

Thuringia Focus.



The construction of the battery gigafactory of the Chinese global market leader CATL in the industrial area "Erfurter Kreuz" in Arnstadt/Ichtershausen is progressing steadily. Photo: LEG Thüringen

Thuringia remains drawing card despite COVID-19

Investors continue to pour into Thuringia, even in today's turbulent times. "Businesses from all over the world, including our state, continue to expand and relocate to Thuringia," said Economics Minister Wolfgang Tiefensee. "We're optimistic about the future seeing how such encouraging signals are being sent out even during the COVID-19 era!"

The State Development Corporation of Thuringia (LEG) has enjoyed healthy business this calendar year. It managed 35 expansion and relocation projects, involving around 2,000 new jobs and approx. 460 million euros in investment commitments. "We have attractive sites with fully developed free plots and excellent traffic links and can support investors with one-stop service, from establishing their first site in Thuringia to expanding their current operations," said Andreas Krey, Managing Director of LEG. One of the most recent projects officially kicked off in mid-November in Weimar, where Antennentechnik Bad Blankenburg, a member of the Desay SV corporate group in China, will be operating a development center for the car of the future. Also under con-

struction is the new Daimler Truckstore facility in the Erfurter Kreuz industrial area, while Papacks Sales GmbH, a packaging specialist, is building a gigafactory in Arnstadt/Ichtershausen. Other expansion projects are continuing full steam, such as the one from CATL, a Chinese battery manufacturer, and Marquardt, an auto parts supplier from the southeast German state of Baden-Württemberg. This summer also saw the launch of the Battery Innovation and Technology Center (BITC) project – a center of innovation and excellence that is directly related to the CATL investment and that will invest even more energy into the vibrant exchange of ideas between industry players and researchers in Thuringia.

All companies in Thuringia, including the newcomers, will benefit from additional digital services which have been developed by LEG. These include the digital company database "Local Sourcing", which enables companies to quickly find new suppliers, business partners or customers in the face of interrupted value chains. (hw)

Development center of China-based Desay SV Automotive Group is built in Weimar

Thuringia has become a bridgehead for Antennentechnik Bad Blankenburg (ATTB) and its parent, Desay SV Automotive, to expand into Europe. ATTB will soon be operating a development center in Weimar-Legefeld where 20 to 30 highly trained experts will design solutions for smart antenna technology, electronics and software for the car of the future. ATTB plans to outfit car models with the products it develops – from smart antennas to vehicle electronics and software from Desay, its Chinese parent. ATTB used to specialize in supplying auto parts for commercial and special purpose vehicles, but the new development center marks its entry into the carmaking market. It is currently constructing the facility in close cooperation with LEG. The former factory site is thus being expanded into ATTB's future state-of-the-art research and technology campus – a place where big-name manufacturers' pre-production vehicles, a.k.a. "development mules", will drive in and out. (hw)



The foundation stone for the new development center is laid. Photo: Antennentechnik Bad Blankenburg GmbH

Röchling Group invests 50 million euros in southern Thuringia

Plastics processor Röchling Medical has set its sights on expansion: The company is investing 50 million euros in a factory building and production equipment in Neuhaus am Rennweg in southern Thuringia, adding around 30 new jobs to its current payroll of 350. Röchling made this move to set up its Medical division for further growth. The specialist develops and manufactures high-quality plastics products for diagnostics, fluid management, pharmaceutical, surgery and interventional applications.

It is now adding a new four-story building on a site measuring 1,850 m² to augment its current 43,000 m² of production and logistics space and to house clean rooms for extrusion blow molding operations. The new facility will meet state-of-the-art standards for automation, sustainability and the Industry 4.0 vision. Commissioning is scheduled for early 2023. (hw)

British fiber optic company expands in Erfurt

Another boost for fast internet: The Emtelle Group is adding microduct production capacity in Erfurt and will soon start making fiber optic cables itself at multimodal business park GVZ Erfurt. Since taking over Moore GmbH in October 2017, the Emtelle Group has completely repositioned the company and generated tremendous growth. It now employs 82 employees here, with more to come.

Emtelle recently purchased 1.7 hectares of land next to its current factory at GVZ Erfurt. The new structure will house a VDE-compliant product test facility and customer training center, production and storage capacity and office and training rooms. According to Emtelle, it will soon be the only manufacturer in Germany to manufacture and combine both of the technological components needed for fast internet under one roof: microducts and fiber optic cables. (hw)

PAPACKS invests in production of eco-friendly packaging in Arnstadt

Papacks Sales GmbH has replaced 2.5 million kilograms of plastic – the weight of ten jumbo jets – by making sustainable packaging. The Cologne-based firm will soon be manufacturing in Arnstadt, in central Thuringia: It is creating 20 jobs and investing over ten million euros in the new factory.

The topping-out ceremony for “Giga-factory 1” was held in September; founder and Managing Director Tahsin Dag screwed the last screw into the building, which the company claims

will be the largest production facility for molded paper fiber parts in Europe. The Thuringian factory will be a model for future plants, announced the company. Papacks already has facilities in Appingedam (NL), Cologne, Munich, Prague and Frankfurt/Main. Most of its parts are made from eco-friendly molded pulp. Sustainability is the thread running through the company’s wide product range, from transport and industrial trays to packaging for food and medical or cosmetic products to refill caps, advent calendars and much, much more. (hw/msh)



Papacks' new location should develop as well as the trees planted at the topping-out ceremony. Photo: Juliane Keith

Seed specialist will open new production site in Thuringia

Strong commitment to Thuringia as a place to do business: Hahn & Karl Saatenhandel GmbH from Bad Soden recently built a production, logistics and administrative center in Eisenberg, in eastern Thuringia.

The company has invested several million euros and created at least 10 new jobs. The center will be used not only to wholesale agricultural seeds but also to house a new production line for wild bird feed. “We picked Thuringia for its strong region-

al agricultural industry, highly skilled and motivated workforce, Eisenberg’s central location in Europe and the close, positive support we received from the state, including LEG,” explained Dr. Axel Kaske, Managing Director of Hahn & Karl. In addition to current sales markets such as Thuringia, Saxony and Bavaria, the company hopes to tap markets in Italy, Austria and Northern and Eastern Europe and make greater use of central Germany for seed production. (hw/msh)

Innovative project extends battery life

If we want to put millions of electric vehicles on the road, their batteries will need to live longer. That is the mission of BattLife, the initial project of the newly founded Battery Innovation and Technology Center (BITC) at the Erfurter Kreuz industrial area. BITC will be optimizing the energy storage devices and their components and extending their service lives in a digitalized testing center.

BITC's industry partner is Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Ltd. (CATL), a Chinese battery manufacturer who leads the global market in the development of lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles and energy storage. CATL is building its first European factory at Erfurter Kreuz, where it plans to employ up to 2,000 people. BITC will work on BattLife and other projects

in cooperation with CATL, driving Thuringian's ongoing evolution into a center of excellence for battery technology. The Thuringian state government has started emphasizing forward-looking technology transfers; it provided more than 13.5 million euros in funding to build BITC. (hw)



Thuringian Economics Minister Wolfgang Tiefensee, Dr. Roland Weidl, Site Manager at BITC and Jason Chen, General Manager Operations Europe CATL at the symbolic handover of the subsidy cheque. Photo: Fraunhofer

UV light disinfects ambulances

Southern Thuringian company BINZ recently launched a groundbreaking innovation to combat deadly pathogens: An LED light system installed in the ambulance's headliner emits UV light that kills 99.99 percent of bacteria, viruses and other germs in just under ten minutes.

The Ilmenau-based ambulance equipment manufacturer claims that its technology disinfects vehicles more quickly and thoroughly than conventional methods. The light system is activated with

a push of a button while the ambulance waits for its next call. It requires no warming-up period, generates no harmful ozone and has proven to be better and more variable than fluorescent bulbs, according to the Fraunhofer Institute in Ilmenau, which collaborated with BINZ in developing the innovative technology. The partnership between the company and the research institution is an example of the kind of vibrant, fruitful technology transfers that happen in Thuringia. (hw)



Also Thuringia's Minister for Economic Affairs, Wolfgang Tiefensee, already informed himself about the innovative UVC disinfection of BINZ. Photo: BINZ

Researchers from Thuringia rejoice about 2020 German Future Award

For their project „EUV Lithography - New Light for the Digital Age“, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier awarded the prize for technology and innovation to a team of experts from ZEISS, Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology (SMT) Division, TRUMPF Lasersystems for Semiconductor Manufacturing, and the Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Optics and Precision Engineering IOF in Jena in November. EUV stands for „extremely ultraviolet“, i.e. light with an extremely short wavelength. In this and the next decade, this unrivalled key technology will enable the production of far more powerful, energy-efficient and cost-effective microchips than ever before.

„This is an absolutely future-oriented development and the prize is a clear signal for the outstanding scientific and technological achievements that are being made here in Thuringia,“ said Economics Minister Wolfgang Tiefensee, delightedly.

Jena company provides modern optics in orbit

When satellites circulate in space, they require mirrors with a wide variety of optical properties. SpaceOptix has exactly the products they need. The eastern Thuringian company, based in Jena, the birthplace of modern optics, worked closely with the nearby Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Optics and Precision Engineering to develop metal lenses that can be tailored to customers' preferences. They come with a broad array of optical features in sizes that range from a few millimeters to half a meter.

“SpaceOptix's success story is a prime example of a productive technology transfer that is rooted in tradition in Thuringia but still able to serve markets of the future,“ said LEG Department Manager Dr. Arnulf Wulff. Close cooperation between industry and academia is one of the locational advantages that LEG always cites when talking to investors. (hw)

Hiking trails: Rennsteig tops the ranking

One of Thuringia's biggest draws for skilled workers is the beauty of its countryside. The Thuringian Forest with the Rennsteig ridgeway trail is extremely popular with nature lovers. A recent ranking showed that the Rennsteig is Germany's best-loved hiking trail.

The German Hiking Association (DWV) analyzed Google searches of hiking trails – and the ridgetop trail in southern Thuringia left the other German hiking trails far behind. Its top position is no surprise: The Rennsteig is the most frequented long-distance hiking trail in Germany, attracting some 100,000 hikers a year. It starts near the Wartburg, the castle near Eisenach where Martin Luther translated the Bible. It also passes through the winter sports mecca of Oberhof, the future site of the 2023 Biathlon and Luge World Championships. The tourism infrastructure is being expanded here, including an extraordinary hotel, the “Familux Resort The Grand

Green”, being built by the Austria-based Mayer Family Hotels Group. Rennsteig fans can check in starting in 2021. (hw/gro)



Right on trend: Hiking in Thuringia is becoming increasingly popular. Photo: TTG

Leuchtenburg: Experience history up-close and personal

In Thuringia, learning about history can be a picturesque experience. It has the highest density of castles and palaces in Germany. That includes Leuchtenburg Castle in eastern Thuringia, which is receiving an inclined elevator and becoming Germany's first accessible hill castle.

Known as the “Queen of the Saale Valley”, Leuchtenburg Castle majestically and gracefully overlooks the valleys to the south of Jena. Since 2014, it has housed “Thuringian Porcelain Worlds”, a multi-award-winning exhibition. In October,

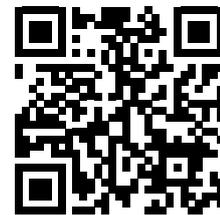
Thuringian Economics Minister Wolfgang Tiefensee, accompanied by LEG Managing Director Sabine Wosche, officially presented a grant notice for around six million euros in funding for the elevator to Sven-Erik Hitzer, Chairman of the Leuchtenburg Castle Foundation, and Kristina Vogel, a two-time Olympic winner and the project's patron. The new elevator, which climbs 61 meters of elevation, will make the castle fully accessible. And that will bring history to life for even more people regardless of disability. (hw)



The „Queen of the Saale Valley“ will receive an elevator and thus become barrier-free accessible. Photo: Fotolia

Digital formats

Since it is currently hard to meet in person, LEG has created **Log in Thuringia**, a digital platform for virtual workshops, lectures and seminars that will take you and your company to the next level in Thuringia. The content ranges from presentations on Thuringia as an excellent location for the battery industry and panel discussions on life sciences and robotics to information on export promotion, recruiting skilled workers, etc.



The German **Tourism Real Estate Summit**, originally scheduled to be held at the Spa & GolfResort in Blankenhain, Thuringia, was also conducted digitally. The exciting program, packed with outstanding speakers, and the interactive elements such as video communication, surveys, chat rooms and 1-on-1 networking discussions kept boredom at bay and attracted more than 100 attendees. Thuringia clearly raised its profile as a vacation destination.

Publisher:

State Development Corporation of Thuringia (LEG Thüringen)

Editorial Staff: Dr. Holger Wiemers (V.i.S.d.P), Olivia Großmann, Christine Maas, Marie Sofie Holub

Copy Deadline: 8.12.2020

Layout: Luise Marholdt

Printed by: Mehgro

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The printing paper used for this brochure comes from sustainable forestry.