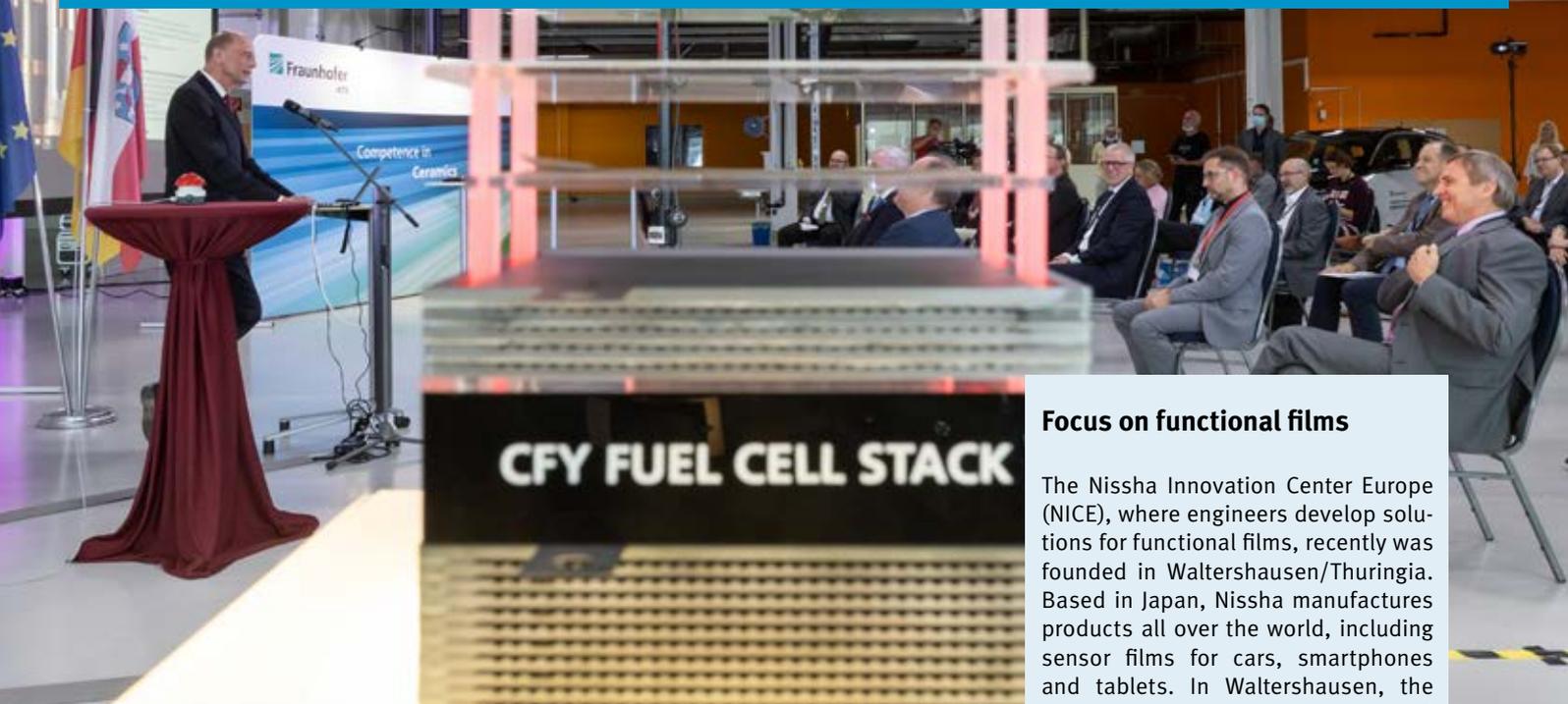


# Thuringia Focus.



On the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Battery Innovation and Technology Center in Arnstadt Minister Tiefensee underlines the development of Thuringia into a leading battery hub. Photo: Fraunhofer IKTS

## Focus on functional films

The Nissha Innovation Center Europe (NICE), where engineers develop solutions for functional films, recently was founded in Waltershausen/Thuringia. Based in Japan, Nissha manufactures products all over the world, including sensor films for cars, smartphones and tablets. In Waltershausen, the Japanese corporation is represented by Schuster Kunststofftechnik GmbH and Back Stickers GmbH, which produce decorative in-mold labeling (IML) for vehicle interiors. This field is also where NICE conducts most of its research. NICE cooperates with 400 engineers at the main R&D office in Kyoto and brings in car makers and auto parts suppliers. Nissha picked Thuringia due to its dense network of innovative companies and institutions. NICE has been tasked with developing client-centric solutions such as functional films that heat proximity sensors and headlights in the winter or decorative surface films and touch sensors to replace conventional buttons in vehicle interiors. (hw)

## Thuringia expands battery research

**Thuringia is evolving into one of Europe's leading battery hubs: The Battery Innovation and Technology Center (BITC) opened for business to the south of Erfurt on July 10, 2020. The institution develops high-tech solutions for battery cell production and quality assurance using ceramic materials, state-of-the-art sensor technology and non-destructive testing methods. BITC plans to partner with CATL, a Chinese battery cell manufacturer who is investing EUR 1.8 billion to build its first European factory nearby.**

BITC is a branch office of the Fraunhofer Institute for Ceramic Technologies and Systems (IKTS). That links it to one of Germany's largest battery research institutions and gives it access to close industry ties. BITC will develop solutions for the digitally supported and connected production and quality assurance of battery cells and modules in order to drive the transformation of the automotive and energy industries.

"This production research at the Erfurter Kreuz business park plays a pivotal role in adding new industrial capacity in Thuringia and eastern Germany more generally," says Wolfgang Tiefensee, the Economics Minister of Thuringia. He describes the research center as a key element of the strategy to transform Thuringia into a leading battery hub in the years ahead. The state has provided EUR 13.5 million in funding to support BITC's construction.

The State Development Corporation of Thuringia (LEG) is providing a building complex containing around 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> of office and equipment space at Erfurter Kreuz. "The establishment of BITC is a vital step in our forward-looking approach of integrating production and research at the site," explains Andreas Krey, LEG Chairman. "This strategic focus, along with the state government's commitment to it, was one of the reasons why CATL decided to invest here." (hw)



The founder team of the NICE: Susanne Achtzehn, Volker Schuster, Tino Theer. Photo: Nissha

### Chinese investor CATL donates masks and gloves

Arnstadt – Chinese battery manufacturer CATL, who plans to build a battery factory with up to 2,000 employees at the Erfurter Kreuz business park, has demonstrated its solidarity with Thuringia in these difficult times: CATL has given away 100,000 surgery masks and 200,000 disposable gloves, which are extremely valuable to local providers of inpatient and outpatient care. “We started laying the foundations for our future business in Arnstadt and Ichtshausen last year, and in all that time, we have enjoyed tremendous support and feel extremely welcome here,” says Matthias Zentgraf, President of CATL Europe. “We have felt attached to the region and its people from the start and so are thrilled to be able to donate items that can help combat the pandemic in Thuringia!”

“CATL’s generous donation sends out a strong signal of solidarity,” says LEG Chairman Andreas Krey. “Our company has helped CATL quickly and smoothly arrange for the materials to be transported. We are delighted to continue working closely with CATL on this important project and deepen our relationship with them!” The items were manufactured in Ningde, China and arrived in Weimar in the early days of the pandemic. They were delivered to the Thuringian Outpatient Care Foundation (SAVTH), who distributed the protective equipment to doctor’s offices, on-call medical providers, COVID-19 testing centers and physicians offering a separate window of office hours for potential COVID-19 patients throughout Thuringia. (maa)



The donation is ready for transport from Ningde to Thuringia. Photo: CATL

## Industrial bakery Panem Backstube GmbH expands in northern Thuringia

**Panem is growing rapidly. The industrial bakery in northern Thuringia is putting up a second factory building at its Bleicherode location and doubling its production capacity. Starting in 2021, 40,000 rolls, 20,000 pretzel products and 15,000 baguettes will leave the new building each day. Panem set up business at this location in the mid-2010s with support from the State Development Corporation of Thuringia (LEG).**

The company is investing around EUR 50 million in the new facility: EUR 15 million for the building itself and EUR 35 million for the production equipment. It plans to

increase its headcount from 230 permanent employees to around 350. One key element of the new production line will be a state-of-the-art masonry oven worth three million euros. “Each square meter can hold around half a ton of dough. And each production line processes around four tons per hour. Eventually, we plan to have four lines,” explains Panem CEO Markus Schirmer. “We are confident that our high product quality will enable us to expand our market share. Between the good transport links, close proximity to our customers and available space, northern Thuringia is the ideal location to continue driving our expansion!” (hw)



Panem builds its second factory building in Bleicherode. Photo: Panem Backstube GmbH/Doreen Thon

## Multimillion-euro site investment

**Family-run logistics firm Rhenus is considerably expanding its facility at the Kindel industrial zone near Eisenach. The eight-figure investment is being made possible by a new customer’s long-term contract.**

Rhenus has expanded this location multiple times since its establishment in 2012. In the latest expansion, back in 2018, it built two new buildings that added 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> of operating space. An automated storage and picking system is now being installed in one of these buildings as a pilot project. The system will greatly accelerate picking processes and make work easier for employees by reducing the amount of walking they have to do.

The Otto Group, for whom Rhenus already provides logistics services, has hired the firm to perform all the services for its Lascana fashion brand. Rhenus will not only be handling logistics, but will be fully preparing the merchandise, too, e.g. ironing it, sewing on buttons and attaching labels. 80 new jobs will be created at the site. “As in previous years, we are mainly recruiting regional workers – people who feel at home here and know their way around,” explains plant manager Jennifer Thomas. That approach has proven its value, noted Thomas, pointing to the site’s low employee turnover. Rhenus employs 33,000 people worldwide at over 750 locations, including 4 in Thuringia. (maa)

# Powerful performance: Thuringian companies reinvent themselves

**In record time, Thuringian companies, research institutes and universities have tackled the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic head-on and harnessed their ingenuity, knowledge and versatility to blaze new trails out of the crisis.**

Many Thuringian companies have overhauled their production operations to produce urgently needed personal protective equipment (PPE), laboratory components, disinfectant, rapid tests or similar items in order to help Thuringia and Germany through the pandemic. For example, Engineering Technologie Marketing GmbH (etm), an auto parts supplier from Schönbrunn, summarily switched its production lines over to face masks once orders from the automotive industry faltered. A new

consortium of five Thuringian companies, established during the COVID-19 crisis, produces medical and consumer-grade face masks to ward off the virus. Even long-standing spirits maker Aromatique quickly converted part of its factory and started producing disinfectant alongside its world-famous liqueur.

An official face mask certification center was also created at the Textile Research Institute Thuringia-Vogtland (TITV) in Greiz. Since there are only two other centers of this kind in Germany, it provided much-needed relief for a critical bottleneck. All proof positive that Thuringian companies and researchers were and are innovative – even in these unusual times! (gro)

## MetraLabs is fighting the microbes

**Indoor spaces have become dangerous places during the Corona outbreak. Countless bacteria and viruses float through the air and gather up on the surface areas in these spaces. An invention coming from the Southern Thuringia town, Ilmenau provides the remedy: A robot from the company of MetraLabs eliminates the pathogens quite successfully.**

The “Sterybot” works with UV-C light, which is an extraordinarily high-energy radiation. MetraLabs specifies that the robot can eliminate up to 99.99 percent of the bacteria and viruses which are in

a room. The device moves on its own and disinfects not only the air in the room but also floors, walls, table tops, chairs, door handles and light switches. It will be mainly used in clinics, but also in public spaces such as airports, shops and hotels. “Sterybot” is one of nine projects out of 146 applications, which are funded by the EU to fight against Corona. Metralabs has been active in Thuringia for the last 15 years and it benefits from the innovative business and research landscape surrounding the Ilmenau University of Technology. (hw)



The robot “Sterybot” is also used in restaurants. Photo: MetraLabs, photographer Michael Reichel

### Senova develops rapid test for coronavirus

Senova, a mid-market company from Weimar, has been producing a rapid test for coronavirus antibodies since April. The test identifies COVID-19 survivors within ten minutes. Senova now plans to develop an electronic lateral flow test in cooperation with ams, an Austrian sensor specialist who has developed an optical sensor module for spectral analysis. The test result does not need to be interpreted by the user. ams has a presence in Thuringia through its subsidiary, ams Sensors Germany GmbH. Preparations are underway to mass-produce the test. Results can be transferred over Bluetooth and read out for national and international studies if the patient consents. (maa)

### Ilmenau University of Technology tops the rankings again

Thuringian universities do more than just rank high on the lists published by companies and business magazines; TU Ilmenau also gets excellent marks from the students themselves. StudyCheck, a university rating portal, has named TU Ilmenau a “TOP UNIVERSITY 2020” based on a total of 40,000 ratings. The president at the time, Prof. Peter Scharff, was delighted by the award and viewed it as a testament to the university’s high educational quality. 91 percent of students and graduates would recommend TU Ilmenau to their friends and family and give the school an average of 4 out of 5 stars. TU Ilmenau scored particularly high on quality, support services for students, job prospects for graduates, modern equipment and attractive campus. (maa)



TU Ilmenau regularly scores well at rankings. Photo: TU Ilmenau

# Welcome to the jungle

**A prize-winning Thuringian app throws light into the botanic darkness: Flora Incognita instantly names mysterious plants found in your garden or on the side of the road.**

This wizardry is powered by tight integration between the smartphone, artificial intelligence, a database with millions of plant images and user participation: The interactive app automatically recognizes plants from pictures that smartphone users have taken. It then pulls up the name of the previously unknown plant within seconds, along with a wealth of interesting facts about it.

The app learns from each successful use, improving its accuracy over time. At the same time, recognized species and locations are logged to create a valuable dataset for answering questions about biodiversity and species conservation. The free app is already being used by over a million people, from enthusiastic hobbyists to biology professors. The interdisciplinary project team behind the app, consisting of people from the Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry in

Jena and Ilmenau University of Technology, received the Thuringian Research Award for their idea this year.

A recent study found that nearly 54 million people in Germany – and counting – use a smartphone daily. At the same time, fewer and fewer people can identify or name the plants growing in their garden, in the forest or on the side of the road. This app does much to combat that trend. It effortlessly educates people and is also tremendous fun, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people are exploring the great outdoors. (gro) [www.floraincognita.com](http://www.floraincognita.com)



The app for the botanical overview.  
Photo: [www.floraincognita.com](http://www.floraincognita.com)

## High-end vacation resort promises lakeside fun

**Almost ready for guests: The finishing touches are underway on the new high-end vacation resort at the Zeulenroda Sea.**

The 21 houses, which should be finished right on schedule this fall, offer visitors a wonderful place to rest and relax. Since the reservoir gave up its drinking water

status in 2012, the Zeulenroda Sea has become a real insider's tip. LEG's urban and regional developers, working closely with local representatives, have developed an expansive tourism plan and executed it in several stages. The reservoir is lined by a revived natural adventure pool, well-built hiking paths, including several that are barrier-free, an information center, a water sports school, the Starfish Panorama Stage and campgrounds for (active) lounging and relaxation.

Work is wrapping up on Manoah.Haus, a new high-end vacation resort. It represents the latest big investment in the regional tourism industry. A total of 21 barrier-free wooden houses are being built right by the lake. These family-friendly, barrier-free vacation homes are scheduled to open their doors in October 2020. They are special in that they are mostly made of wood and other high-quality natural materials that meet exacting environmental standards and have been manufactured or installed by local businesses. (gro)



Photo: MANOAH Ferienhäuser, Architekturbüro Müller & Lehmann GmbH

### Digitale formate

Due to the continuing restrictions on traveling and events, LEG Thüringen's Invest Team is planning some interesting digital offers for the fall.

For example, an online seminar series will be held with the current main topics of labor availability, funding opportunities, value chains and e-mobility.

Online panel discussions on various topics such as robotics in Thuringia are also on the agenda.

Furthermore, you will find interesting information about investing in Thuringia in the social media. Please visit the LinkedIn focus page "Invest in Thuringia".



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