



PRESS-INFORMATION

Cluster for medical and plastics technology: “Halberstadt – wholly attractive to investors”

Like waymarkers, the towers of the Gothic cathedral guide people to Halberstadt, known as the “Gateway to the Harz mountains”. As you drive along highway 81 towards this city in Saxony-Anhalt, you will see the imposing backdrop of the uplands and the Brocken Mountain. You’ll scarcely notice the industrial park along the roadside. Unless you’re especially interested in this business center! “Nowadays, we are seen as a significant cluster for medical technology. But that’s not all – a broad mix of industries makes us less susceptible to recession,” emphasizes Daniel Szarata, Mayor of Halberstadt.

Fluttering from the balcony of the City Hall, a banner plays on Halberstadt’s name (literally, “Half City”) with the words “Half a city – wholly lively.” “The name of our city contains the word ‘half’. We want to make that up to a ‘whole’,” says Daniel Szarata, explaining that this “wholly” is combined with various adjectives to convey messages of development and diversity. Szarata has been Mayor of this 40,000-strong city since 2021, known throughout the land for its cathedral treasury, Gleimhaus literary museum, and the Halberstädter Würstchen local sausage. The newly christened city branding complete with new logo aims to promote the perception of the city as a dynamic business center – based on many years of successful policies encouraging companies to locate here.

The top business developer since 1997 is Thomas Rimpler. Over the last 26 years, he has built up an expansive network. Both resident companies and those looking to relocate should be more than satisfied – delighted, even – with business promotion in Halberstadt, he claims. Thomas Rimpler and his team see themselves as service providers and citizens’ advice centers for businesses. In 2003, the Entrepreneurs’ Center emerged from this business promotion as a central port of call, combining business, town planning, and real estate. Key topics focused on by the Entrepreneurs’ Center include funding advice, portfolio development, start-up advice, acquisition, and company founding and relocation.

A magnetic attraction

Thomas Rimpler also highlights the value of recommendations by the companies themselves. This happens when companies are happy with their location and recommend it to others. Or if businesses here are so attractive that they exert a magnetic pull on others. And this is how the medtech cluster has evolved.

At the heart of this is Primed Halberstadt Medizintechnik GmbH. Under its roof, widely respected expertise in high-quality plastic medical products has been growing for over 75 years. Here, it manages the entire production process, from development to production and from sterilization to marketing authorization. In Halberstadt, HA2 Medizintechnik GmbH, a member of the Primed corporate group, boasts one of Europe’s most modern gas sterilization plants. According to Thomas Rimpler, Primed has been a beacon attracting companies to Halberstadt from around Cologne and

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Frankfurt/Main, for example. Dahlhausen Medizintechnik GmbH is another example. Here in Halberstadt, the company can assemble its customized sets for hospitals and pharmacies, while keeping distances short.

Currently, the plastics and medical technology cluster is home to over 20 companies. It provides more than 700 jobs, covers nearly 194,000 square feet in total, and manufactures products “Made in Halberstadt” – from electrodes to place on the skin to disposable systems.

And these days, the Mayor explains, Halberstadt is regarded as a significant location in the future-oriented medtech market. However, Daniel Szarata and his deputy Thomas Rimpler see a mix of industries as the basis for a resilient economy. This mixture includes the food industry, mechanical engineering, and metal and wood processing.

The city’s central location in the triangle formed by Magdeburg, Halle and Braunschweig ensures short transport distances to larger industrial centers via the B81, B79 and A36 highways and by railroad. Two hundred and five companies have set themselves up in the commercial and industrial park. Over 3,000 jobs have been created.

As far as the allocation of land is concerned, the Halberstadt business developers are proving to be visionaries: “We were willing to take a risk and kept a strategic reserve available for many years, to enable a large company to set up here,” says Thomas Rimpler. And in 2021, along came major investor Daimler Truck, which purchased space covering over 247 acres in 2022.

Setting up a company is a top level concern

The first contact with Daimler Truck coincided with Daniel Szarata taking office. With a grin, the Mayor explains that since then, he has always had his rubber boots to hand in the car, then he gives us a bit of an insight into what goes on behind the scenes: first, the investor walks over the land, to get a feel for the terrain. Then he finds out what skilled workers live locally, and what universities and other educational establishments there are, from which he could recruit skilled workers. Then he also takes an interest in the housing situation, childcare, school, culture, and nature ...

In all these things, Halberstadt was impressive. And not least because setting up a company is a top level concern. “The stakes are very high,” says Szarata.

This September, construction started on the 500-million-euro Daimler Truck Logistics Center with its state-of-the-art warehousing and materials handling facilities. Both officials say that this was achieved in record time. According to Rimpler, this was possible because decisions on building permissions were taken quickly, and because the entrepreneur-friendly administration has a flexible attitude to investors’ needs. The Mayor and his deputy also emphasize the reliability of the city council and the trusting relationship it fosters. For ultimately, councilors have to approve the decisions while initially not knowing exactly who they’re dealing with. “Investors, especially major



ones, set great store on promises being kept, regarding secrecy, for example,” Rimpler points out.

From 2025, the Daimler Truck Logistics Center in Halberstadt will deliver roughly 300,000 products, from bolts to truck cabs, to approximately 3,000 car dealers in over 170 countries.

These days, space for further relocations to Halberstadt is becoming scarce: for as the saying goes “Halberstadt – Wholly attractive to investors!” The development of another industrial park is under consideration, on the premise that well-paid jobs will be created for skilled workers. “We mustn’t lose the generation that is currently at college or in an apprenticeship,” declares Mayor Szarata. “Halberstadt – Wholly attractive to young skilled workers” – the business developers are doing all they can to make this come true.

Author: Kathrain Graubaum

For more information:

- Halberstadt has five business parks and one industrial park, with fully fledged and completed infrastructure.
- Total surface area over 740 acres.
- The Ost (East) industrial park covers 500 acres, has fiber optics and direct links to the B79 and B81 highways. It’s only a few minutes’ drive to the A38 highway, and just over a mile to the Halberstadt railroad hub.
- Halberstadt boasts newly completed residential areas, affordable property to rent or buy, sufficient daycare centers for children, and a good educational infrastructure.
- The plastics and medical technology cluster includes the following companies: 1+Medizinprodukte GmbH, 1+Steri Medizinprodukte GmbH, adamus group GmbH, Cardea GmbH & C.KG, Cardinal Health Germany Manufacturing GmbH, Dahlhausen Medizintechnik GmbH, Elischa Medical GmbH, HA2 Medizintechnik GmbH, hydroWEB GmbH, ISKIA GmbH & Co.KG, Kamedtech Medizintechnik GmbH, Nanostone Water GmbH, Novoplast Schlauchtechnik GmbH, Oxy Care GmbH, Panadur GmbH, Primed Halberstadt Medizintechnik GmbH, RKW HydroSpun GmbH, Teguma GmbH

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PRESS-INFORMATION

Ambitious protein research made in Halle

NH DyeAGNOSTICS GmbH (NHD) in Halle (Saale) develops, produces, and sells new products for protein detection processes. Its everyday business also includes optimizing diagnostic procedures, and also the development of innovative products and collaboration in networks. By taking over a specialist firm in Lower Saxony, this successful biotech company has now charted a course to the future here in Saxony-Anhalt.

Dr. Jan Heise has also been on the road a great deal in the past few years. Born in Flensburg, he has turned a spin-off from the Leibniz Institute of Plant Biochemistry (IPB) in Halle into an important company, and shuttles almost incessantly between numerous projects, ambitions, cities, and sites. The keen oarsman, who won a gold medal in the quadruple sculls in the 2011 World Rowing Championships, has always been more than “just” the boss of NHD. He holds seminars, keeps an eye on the markets, and collaborates with universities and businesses. And from one of these connections, an even closer relationship has arisen. Intas Science Imaging Instruments GmbH in Göttingen became part of NH DyeAGNOSTICS in September. The company is an expert in everyday lab imaging processes using scanner- and camera-based imaging systems. The boss’s travel itinerary is more extensive than ever these days, as he now has two companies to manage: the team of six at the Weinberg Campus Technology Park site is doubling, the portfolio is growing. “To put it simply, we now have the right systems for analysis in research and in medical routine diagnosis,” declares Dr. Jan Heise. “This way, we can fine-tune the products to one another better and also try out new things.”

Passion projects revolve around competitive sport

His company has been conquering niche markets for years and serves a large client base throughout Germany. What started as a new analytical procedure for rendering proteins visible at molecular level is now growing bit by bit. For customers from academia, industry, and medicine, NHD is synonymous with fast, reliable and automated detection processes. The characterization of special proteins in complex protein mixtures is one of the medium-sized company’s specialist subjects. Another is the identification of new protein biomarkers in order to determine diseases.

In this field, the Halle-based firm occasionally also “treats itself” to projects that may only be of interest in the long term and, last but not least, are to do with its boss’s passion for sport. For example, in recent months the NHD team has been investigating biomarkers that show when competitive athletes are sufficiently recovered after a major effort. The problem is this: “There isn’t just one single biomarker,” says Dr. Heise. “Here, many substances and individual values have a part to play.” Now, with the first results, the NHD has suggested that there are certain patterns. In order to validate these in the near future, partners such as Halle University Hospital are also on board.

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Analytical imaging and immunochemical detection

The “richtigrudern.de” (row right) project is an example of the company’s diversity and compulsion to apply new findings. And here too, their sporty CEO isn’t far away. In this recently completed project, an interactive movement monitoring device was created, which provides users with feedback on their technique in real-time, as if they had a trainer. And a device for analytical imaging that recently captured the market is another example of the biotech firm’s success in moving forward with its projects. “We have raised routine medical diagnosis for a certain type of blood cancer – multiple myeloma – to a whole new level of quality,” claims Dr. Jan Heise. Another reason for the success of this EU-sponsored project is that it came into being with the support of no fewer than five Medical Care Centers, close to the point of need. The specialists from Saxony-Anhalt have a lot of balls in the air. In life sciences, a significant project will soon be entering the home straight. If everything goes to plan, NHD could reduce the standard analytical procedure for the immunochemical detection of proteins from 20 steps to just four by the end of next year, Dr. Heise tells us. “We are developing a consumable that can dramatically facilitate this work. Analysis will then get faster and deliver more valid results.”

Cluster initiative aims to bring skilled workers to Saxony-Anhalt

As well as his job, the company boss also acts as a business coach. He advises and supervises scientists, is a member of networks, and supports start-ups. For two years, he has been one of the CEO duo at the Research Center for Medical Technology and Biotechnology, a business-oriented facility in Thuringia. His wife, Dr. Jana Heise, is no less active. A biochemist and manager of NHD’s research and development department, she is also on the board of the new life science cluster initiative in Saxony-Anhalt. This young network of start-ups, small and medium-sized businesses and corporations wants to bring in and retain skilled workers in future, and also represent the industry’s interests.

“There’s an incredible momentum to our work,” says the CEO of NHD. “Overlaps between us and different sectors help us to think ahead.” There’s certainly one thing they can be sure of in future: “We will continue to remain in Saxony-Anhalt, ideally in Halle.” And no wonder: in recent years, the city in Saale has gained an international reputation as a center for protein research. “We feel at home on the Weinberg-Campus, a lively community is growing here, where we can all ask each other for advice,” says Dr. Heise in praise of the location, adding: “For us, the appreciation that we generally experience here in Saxony-Anhalt is one of the important factors in favor of this site.”

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PRESS-INFORMATION

Seleon GmbH in Dessau: development partner for air, gas and fluid systems

25 years ago, a start-up focusing on respiratory equipment set itself up in Dessau. Now, seleon GmbH is an international medtech service provider with a unique selling point: it's a one-stop shop combining development, assistance with marketing authorization, and production.

The address of this innovative medtech company is in Brauereistraße 13 in Dessau-Roßlau. Here, you unexpectedly find yourself in a place of farewells and new beginnings. Tall production halls are a reminder of the time when this was still an important site for cement plant manufacture. These days, the gates and façades are resplendent with many company signs. Founders often feel inspired by historic sites to bring in new capital. A quarter of a century ago, a start-up rented premises here for developing and producing medical devices. Its respiratory devices for treating sleep apnea were a complete success. "The start-up then took the usual steps of a business striving to grow," says Frank-Martin Rammelt, current CEO of seleon GmbH. "In order to expand, we looked for investors and found venture capital investment firm Zukunftsfonds Heilbronn. Since then, seleon has been based in Heilbronn. But important chapters in the company's success story are still being written at Brauereistraße 13 in Dessau today.

Expertise in fluid technology

seleon GmbH has been building up expert technical knowledge in fluid engineering since the very beginning. The medtech firm boasts expertise in the development of systems that take over the management of air, gas or fluid. As an example, Frank-Martin Rammelt mentions a device that mixes liquid drink and special food for patients who can no longer nourish themselves adequately with normal food. "We were contracted by a large healthcare corporation to develop this device, assist with marketing authorization, and produce it in Dessau," he explains, showcasing the company's USP: "We offer our customers a one-stop shop for development, marketing authorization, and production." Ultimately, the device will bear the contractor's name. "Our clients in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland develop their medtech innovations with us and have these produced in Dessau as needed. The reasons development is outsourced primarily include lack of expertise, capacity bottlenecks, and the desire to bring a system onto the market quickly," he explains.

Because requirements have often become more stringent, seleon pools its advisory services in its "Consulting" division and, as well as authorization procedures and clinical assessment, also offers advice on product life cycle, quality, management, and software and digitalization issues. Frank-Martin Rammelt also talks about the EU's new Medical Device Regulation (MDR). This imposes stricter standards regarding the content of technical documentation and clinical assessment, in order to guarantee the safety of medical products throughout their life cycle. As you can imagine, this takes up a great deal of time – time that no company has, if it wants to quickly get developments onto a fiercely competitive market. For while companies' engineers are writing documents, they won't simultaneously be forging

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ahead with innovative developments. Says Rammelt: “seleon GmbH reacted to this issue early on and recruited staff to expand its expertise to cover MDR-focused consulting.”

Heading towards digitalization

Nowadays, it's clear that companies once again have more time for innovations and further developments, and engineers have room in their heads for new ideas, explains Benjamin Klein, Sales Manager of Development and Production, who is therefore familiar with clients and their current and future needs. First of all, he produces a requirements analysis. Next, he demonstrates seleon's expertise in the respiratory and cardiology fields with precisely suitable products, convincingly getting them on board. “From start-ups to small and medium-sized companies to well-known corporations, our customers are very satisfied with us as a reliable development partner,” says Klein. He then mentions a device in the new generation of CT contrast injectors, which is used in computed tomography scans when a contrast agent needs to be injected over a longer period. Or if one of the contrast agents, which have a viscosity like honey, must be injected at high pressure. Together with a start-up in Switzerland, seleon is currently developing a dialysis system with a new blood purification technique.

In general, the medtech company always has to keep its ears to the ground in order to hear in good time what future fields are opening up in medical technology. seleon exhibits at trade shows, holds presentations, launches special interest campaigns, and is a member of associations. In addition, the company partners research projects, for example at the medtech Research Campus STIMULATE in the Magdeburg Port of Science. “There is a great deal of potential for innovation in medtech. Coming into contact with these topics always stimulates our own quest for knowledge. We employ working students, and degree students write their bachelor's or master's thesis with us,” Benjamin Klein emphasizes.

At the moment, seleon is increasingly focusing its efforts on digitalization and wishes to broaden its appeal in software and app development. On this topic, Rammelt draws our attention to an in-house study by the company, which showed that above all, customers want apps for health management at home, such as digital control of insulin pumps, for instance. The “Engineering Service” is going to be expanded at the Dessau site, too. The next chapter in the firm's history is being written in the digital age.

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PRESS-INFORMATION

Start-ups in Saxony-Anhalt: a small but innovative medtech scene

Here, knowledge is the main business these days. The old industrial port near Magdeburg's inner city has changed dramatically over the decades. Once, the large quay welcomed ships bringing or fetching merchandise and raw materials to and from the city along the River Elbe. Today, this area has become a modern site for research and science, the "Center of Excellence Saxony-Anhalt". And that's why, for some years, Magdeburg's residents have been calling this innovative place simply – and fittingly – the Port of Science.

Right here is also where we find the germ of a still young branch of science in Saxony-Anhalt: medical technology, or medtech for short. This is rooted, above all, in the Otto von Guericke University – just a few paces from the port – with its many medical, engineering, and IT students. The Research Campus [STIMULATE](#) is also considered a driving force in this sector. STIMULATE was founded 11 years ago as a public-private partnership between the university and Siemens Healthineers in this city on the Elbe. The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research is supporting the project with a 15-year grant.

These benefits numerous scientists in the field of medical technology. "STIMULATE helps companies in this branch to set up in the region, but it also helps research groups on their way to founding new businesses," says Dr. Philipp Berg, member of the board at the Research Campus. In his opinion, the medtech start-up scene in Magdeburg is on course for growth, even if newly established companies are not as prevalent here as they are in Hamburg or Berlin, for example, or in the medtech regions in and around Erlangen or Tuttlingen. "But Magdeburg is growing in importance."

A strong research landscape in Saxony Anhalt

The key benefit of this area is that research has very strong foundations in Magdeburg. However, in the medtech sector it's a long way from research to a ready-to-use product. "It's not unusual for ten years to pass between the first prototype and the finished product," says Dr. Berg. And that's precisely why the new [transPORT](#) project is going to create space for these developments. transPORT is another step along the road to a strong medtech cluster in Saxony-Anhalt.

The project also has its home in the Port of Science and is to become a kind of ecosystem that brings science, business, living, and well-being together in one place. "In a region where structures are still weak, we want to give young people prospects here, in this place," explains Dr. Berg. And we want to attract new businesses and support spin-offs – to give the start-up scene a boost. transPORT is even more open to business than STIMULATE and is an alternative concept to a cold industrial park on a greenfield site. This project also receives government funding.

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Neoscan – a beacon for start-ups

One start-up that has successfully established itself at the Magdeburg Port of Science is [Neoscan Solutions GmbH](#). It purposely chose this location because STIMULATE provided intensive support in the search for investors and works with it closely due to its expertise in the field of MRI. Neoscan is something of a beacon for start-ups in Saxony-Anhalt's medtech sector. The company was founded in 2017, currently has a workforce of 30, and specializes in the construction of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) systems.

The company is a certified medtech manufacturer and uses innovative technology to build magnets for research and MRI systems for babies and toddlers. In addition, Neoscan recently received a highly respectable order: the company is building magnets for the world's most powerful MRI system – a 14T MRI magnet, which is to be operated by a research consortium in the Netherlands. And it was possible to write this success story in Magdeburg because Neoscan founder Dr. Stefan Röhl found excellent conditions already in place. Investors, the university, Research Campus STIMULATE, and the state of Saxony-Anhalt had ensured a good environment for the necessary capital and networks, and for encouraging young, highly motivated students and employees to settle here.

Numerous spin-offs and newcomers

Spin-offs from research projects have already set themselves up in the Port of Science, too. These include [RAYDIAX GmbH](#), which specializes in building interventional computed tomography (CT) systems. CT imaging scanners are used for diagnosis, but RAYDIAX develops and builds special devices for treatment, which enable minimally invasive surgery to be performed. This is a very important area that requires a completely novel generation of scanners.

Another spin-off is [mediMESH GmbH](#). This company operates an interface platform between industry and clinics. It enables companies to gain an insight into processes in operating theaters. For example, how much room is there in the theater? What equipment is there? Where can I connect other devices? What is the timing of workflows like? Partners from industry can find out information like this via mediMESH GmbH's platform.

The Managing Director of [SecureAir GmbH](#), Arno Lauhöfer, also praises the good conditions and networks for science in Saxony-Anhalt. This start-up, which recently won the Bestform Award for creative ideas, has established itself at the Fraunhofer Institute in Magdeburg. "We have developed the world's first electronic respiratory mask, which kills viruses, bacteria, and germs and therefore provides the user with comprehensive protection from environmental influences. With this mask, we could even prevent another pandemic outbreak," says Lauhöfer. The aim is to have the SECURER ready for production soon and to market it globally. And to do this, the firm is looking for a partner, for example for sales.



Institutional and private involvement possible

The state of Saxony-Anhalt also offers to partner newly established businesses. [ibg Beteiligungsgesellschaft Sachsen-Anhalt mbH](#) supports innovative enterprises in their start-up endeavors, either as a silent or a general partner, with up to ten million euros per company. In the medtech sector, ibg has invested in [Emperra GmbH](#), for example, supporting the development of a product and service system for collecting, monitoring, and transferring the vital diagnostic and treatment data of diabetes patients.

In addition, [Health + IT Campus \(HIT\)](#) has also been an accelerator for start-ups since 2020. “The Campus accelerates start-ups in health and IT,” says Campus Manager Julia Grünthal. Founders receive support in the form of commercial space and offices near the center of Magdeburg. “As well as premises, we also provide help with drawing up the business plan, marketing and sales, and content-related support with software development,” Grünthal continues.

A medical technology start-up, [MD2B LifeScience GmbH](#), is currently benefiting from this offer. In minimally invasive surgery, the ribcage and the sensitive organs beneath present a particular challenge. Therefore, the team at MD2B has developed a thorax model created using a 3D printer, which replicates the bones and soft tissues in anatomically correct proportions. This enables surgical interventions to be practiced realistically.

According to Julia Grünthal, the HIT Campus is currently directing its focus away from classical medtech towards eHealth. “This is because the certification of medicinal products is becoming ever more complex and it’s therefore often no longer financially possible to get developments onto the market.” So, the Campus wishes to concentrate on digitalization in healthcare in future, and support innovations and start-ups in this field.

Despite this, the HIT Manager firmly believes in the advantages that Saxony-Anhalt has to offer. “We have advantages that put us ahead, and which we should tell everyone about. Above all, these include the fact that we’re one of the few German states that still have commercial space available.” Another advantage is the state’s generous funding landscape. “Thirdly, I still see a large enough ‘playing field’ in our state.” Businesses are not so densely packed, there are plenty of opportunities and gaps in the market.

Text: Björn Menzel



PRESS-INFORMATION

transPORT project launches in Magdeburg: a port for working, living and well-being

On July 1, 2023, an eye-catching project was launched at the Magdeburg Port of Science, a “Center of Excellence Saxony-Anhalt”: the TransferHAFEN transPORT project. Interview with Dr. Katja Mittrenga, CEO of the transPORT Office, and Dr. Philipp Berg, member of the board of the Research Campus STIMULATE and one of the principle initiators of the transfer initiative.

What exactly is behind TransferHAFEN transPORT?

Dr. Katja Mittrenga: TransPORT stems from the words “transfer” and “port”. It’s about the transfer of knowledge at the Magdeburg Port of Science. Here, ideas from science are transferred. And the transPORT project aims to give this a boost, particularly through recruitment to support the infrastructure. The aim is to create an ecosystem that brings science, business, living, and well-being together in one place. It focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on the field of medical technology.

Currently there are ideas and a website for the project. Will we actually be able to go to this “transferHAFEN” port in future?

Dr. Philipp Berg: The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is funding this project with a little over two million euros a year for a period of up to nine years. The aim of this funding is to design, trial and assess innovative transfer formats. To achieve this, we have assembled a consortium of partners, which will be active at various levels in the Port of Science. The BMBF grant cannot be used to develop property, but this is what we and our partners intend to do. So, there will be premises – for sharing ideas, working and living.

Dr. Katja Mittrenga: In concrete terms, our idea is to be present and approachable at the Port of Science. In addition, we also want to create an immersive, digital twin – a portrayal of the physical reality of transPORT. People and companies that can’t be in Magdeburg itself should nevertheless be able to picture the Port of Science and its opportunities, and benefit from it.

One new strategy is that transPORT should combine science and business with living. What will this look like?

Dr. Philipp Berg: Property developers GETEC and Agromex are on board as partners. They have already acquired plots of land and will begin construction soon. Building work has already begun in the north of the port. The first apartments are under construction. With transPORT, our overarching goal is this: in a region where structures are still weak, we want to give young people prospects here, in this place. And we want to attract new businesses and support spin-offs – to give the start-up scene a boost. We believe that we will succeed because we are creating an attractive living environment and a lively ecosystem. It’s an alternative to the cold industrial park on a greenfield site next to residential areas.

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What's the difference between the existing Port of Science and the planned TransferHAFEN transPORT?

Dr. Philipp Berg: With transPORT, we are endeavoring to open the area up even more, beyond science, to business and to urban living and well-being. Then, the port area will be used even more intensively. We are pursuing the idea of bringing together all the people who would like to invest in this location – regardless of whether they're contributing finance, resources, or ideas. And from these discussions, we can see that there is a great need and a lot of interest.

Dr. Katja Mittrenga: In our view, transPORT is enriching the current Port of Science, and will provide a structural boost. Even now, the Port of Science is not only a Center of Excellence – it's also a dream destination full of expectations and visions. We have the means and the resources to build on this. We take what's already there and combine it with new ideas and concepts, in particular to encourage collaboration with academia and research in order to strengthen existing and future businesses. At the same time, we want to forge ahead with local development culturally, too, and comprehensively revitalize the neighborhood for everyone. So, it's a transfer on all levels.

What's behind the transPORT idea?

Dr. Katja Mittrenga: The Research Campus STIMULATE at the Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg played a leading role in planning the project and developed it in collaboration with Magdeburg City Council, the Fraunhofer Institute IFF, property developers Agromex, GETEC, etc., and business partner Neoscan Solutions, a company that develops special MRI equipment for use in medicine, and digitalization company Visualimpression. Many other companies are involved in the individual projects, and we are of course planning to acquire further suitable partners. Participation and interest are therefore very lively.

transPORT launched in July 2023. What are your first objectives?

Dr. Philipp Berg: We have set ourselves ten individual milestones for the first three years. These also need to be approved through individual funding applications. These milestones have different durations, and we are now beginning to get them underway.

Dr. Katja Mittrenga: The first project, the transPORT Office, has already started. The transPORT Office is the central port of call for partners and supporters of the transfer initiative. It coordinates communication and handles reporting and financing for funded projects. The Office is striving to establish transPORT for the long term and with visibility in Germany and abroad, through active and agile commitment to project management, public relations, and strategic implementation. We are planning creative workshops and networking concepts, we carry out PR and are developing digital resources to market the Port of Science as a knowledge and high-tech eco-center with an urban feel-good factor. And we are proactively supporting the hoped-for transfer of science and technology through diverse experimentation and learning formats. The next projects will launch shortly,



ideally early next year. These include the digital twin (transDIGITAL) mentioned earlier, plus a culture-driven project (transSCAPE), which aims to culturally integrate the project for the people here in the region.

You said that transPORT also aims to establish and attract start-ups. What does the project have to offer potential founders?

Dr. Philipp Berg: When it comes to start-up activity, Saxony-Anhalt seems to be at the bottom of the heap in Germany. But the medtech scene appears to be busting this trend. Magdeburg, with its numerous research activities focusing on the needs of the medical sector, has seen above-average numbers of spin-offs get off the ground. In recent years, start-ups Neoscan, Raydiac, Inline, Surrag, and mediMESH have set themselves up in the surroundings of the Research Campus STIMULATE alone, and more are on the way. One of our workshops is called transFORM. It enables us to precisely answer to the needs of would-be founders in the medtech sector. This is happening in close cooperation with the university's Transfer and Entrepreneur Center. As well as standard needs, we are particularly focusing on medical technology. The support we provide here is very specific, but it goes beyond this.

How did transPORT come to specialize in medical technology?

Dr. Philipp Berg: That has a very long history. Medical technology is a beacon in Magdeburg. Above all, medical imaging – CT and MRI scanning, for example – has a strong presence in Magdeburg at the University Hospital, at the university itself, and here at the Research Campus STIMULATE. This has led to successes such as Neoscan Solutions, which builds compact MRI scanners for children here, among other things. That success story has been the catalyst for the evolution of further research and businesses in this field. In the meantime, the site is benefiting from these synergistic effects. We see the construction of the transPORT transfer port as the logical follow-up for consolidating and pushing ahead with this evolution.

Interview: Björn Menzel

For more information:

www.trans-port.net/
www.forschungscampus-stimulate.de
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PRESS-INFORMATION

Success comes in waves: research center pools ultrasonic expertise

Ten years ago, the Forschungszentrum Ultraschall gGmbH (FZ-U) research center was launched in Halle (Saale). Five companies from central Germany – including four from Saxony-Anhalt – joined forces to leverage the potential of ultrasound technology, establish new applications, and use this to conquer new markets. Today, the privately-owned center is an institution for practical research into ultrasound technology, with an excellent reputation that radiates far and wide.

This initiative was unique in Germany: five small and medium-sized companies, including innovation driver SONOTEC from Halle (Saale), are networking in an innovation forum that's looking at new opportunities for measurement and testing with ultrasound. These central German businesses all share a desire to further develop this technology. They want to plug a gap and pool ultrasound expertise. That's why they're founding the ultrasound research center – a novel concept. And they didn't choose this city by chance. Before the German reunification, Halle and its surroundings in the former East Germany were renowned for ultrasound research. SONOTEC, a leading ultrasound specialist, has its headquarters there, is a center of expertise, and sponsors university research.

Industrial and medtech solutions under one roof

Its early days are reminiscent of other famous garage start-up stories: physicist and eventual CEO Dr. Ralf Steinhausen and a science colleague laid the foundations for the not-for-profit research center in an unobtrusive side room at the Schweißtechnische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt (Welding Teaching and Training Institute) in Halle. Just ten years later, it had made a name for itself in industry and medical technology with non-destructive testing, ultrasonic sensors, and medical ultrasound. Its customer base relies on its research, development, advice, and training programs. Sponsored research projects involve innovative approaches that have never been tried before. Now, ten employees – specialists in physics, materials, electronics, engineering, and machine learning – work in diverse areas in ultrasonic testing, acoustics fundamentals and modeling, and medical technology.

Filling the ultrasonic testing niche

The FZ-U is building networks through consultation, knowledge transfer, and its own regular ultrasound discussion panel. Over the years, it has been gaining a reputation in Germany and globally with its solutions. On their anniversary, when the CEO now looks back he remembers a “challenging start”: “We started with nothing, had few partners, no clients, and had to do everything ourselves.” In its first few months, the FZ-U dedicated itself to research projects, with which its associates could open up new markets. Establishing contact with universities has been important right from the start. Therefore, the research center quickly signed a cooperative agreement with the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences. Basic equipment was

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purchased with funding from the state of Saxony-Anhalt. And the rest is history.

With its decision to focus on air-coupled ultrasonic testing, the innovative center successfully occupied a niche early on, which today extends along the entire technology and value chain – from materials to algorithms all the way to feasibility studies. The foundations for all this were laid roughly ten years ago. What gradually seeped out of the aerospace industry and into other branches of industry in 2013, the specialists in Saxony-Anhalt are seeing as opportunities in lightweight construction, and for absolutely anything that can easily be deformed and should undergo non-destructive testing – and they are spot on. Just like with the first research project, in which the FZ-U experts are completely rethinking an acoustic transducer, and which has got SONOTEC GmbH on board. This shareholder from Halle (Saale), a world-leading product and solution specialist for precision measurement technology, is launching this on the market and cementing its ties for future collaboration.

CEO Michael Münch expresses his congratulations on the ten-year anniversary: “As a founding member, we are proud of our joint success and the progress we have made in the ultrasound sector. The partnership remains key to our ability to innovate.” SONOTEC is now selling the equipment around the world. The FZ-U cooperates with and advises customers in North America, Europe, and Asia on the ultrasonic product. In Halle, it has long been considering other paths that can be forged with air-coupled ultrasound. Many industries would realize that with this technology, they could perform 100% tests on their products in large numbers and in a short time, the CEO points out, adding: “In future, we would like to gain a stronger foothold in processes involving ceramics, building materials, and semi-finished products.”

Highly complex medtech needs well trained staff

All the signs are positive. The Research Center’s partner and customer base has long since grown far beyond the five original shareholders, and its expertise is in demand. “We are applied research,” responds Dr. Ralf Steinhausen, when asked as CEO to describe exactly what the institute does. Finding practical solutions that can rapidly be put to use – this founding principle also applies to medical technology, its second key topic. The institute’s flagship achievements include a practicable, highly sophisticated endosonography training unit, with which medical professionals can practice the special art of internal ultrasound examination without major technical outlay.

Over the past few years, the Center in Halle (Saale) has built up its medical profile through the development of innovative medical technology and modeling. For medical practitioners, the FZ-U has long been an important point of contact for education and training. State-of-the-art technology like the endosonography unit enables highly complex interventions. Patients can benefit from minimally invasive surgery, for example. “Doctors must have extremely good training in order to use technology like this, however,” the boss of the research center points out. “Demand for training will grow.”



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The institute's portfolio also includes training people on the premises. Dr. Ralf Steinhausen underlines the importance of providing feedback. This way, they will hear in practice what is going to be on the agenda. And this lists a few things for the future: phantom models need to become more lifelike, there should be more alternatives for basic biology training, like the pig's stomach, and the calls for smaller, portable training equipment are becoming louder. After the first ten years, the CEO of the research center in Halle is confident: "Ultrasound will continue to play a major role in medicine. And we will be actively involved and provide marketable products."

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