

Thuringia Focus.



Dr. Arnulf Wulff (left) and the new head of department Herbert Stütz (right). Photo: LEG Thüringen

Change at the top of LEG's business promotion department

For close to three decades, Dr. Arnulf Wulff has successfully headed LEG's department for business development in Thuringia. His portfolio has grown as the years went by. In addition to providing relocation and expansion services to companies investing in Thuringia, the department handled foreign trade promotion and internationalization for Thuringian companies as well as cluster management, including support for the Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS). At the end of 2023, the always energetic and accomplished business promoter began his well-deserved retirement and passed the baton to Herbert Stütz. The new department head has also been with the company for a quarter century, having acted as deputy department head and team leader for many years.

LEG has overseen around 1,800 relocation and expansion projects since the 1990s;

there is hardly a project that Dr. Arnulf Wulff has not been involved in, including in his capacity as Senior VP since 2010. The department's successes include attracting major companies such as CATL and N3 to Arnstadt or MDC Power to Kölldeda. Dr. Wulff took part in dozens of delegation trips to open up new markets for Thuringian companies and also oversaw the work of the Thuringian Energy and GreenTech Agency (TheGA) for several years. His signature is all over LEG's success story, which has created around 86,000 jobs and resulted in investments of around 13.8 billion euros. The expert taking the helm, Herbert Stütz, has many years of experience as head of the Investment Promotion team; he knows the business inside out and has been operating competently in the network for decades. The change will set the course for LEG's continued successful economic development in the future. (hw)

Interview

Mr. Stütz, we'd like to start out by congratulating you on your new position as department head at LEG Thüringen. Can you tell us what your career at LEG has been like so far?

I started my journey at LEG in 2001 as a project manager in charge of acquiring and providing support to Asian investors. In 2015, I took over as head of the Investment Promotion team. Now I'm very much looking forward to this new position with all the responsibility it entails.

What will you be focusing on in the coming months?

The department will obviously continue to focus on supporting Thuringia's economy, whether it's helping new companies to set up in the region, assisting existing companies to expand, promoting foreign trade or driving innovation and supporting the Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS).

Can you say anything more about your plans in detail?

In the new year, we will continue our efforts to make Thuringia more visible as a great place to do business and develop tomorrow's technologies. In addition, we will continue to support regional economic development agencies in local communities. We are responding to the difficult geopolitical situation by opening up peripheral markets. And we will initiate a forecasting process to better assess technology trends.

Mr. Stütz, thank you very much for giving us this brief insider's view!

All-inclusive service to support trade fair success is back in 2024

Trade fairs in Germany and abroad offer indispensable opportunities for companies to present products and solutions to a wide audience and to establish and expand their business networks. Using the slogan “Simply. Trade Show” (Einfach.Messe), LEG is giving Thuringian companies another opportunity this year to use the comprehensive LEG service to present themselves on a wide range of industry platforms and benefit from an attractive cost-benefit ratio.

In this all-inclusive service, LEG takes care of the entire process of preparing and organizing attention-grabbing joint exhibition stands. This allows exhibitors to concentrate fully on presenting their products and services. Even better, exhibitors can generally receive up to 50 percent of the stand construction and rental costs reimbursed through funding programs. The 2024 trade fair line-up is packed with attractive trade fairs, too. They include perennial favorites where Thuringia has been represented for years, such as Hannover Messe in April, IAA Transportation in September and Fakuma Trade Fair for Plastics Processing in October. Then there are newcomers such as IFAT, the world’s leading trade fair for environmental technologies in May, and SEMICON Europa/electronica in November. (hw)

Detailed information on all joint stands, including cost calculations and registration options, is available at:

www.leg-thueringen.de/messen-und-veranstaltungen/uebersicht/



The joint booth of Thuringia at the Hannover Messe 2023. Photo: LEG Thüringen

Thuringia provides a solid foundation – companies expand capacity

Thuringia is not only an attractive location to set up a company or relocate to, but also a good breeding ground for entrepreneurial growth and expansion. There is plenty of evidence to back this up. Only recently, two companies in northern Thuringia made positive headlines – WAGO Kontakttechnik GmbH, a supplier of connection and automation solutions, is investing in a new central warehouse in Sondershausen for worldwide shipping, and Funkwerk AG, a Thuringian railway technology company, is expanding at its headquarters in Kölleda .

“Sondershausen will be the gateway to the world,” WAGO’s CEO Heiner Lang recently announced. The family business is investing 50 million euros, the largest single investment in the company’s history.

WAGO is not only expanding its existing warehouse in Thuringia but is also building a high-bay warehouse with cutting-edge technology on a 11,000 square meter site. Once the new warehouse goes into operation at the end of 2024, it will enable the processing of up to 12,000 orders per day. According to Heiner Lang, the company’s decision to bet big on Thuringia was largely due to all the available local expertise.

In nearby Kölleda, Funkwerk AG invested almost ten million euros in the production of train radio communication and information systems for passengers at train stations, including the new generation of train information monitors. It built a new administration building as well. (hw)



The new building of Funkwerk AG in Kölleda. Photo: Funkwerk AG

Thuringia and Vietnam broaden their relationship

A large number of contacts, the signing of ten collaboration agreements and contracts, and a broader collaboration in business, science and skills management – this is the successful outcome of a seven-day trip taken by a Thuringian delegation to Vietnam at the beginning of November. A 75-strong delegation led by Minister-President Bodo Ramelow accepted an invitation extended by Vietnamese Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son and visited the economically vibrant Southeast Asian country.

The agenda was dominated by a wide range of topics from business and science to the recruitment of skilled workers. The Minister-President as well as Labor Minister Heike Werner and State

Secretary for Economics Carsten Feller came on the trip. The delegation visited the major cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as well as – for the first time – the city of Danang in central Vietnam and Phu Tho province in the north. The trip’s organizer, LEG, concluded a co-operation agreement with Phu Tho’s economic development agency. During the trip, young Vietnamese trainees also received certificates of participation, assuring them of training contracts in Thuringia from this year onwards. The delegation explored further collaboration options with Vietnamese partners regarding skilled workers; companies and universities developed new networks and expanded existing ones. (hw)

Next generation of innovative batteries comes from Thuringia

A Thuringian company is making an important contribution to the car battery of the future: Weimar-based IBU-tec Advanced Materials has rolled out a new type of cathode material for sodium-ion batteries. According to the company, it is the first manufacturer in Europe to use sodium manganese oxide (NMO) to make battery production cheaper and more environmentally friendly.

In the future, the new product called IBUvolt NMO should make it possible to produce batteries without the use of lithium and other rare raw materials. NMO mainly consists of materials that you frequently find in nature, including sodium, which can be extracted from sea salt and salt domes, and manganese, the third most common metal in the world. The

company has succeeded in developing a two-stage process that enables significantly more energy-efficient production than many other methods. Even better, the new type of battery is considered to be very safe. The material is particularly predestined for use in smaller electric vehicles, such as those zipping through city centers. Jörg Leinenbach, CEO of IBU-tec, explains: "IBU-tec is already Europe's tech leader for LFP cathode material (lithium iron phosphate). The sodium-ion battery has now put the next generation of innovative batteries in the starting blocks – an area where IBU-tec is once again one of the pioneers and drivers of innovation. We are thus expanding our footprint in the battery sector and positioning ourselves in another growth market." (hw)

Thanks to Thuringian technology: long live the battery!

Thuringia has long been one of the most innovative locations for battery technology in Europe. As the world moves towards optimized e-mobility, Thuringia is laying the foundation for the storage solutions of the future.

The world market leader for battery production, Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Ltd (CATL), has had a production site in Arnstadt, Thuringia, for around a year now. Together with the nearby Battery Innovation and Technology Center (BITC), a site of the Fraunhofer Institute for Ceramic Technologies and Systems (IKTS), the company is developing models for calculating the ser-

vice life of batteries. The activities are based on Germany's first-ever battery service life development model at the site, just as the collaboration between CATL and BITC/IKTS is the first of its kind in Germany. The previous collaboration between CATL and IKTS called "Batt-Life" is now being expanded as part of the new "BattForce" project: The test center operated by the partners will be expanded and operated with new technology. The benefits are legion. After all, a lot depends on increasing the service life of the storage systems – a decisive criterion for optimizing production and maintenance processes and the use of resources. (hw)



Sino-German cooperation continues. Celebrating the launch of BattForce project (from left): Dr. Arnulf Wulff (LEG Thüringen), Dr. Roland Weidl (Head of BITC, Deputy Director of Fraunhofer IKTS), Zhang Junhui (Envoy of the Chinese Embassy), Jason Chen (Managing Director CATL Europe), Prof. Alexander Michaelis (Director Fraunhofer IKTS), Wolfgang Tiefensee (Thuringian Minister of Economics), Matthias Zentgraf (Member of the Supervisory Board CATL), Xue Yang-Xian (BattForce engineer). Photo: CATL / Paul-Philipp Braun

News

Outstanding innovations – Thuringian business prize awarded

The renowned Thuringia Innovation Prize was awarded for the 26th time in Weimar: It honors exceptional forward-looking developments and entrepreneurial achievements in Thuringia. The winners' skills and capabilities reflected some of the traditional, yet trend-setting strengths of Thuringia's entrepreneurial and research landscape: precision, lighting engineering and health care.

"This diversity is what makes the Thuringia Innovation Prize so special and demonstrates the technological capabilities of our state," said Thuringia's Minister of Economics, Wolfgang Tiefensee, at the award ceremony. The prize is presented annually as part of a competition organized by the Thuringian Ministry of Economics, the Thuringian Foundation for Technology, Innovation and Research (STIFT), TÜV Thüringen e. V. and the Ernst Abbe Foundation. This year, 50 applications were submitted and evaluated by a jury of 18 experts. The jury's criteria focused on innovativeness, sustainability, functionality and business success. Entries are only eligible to receive the prize if the submissions were predominantly developed or manufactured in Thuringia and are already on the market or due to be launched soon. The prizes in the various categories went to (hw):

TRADITION & FUTURE category
migohead Flora Mirzoyan & Roman Golovkov GbR

INDUSTRY & MATERIAL category
Maximator Hydrogen GmbH

DIGITAL & MEDIA category
Funkwerk Systems GmbH
dSign Systems GmbH

LIGHT & LIFE category
Jabil Optics Germany GmbH

SPECIAL PRIZE FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS
Xsight Optics GmbH

ERNST-ABBE PRIZE FOR INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Sven Kiontke, CEO of Jena-based asphericon GmbH

AUDIENCE PRIZE
Q-SOFT GmbH

Erfurt's Jewish medieval heritage gains world-class status

The ballroom of Erfurt's town hall erupted in thunderous cheering one Sunday afternoon in mid-September when the UNESCO decision was announced in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 5,000 kilometers away: The Jewish medieval heritage in the Thuringian state capital was designated as a new World Heritage Site.

Erfurt has a rich historical heritage in general and is home to one of the largest contiguous medieval old towns in Europe. There are three buildings in the city center that are now among the most important legacies of mankind: The Old Synagogue is considered one of the oldest synagogues in Central Europe that has been preserved up to its roof. Today, the building, whose construction began back in 1094, houses a museum documenting medieval Jewish life in the city. Not far away is a medieval ritual bath, a mikveh. The Stone House, built around 1250, is also located in the old part of town. Thuringia now boasts five World Heritage Sites. The title was awarded to the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1996 and to classical Weimar as the place where Goethe and Schiller worked in 1998. Wart-

burg Castle near Eisenach made it onto the UNESCO list in 1999, followed by the ancient beech forests in Hainich National Park in 2011. (hw)



North façade of the Old Synagogue in Erfurt's old town. Photo: www.unesco.de/pressefotos – © Pro Denkmal

Red gold attracts tourists to Thuringia

It strengthens the heart and circulation, gives cosmetics their color, adds just the right seasoning in the kitchen – and is becoming a tourist magnet for Thuringia and Central Germany. It's saffron, a versatile all-rounder extracted from crocus plants



A field of crocus flowers containing the valuable saffron threads. Photo: ©Wandel-Werte-Wege gGmbH, Katja Kipping

– including in the region in and around Thuringia. Experts from Thuringia and neighboring Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt now want to establish a "Saffron Road" by 2025, which will attract guests with a variety of events and programs.

In Thuringia, it's Altenburg, located on the border with Saxony, that has the largest concentration of saffron farmers who collect bright purple crocus flowers and harvest the intense red saffron threads by hand – hence the name "red gold". Saffron gardens were found in the former principality of Altenburg centuries ago. Stations on the new Saffron Road will include not only Altenburg but also the towns of Torgau in North Saxony and Annaburg in Saxony-Anhalt. The idea for the project was born at the Torgau Saffron Day – a day when the community comes together to plant saffron bulbs in the Rose Garden – an event first held there in 2022 as part of the State Garden Show. The project is due to start in 2025 – which is the 500th anniversary of the death of the famous Elector Frederick the Wise, who was a key patron of Martin Luther and helped the Reformation achieve its breakthrough in Europe. (hw)

Dates

March 20
AWT – Foreign Trade Day Thuringia, Erfurt

April 09 – 11
DMEA, Berlin

April 22 – 26
Hannover Messe

April 24 – 26
OPIE – OPTICS & PHOTONICS Intern. Exhibition, Yokohama

May 13 – 17
IFAT – World's Leading Trade Fair for Environmental Technologies, Munich

May 28/29
PLMA – Private Label Manufacturers Association, Amsterdam

June 19 – 21
The smarter E, Munich

.....
March 21 – Apr 14
Thuringian Bach Weeks (state-wide baroque festival)



Publisher:

State Development Corporation of Thuringia (LEG Thüringen)

Editorial Staff: Dr. Holger Wiemers (V.i.S.d.P.),

Christine Maas

Copy Deadline: 01/2024

Layout: Luise Marholdt

Printed by: Mehgro

Contact:

Herbert Stütz – Head of Department Investment, International Business and Cluster Promotion

Mainzerhofstrasse 12

99084 Erfurt, Germany

Phone: +49 (0) 361 5603-450

invest@leg-thueringen.de

www.invest-in-thuringia.de/en