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## Vat Dyes for Digital Printing

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In a world first, **ZIMMER AUSTRIA** has revealed a joint project with **DyStar** to develop a commercial platform for digital printing with vat dyes. It said the ultra-high-lightfast application, scheduled for launch in mid-2016, is aimed at exacting markets such as high-end upholstery, terry towels, workwear and military fabrics.

CEO Tony Naschberger said these were niche but high-value applications that fitted with Zimmer's market profile. In fact, vat dye printing represents around 3% of the broad textile-printing market, which is almost as much in volume terms as the total of all today's digitally printed fabrics.



To date, **ZIMMER AUSTRIA** and **DyStar** have run tests with four colors – yellow, blue, black and a dark red – but they expect to have eight colors by the time of the commercial launch. The inks are optimized for the **FUJIFILM** Starfire print heads, with internal ink recirculation, use on the latest generation of **COLARIS<sup>3</sup>** printers. They are expected to be marketed for use on other brands of printer with the same print heads. The process requires pretreatment with alkali, followed by printing, steaming (to convert the dye to its soluble form) and washing to remove the pretreatment and any unfixed dye. In the laboratory the fabric is being dried before being steamed off-line but **ZIMMER AUSTRIA** foresees a one-stage process of in-line pretreatment by **CHROMOJET**, followed by printing and steaming.

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