aluminum coating of the invention by brief immersion of the steel product into a liquid-melt coating bath - hence the term "hot dip aluminizing"

which can also be used here. In order to achieve effective wetting and adhesion of the coating material on the steel substrate, a pretreatment is carried out in order to activate the steel surface. This
5 pretreatment and the hot dip aluminization take place preferably in series and also in a continuous operating sequence. This operating sequence comprises the following steps:

- 10 a) providing the steel product, preferably flat steel product, in a hot-rolled or cold-rolled state
- b) cleaning the surface of the steel product (optional)
- c) activating the surface of the steel product
- 15 d) hot dip aluminizing, i.e., hot dip coating in a coating bath composition of the invention based on aluminum
- e) thermal, chemical, or mechanical aftertreatment (optional in each case).

20

The surface activation removes passive oxides from the surface of the steel product, causing this surface after activation to consist very largely of metallic iron. This can be achieved in a variety of ways,
25 specifically as follows:

- c1) Chemical surface activation, comprising pickling, rinsing, fluxing, and drying of the steel surface and conditioning of the steel product at bath immersion
30 temperature before it is immersed into the coating bath. This surface activation or operating sequence is advisable particularly for hot-rolled steel starting material.
- 35 c2) Combined chemical/annealing gas activation, comprising pickling, rinsing, annealing in a hydrogen-nitrogen atmosphere (having a dew point of -60°C to 0°C) with a holding temperature in the range from 500°C

to 900°C, and cooling to bath immersion temperature. Optionally here it is possible for an overaging operation to be carried out before the surface-activated steel product is immersed into the coating bath. This surface activation or operating sequence is also advisable for hot-rolled steel starting material.

c3) Annealing gas activation, comprising heating to a holding temperature in the range from 600°C to 1100°C in hydrogen-nitrogen atmosphere (with a dew point of -60°C to 0°C) and cooling to bath immersion temperature. Here likewise it is possible optionally to carry out an overaging operation before the surface-activated steel product is immersed into the coating bath. This variant of the surface activation or operating sequence is advisable particularly with cold-rolled steel starting material, since the microstructure of this material can recrystallize at the holding temperature.

Independently of the choice of operating step sequence c1), c2), or c3), the liquid-melt coating bath is operated with a coating bath temperature in the range from 650°C to 750°C, preferably in the range from 680°C to 750°C. The surface-activated steel product to be coated is cooled preferably to a bath immersion temperature in the range from 650°C to 800°C.

If a steel product made of alloyed steel is to undergo hot dip aluminization in accordance with the invention, using one of operating step sequences c2) or c3), it may be necessary to operate the annealing gas-metal reaction during the anneal in such a way as to prevent external oxidation of the alloying elements with affinity for oxygen (such as Mn, Al, Cr, B, Si, etc.). For this purpose the annealing gas-metal reaction would additionally comprise, for example, a preoxidation, a surface nitriding, a controlled dew point working, or

combinations of these additional measures. It is likewise within the scope of the invention for edge decarburization to be carried out in parallel with the surface activation, in order to improve the formability
5 of the steel product.

In order to prevent reverse passivation of the steel surface after annealing in the case of operating step sequence c2) or c3), the transfer of the steel product,
10 cooled to bath immersion temperature, into the coating bath is accomplished by way of a snout, in which there is a controlled nitrogen or nitrogen/hydrogen inert gas atmosphere that is neutral or reductive relative to the steel substrate.

15

Through optional dressing of the surface of the steel product coated in accordance with the invention it is possible to apply a desired roughness or surface structure. In an optional downstream anodizing
20 operation, the wear resistance of the coating of the invention on the steel product can be boosted. Anodizing brings about an increase in the abrasion resistance, which is greater by a factor of about 3 than that of a conventional stainless steel (1.4301).

25

The coating of a steel product subjected in accordance with the invention to hot dip aluminization by means of a coating bath and one of the operating step sequences as described above comprises, further to aluminum and
30 unavoidable impurities, the following elements:

	Mn	0.2-2 wt%	
and/or	Mg	0.2-7 wt%	
	Fe	0.5-5 wt% as obligatory element	
35	Ti	0.05-0.4 wt%	
	and/or	Zr	0.05-0.4 wt%.

Table 1 reports a number of working examples for the chemical composition of a metallic coating bath (melt bath) of the invention. The V1 and V3 melts reported in table 1 feature particularly high corrosion resistance even with respect to acids and alkaline media. The melt of type V2 possesses increased resistance toward seawater and alkalis.

A flat steel product provided with an anticorrosion coating of the invention is suitable for all common joining techniques such as soldering, welding, adhesive bonding, etc., and can be subjected to single-stage or multistage processing by either cold forming or hot forming to give a component. A flat steel product or component of this kind is suitable for general mechanical engineering, aircraft, automotive, and marine construction, construction of household appliances, building construction, especially for exterior facings, decorative elements of everyday use, such as casings for cell phones and notebook computers, for example, and also mining equipment. The use of flat steel products with the anticorrosion coating of the invention, or of components produced from such flat steel products, is particularly advantageous in the sector of the chemical industry and also the food industry, examples being statically loaded plant components and articles such as silo containers, insulators, beverage cans, etc. In the case of the latter application, the aluminum-based anticorrosion coating of the invention allows replacement by low-alloy steels of the stainless steels prescribed in the food industry according to EU Regulation 1935/2004 and also the EU Guidelines on meals, alloys used as food contact materials (March 9, 2001).

35

Table 1

Test melt	Elements [wt%]				
	Mn	Mg	Si	Fe	Al
V1 (AlMnSi)	0.98		3.23	0.96	bal.
V2 (AlMg)		5		3.5	bal.
V3 (AlMgMn)	2	7		3.5	bal.

What is claimed is:-

1. A steel product having a metallic anticorrosion coating of an aluminum alloy, the aluminum alloy consisting of, further to Al and unavoidable impurities, the following elements:
 - Mn 0.2-2 wt% and/or Mg 0.2-7 wt%;
 - Fe 0.5-5 wt%;
 - 10 Ti 0.05-0.4 wt% and/or Zr 0.05-0.4 wt%;one or more of the following elements:
 - Si 0.1-15 wt%;
 - Ni 0.05-2 wt%;
 - Sb 0.05-0.4 wt%;
 - 15 Cr 0.05-0.4 wt%;
 - Co max. 0.4 wt%;
 - Cu max. 0.1 wt%;
 - Zn max. 0.1 wt%; andone or more of B, C or N, wherein the individual amount of each of the B, C and N is no more than 0.05 wt% and the total amounts of B, C and/or N combined does not exceed 0.15 wt%.
2. The steel product of claim 1, which is a flat steel product.
3. The steel product as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the aluminum alloy has an Mn content in the range of 0.2-1.5 wt%.
4. The steel product as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the aluminum alloy has an Mn content in the range of greater than 1.5-2 wt%.
5. The steel product as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the aluminum alloy has an Fe content in the range of greater than 1.5-5 wt%.

6. The steel product as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that the aluminum alloy has an Fe content in the range of greater than 3-5 wt%.
- 5 7. The steel product as claimed in claim 4, characterized in that the aluminum alloy has an Fe content in the range of greater than 1.5-3 wt%.
- 10 8. The steel product as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that the aluminum alloy, in addition to Mn with the stated Mn content, has an Mg content in the range from 0.2 to less than 0.6 wt%.
- 15 9. A method for producing a steel product having a metallic anticorrosion coating of an aluminum alloy, characterized by the following steps:
 - 20 - providing a steel product, more particularly flat steel product, in a hot-rolled or cold-rolled state,
 - activating the surface of the steel product to remove passive oxides from the surface of the steel product, and
 - 25 - coating the surface-activated steel product by immersion in a liquid-melt coating bath which contains an aluminum alloy with a composition as claimed in any of claims 1 to 8.
- 30 10. The method as claimed in claim 9, characterized in that the coating bath is operated with a coating bath temperature in the range of 650-750°C.
- 35 11. The method as claimed in claim 9 or 10, characterized in that the surface of the steel product is activated by pickling, rinsing, fluxing, and drying and in that the steel product thus treated is heated to a temperature which

corresponds to the temperature of the coating bath or is at most 50°C above the temperature of the coating bath.

- 5 12. The method as claimed in claim 9 or 10,
characterized in that the surface of the steel
product is activated by pickling, rinsing, and
annealing, the annealing being carried out in a
hydrogen-nitrogen atmosphere at a holding
10 temperature in the range of 500-900°C, and in that
the steel product thus treated is heated or cooled
to a temperature which corresponds to the
temperature of the coating bath or is at most 50°C
above the temperature of the coating bath.
- 15 13. The method as claimed in claim 9 or 10,
characterized in that the surface of the steel
product is activated by annealing, the steel
product being heated in a hydrogen-nitrogen
20 atmosphere to a holding temperature in the range
of 600-1100°C, and in that the steel product thus
treated is heated or cooled to a temperature which
corresponds to the temperature of the coating bath
or is at most 50°C above the temperature of the
25 coating bath.
14. The method as claimed in claim 12 or 13,
characterized in that the annealed steel product
is introduced into the coating bath in protected
30 form through a snout in which there is a neutral
or reductive inert-gas atmosphere.
15. The method as claimed in any one of claims 12 to
14, characterized in that annealing of the steel
35 product is carried out such that additionally
preoxidizing of the steel product, surface
nitriding of the steel product, controlled dew

point working, or combinations thereof are carried out.

- 5 16. The method as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 14, characterized in that annealing of the steel product is carried out such that the steel product is decarburized.
- 10 17. The method as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 16, characterized in that the surface of the hot dip-coated steel product is dressed.
- 15 18. The method as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 17, characterized in that the surface of the hot dip-coated steel products is anodized.
- 20 19. The method as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 18, wherein the steel product is a flat steel product.