

# K»MOBIL

THE KIRCHHOFF GROUP MAGAZINE

The first Auto Shanghai after the pandemic was a complete success. The KIRCHHOFF Automotive team was finally able to present itself again to our customers at the largest automotive fair in Asia and also establish contacts with the many new Chinese e-vehicle manufacturers. [More info on page 047 »](#)

**Content**



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the KIRCHHOFF Group magazine

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Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff  
Managing Partner  
of the KIRCHHOFF Group

## Dear customers and friends of our company, dear employees,

As of 1 April 2023, we, my sister, my brothers and I have transferred our shares in the group of companies to four family foundations, one for each family. In this way, we ensure the continuity of our company over the generations and keep the management in family hands. The purpose of the foundations is, without exception, to provide for the direct descendants of us founders who are associated with the foundations as beneficiaries. The board members of the foundations, who in the future will represent the shares in the companies as we do today as shareholders, will always be family members. The shares of the general partner companies, which provide the management in the respective holding of the group companies, will continue to be held personally by my brothers and me and will also in future always be held personally

by family members, who will then provide the foundation board. An advisory board, in which without exception non-family members with entrepreneurial experience have voting rights, has been advising our group of companies for many years and will remain with us in the future. Its task is, among other things, to appoint a high-performance, competent management team at the top of the company, in which family members can also be given their chance to participate in the future if they are at least equal in performance to non-family management personnel. All family members were involved in the development of this forward-looking foundation structure and are pleased with the result. ▶



All family members have been involved in the development of this forward-looking foundation structure and are pleased with the result.

## Cultural diversity demands our cooperation for peace

A peaceful coexistence of cultures in our world seems a long way off. What can we as companies, as groups or individuals do to make a sustainable contribution to stable, peaceful coexistence in our society in Europe and the world? The intercultural development of our society has diversified greatly in many countries in recent decades. Globalisation and the migration of people have greatly increased its cultural diversity. This brings great challenges, but also opportunities: interactions between culturally different people can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts - but on the other hand, intensive interaction with each other can awaken understanding and reduce prejudices. We are all called upon to create an active dialogue for our togetherness in companies and in society as well as for our intercultural development. We achieve such a dialogue by promoting education, supporting integration, raising awareness of cultural diversity and by constantly striving for open, prejudice-free coexistence. When all people, regardless of ancestry, religious affiliation, gender or inclination, meet each other with openness and respect, we promote intercultural integration and peaceful coexistence among the people in our society.

## Sustainable business is the imperative of the future

But it is not only the intercultural coming together of society and its people that is necessary for a sustainable, peaceful society, but also our ability to conserve natural resources. Using them in a way that does not harm our future must be an absolute priority in our daily thoughts and actions. The responsible use of our world's resources to meet the needs of our society must be characterised by balance among the three dimensions of sustainability – the ecological, the social and the economic. The ecological dimension of sustainability refers to the ability to conserve and protect natural resources and ecosystems. It is about making the use of resources circular, ending the linear economy, preserving biodiversity, combating climate change and preventing pollution.

The social dimension of sustainability refers to the ability to create a just and inclusive society where the needs of all people are met. This is about promoting social justice, fighting poverty, providing education and healthcare for all and protecting human rights.

The environmental and social demand aspect of sustainability does not succeed without the economic dimension of sustainability. It refers to the ability to build a sustainable economy that is economically successful in the long term, based on efficient and sustainable use of resources, enables progress, creates jobs and takes into account people's needs for well-being for themselves and for our environmental system alike.

Without a high share of industrial value creation in our economic performance, with simultaneous disregard for the economic aspect, there is a threat of loss of prosperity, social unrest and thus slumps in the urgently needed shaping of the sustainability of our economic and social interaction.

## Deindustrialisation drains society's fuel for sustainability

Deindustrialisation, through which some dreamers believe they can put a stop to climate change, is draining the fuel for the sustainable development of our society just like intolerance and a lack of will to integrate in intercultural societies. In Germany, industry has lost importance in recent years. Before the financial crisis, it still accounted for 25 percent of economic output. Today it is only 20 per cent. The reasons for this are excessive regulations, planning periods that are far too long, a lack of openness to technology, unnecessary research restrictions and energy prices that are far too high compared to our neighbours. Energy-intensive industry suffers particularly from the high prices. To remain competitive, they need a reliable energy supply at internationally competitive purchase prices. If this is not guaranteed, companies relocate to other countries. In order to make Germany more attractive as an industrial location, the framework conditions must therefore be urgently improved. Planning and approval procedures must be accelerated significantly. Further over-regulation through more and more new labour laws must be stopped, existing ones must be dismantled. German labour costs are among the highest in the world and increasingly make it difficult for companies to sell products from Germany in international competition. A reduction of bureaucracy and a simplification of labour legislation, as well as an immigration law specifically tailored to skilled workers, will help companies better adapt to the challenges of the market and alleviate the shortage of skilled labour.

## Actively engaging and shaping opens up opportunities

If we see the challenges ahead not as a risk but as an opportunity, there are great positive prospects for our companies, our employees and our customers to shape sustainability in our society. Examples of this are the fight against climate change through a technology-open, market-oriented energy transition, the increase in efficiency, safety and comfort in traffic through intelligent traffic control and autonomous driving, as well as the use of digitalisation and artificial intelligence in the imperative recycling of our materials and in our administration.

An ideology-free exchange and an open dialogue involving all players on the markets, from science and research, from teaching, from politics and administration must be at the forefront.

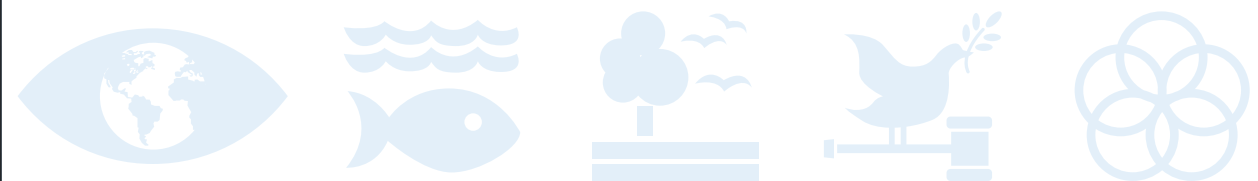
### Join us in shaping the future!

We wish you a relaxed, happy and creative summer season with a hearty "Glück Auf"!

Yours



Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff





# Connected Across Borders

A successfully executed foreign assignment is a great opportunity for the further development and exchange of expertise for both the employees and the company.

**AUTHORS: EVA RADEMACHER**  
**COMMUNICATION & MARKETING SPECIALIST KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE**  
**CLAUDIA SCHAUE**  
**MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER FAUN GROUP**

**S**uccess begins with preparation: drawing up the contract, applying for a visa, arranging housing, home travel, health insurance abroad, childcare, and tax aspects. The human resources department provides support on all these issues before and during the stay abroad, acting as a central point of contact for all the employees' questions and concerns.

At KIRCHHOFF Group, several employees have already taken the opportunity of a temporary assignment abroad and spent between one and five years at a foreign location. Below, they share their experiences.



**" I have made close connections with the people I work with."**

AURÉLIO COSTA, OPERATIONS APPLICATIONS SUPPORT MANAGER  
 KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

**Aurélio Costa from Ovar, Portugal, is an operations applications support manager.** He has been in Aurora, Canada since 2013. "Canada's very welcoming attitude towards new people and cultures is not comparable to any other country I know. I have made close connections with the people I work with. They have helped me feel integrated and part of the family," he said. "In the first few months, I was surprised that no letters or bills came to my home - until my colleagues explained to me that there was a community mailbox for the post at the end of the residential area; that also explained the small key I received when I moved in!" he exclaimed. "Overall, the hardest part was adjusting to temperatures as low as -35°C - there is no way to prepare for that. For the chance to be here, I am grateful because it is a new life for me. My most valuable experiences and best moments? Give me 20 years and I'll make a list!"







"The biggest challenge was transferring my daily life to a new country," reports **Hugo Ferreira, managing director of operations in Ovar, KIRCHHOFF Automotive Portugal**. He worked in Attendorn, Germany from 2015 to 2017. "The company helped me find an apartment, and my colleagues supported me with everything else. Living in a different country, culture, environment and weather promotes personal growth, resilience and maturity; such experiences abroad are great and help transfer our corporate culture to other locations. I understood "right at the source" what it means to work at KIRCHHOFF Automotive. In Attendorn, I have made friends for life – what more could I ask for?"

"In Romania, I felt and experienced the true strength of our company for the first time. All parts of the corporate group come together and support each other; it is a truly unique way that no matter what challenges we face, there are always colleagues in our network who will support us. For me, this positive culture of mutual support is one of the most important success factors of the KIRCHHOFF Group. I had a really wonderful time with our Romanian employees. We have met regularly in the evenings after work

for soccer games or barbecues, which usually end with a folk dance. The Romanian people will always have a special place in my heart," reports **Sean McDermott, managing director in Letterkenny, Ireland**. He was in Craiova, Romania from 2011 to 2012.

**"For me, this positive culture of mutual support is one of the most important success factors of the KIRCHHOFF Group"**

SEAN MCDERMOTT,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE



**"The better people from different plants and countries know each other, the more efficient their cooperation is and the better the processes run."**

MARKUS PICKHAN, PROCUREMENT MANAGER  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE



**Markus Pickhan, procurement manager from Attendorn, Germany**, was in Suzhou, China from May 2018 to January 2020. He recounts: "I moved from my home country of Germany to a world that was completely different for me. The simple things of everyday life were very complicated at first. Finding an apartment, opening a bank account, signing a contract for electricity, even getting from point A to point B. I was very lucky that I was able to find a place to live. I was fortunate that my colleagues on site supported me enormously the whole time. Especially in the beginning, I would have been lost without their great support. During my stay in China, I learned a lot about the Asian way of negotiating and gained a great understanding of the companies that supply various goods from Asia for our plants. The better people from different plants and countries know each other, the more efficient their cooperation is and the better the processes run. They learn from each other, and that improves the productivity of the company. By far though, my most valuable experience has been getting to know so many wonderful people from China and also from other Asian countries."





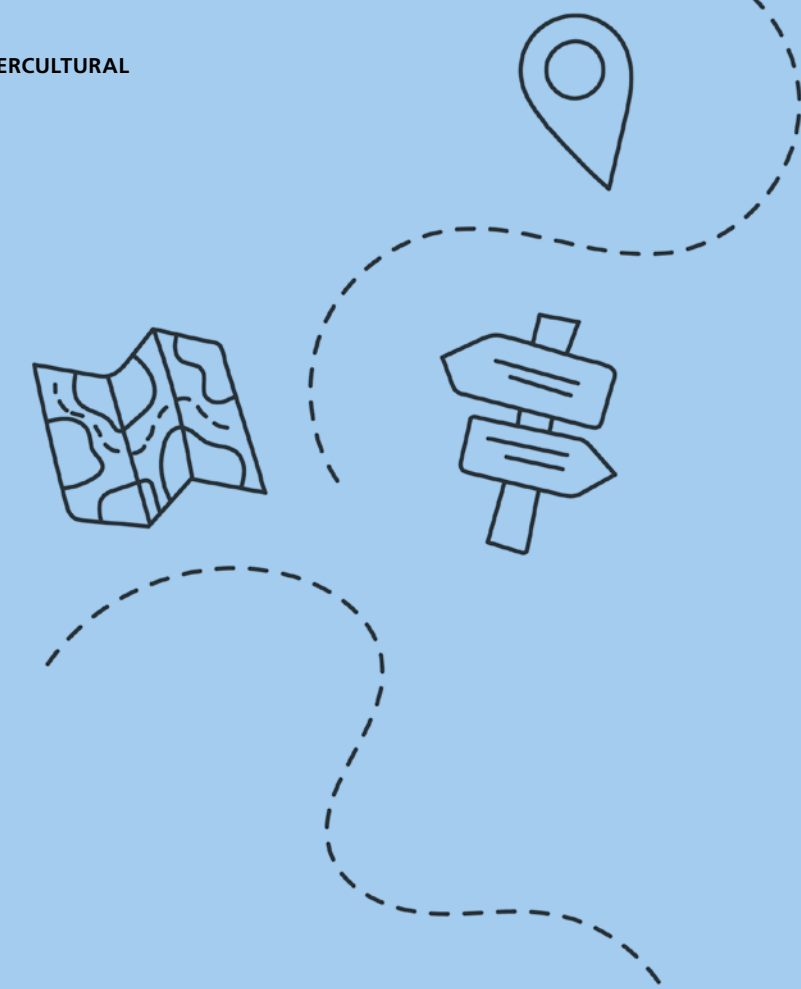
**“There, I learned a lot about myself and broadened my personal horizons in ways I probably wouldn't have experienced otherwise.”**

ALEXANDER HOOF, GLOBAL DIRECTOR  
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND SALES CONTROLLING  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

For me, it was an adventure to live on another continent and get to know another culture. There, I learned a lot about myself and broadened my personal horizons in ways I probably wouldn't have experienced otherwise. I was and still am impressed by the almost endless vastness of the USA and its wonderful nature. I experienced many impressions and moments here that I will certainly remember for the rest of my life. Although I have been working from Attendorn again for almost four years now, I still maintain close contact and exchange with the North American colleagues. I am firmly convinced that medium- and long-term stays abroad offer a win-win situation. Not only does the company benefit from this, but you also profit enormously from it personally. During this time, many friendships have developed that continue to this day and they always make my visit to Troy very special”, reports **Alexander Hoof from Attendorn, Germany, global director of strategic planning and sales controlling.** He spent 2017-2019 in Troy, USA.



Through such a transfer, you can see with your own eyes and compare what it's like to work in an identical position in different locations. As an employee, you develop a fantastic tool for your everyday work: a broader perspective and knowledge about work rules apart from the manuals. Most importantly, however, you develop interpersonal relationships that arise from a different culture. My most valuable experience: I'm still in the U.S., and it's great!" says **Piotr Kuter from Mielec, KIRCHHOFF Automotive Poland,** resident program manager. He has been in Atlanta, USA since February 2022.



Florian Egger, is a native of Austria and is now in Switzerland as Technical Manager at Contena Ochsner.



What special experiences / insights / challenges / best moments / most valuable experience did you take away?

**Florian Egger:** Besides the challenging linguistic and cultural peculiarities of the Swiss cantons, it was touching for me how warmly I was received by my new colleagues and customers as a "foreigner/Austrian" without prejudice.

What do such stays abroad mean for the KIRCHHOFF Group in your opinion?

**Florian Egger:** Long-term work stays abroad within the KIRCHHOFF Group enable the employees and locations concerned to the desired synergies in this very heterogeneous group of companies and to value the and to appreciate the common success.

What do you recommend to other colleagues who are about to take this step?

**Florian Egger:** My advice is to approach the challenges openly and without resentment. But also prepare consciously for the new environment and corporate structures, in order to do your business when the time comes ;-)

**FLORIAN EGGER**

Technical Manager & Member of the Executive Board Contena Ochsner AG

**PROFILE**

- Comes from: Rauris, district Zell am See in the Salzburger Land, Austria
- Working abroad for KIRCHHOFF Group since: August 2021 in Urdorf, Switzerland
- Professional stations: since 2015 with STUMMER Kommunalfahrzeuge Ges.m.b.H. as Export Manager and Project Manager in Order Management



**STEEVE BOUANICHE**

Sales Manager Trombia Technologies Oy

**PROFILE**

- From Narbonne, France
- He used to work in Finland, at Trombia Technologies Ltd, part of FAUN and KIRCHHOFF Group. He works there for 2,5 years. Previously, he lived and worked in Canada, Spain, Romania and Sweden.

What special experiences / insights / challenges / best moments / most valuable experience did you take away?

**Steeve Bouaniche:** I take away the fact of separating the professional life with the personal. Indeed in Finland, co-workers circle is not mixed with friends or family.

What do such stays abroad mean for the KIRCHHOFF Group in your opinion?

**Steeve Bouaniche:** Working abroad means for KIRCHHOFF Group that it develops a company culture where everyone is welcomed, wherever they are from and wherever they go to.

What do you recommend to other colleagues who are about to take this step?

**Steeve Bouaniche:** Go for it ! To me, one year of being abroad is like two years of experience in your home country. We step out from our comfort zone and learn how to start over, with different culture and different language.



Markus Dautermann and his longtime assistant Eva Beckerova. Eva was 30 years with ZOELLER Systems, Eva has also worked as Commercial Managing Director. I have always had a very good and emotional relationship with her, as she supported me in all matters from the very beginning.

**MARKUS DAUTERMANN**

COO ZOELLER GROUP

**PROFILE**

- From Mainz, Germany
- He started in 2018 at ZOELLER SYSTEMS in Ricany. From 2019, he worked as COO and stayed there most of the week. In 2020, I took over the role of CEO. Since last year, I have not been in the Czech Republic too regularly, as I have been focusing more on my role as COO of the ZOELLER Group.

What special experiences / challenges / best moments / most valuable experience did you take away with you?

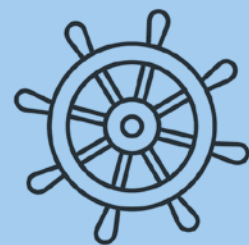
**Markus Dautermann:** The appreciation of my colleagues and employees towards me when I struggled through everyday life in the first months of my stay, with slightly broken Czech.

What do you think such stays abroad mean for the KIRCHHOFF Group?

**Markus Dautermann:** They provide a multitude of opportunities for employees to develop personally and to gain experience that can subsequently benefit the KIRCHHOFF Group. In my opinion, such stays also serve to create a very high level of employee loyalty, which is based on trust and recognition.

What do you recommend to other colleagues who are about to take this step?

**Markus Dautermann:** Everybody should face such a challenge positively. If you have any concerns or unanswered questions, it is advisable to involve your supervisor right from the start. Usually there are also solutions or compromises that can be agreed upon by mutual consent.



Steeve Bouaniche (left) and the Trombia Snowek team in Finland





F.l.t.r.: Maciej Zaremba, Paweł Majewski, Kamil Konieczka, Krystian Złotogórski.

## An Intensive Time with Formative Impressions

Cooperation between the different plants of our company is very valuable, as it enables the exchange of experience and enriches the knowledge and skills of the individual. In 2022, four KIRCHHOFF Automotive employees from the plant in Gniezno, Poland spent several months in Waverly, USA to assist with a project for the Ford F250, the Mustang S650, and the Honda CR-V (pictured on the right).



AUTHOR: KAMIL KONIECZKA  
SENIOR PROCESS ENGINEER  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

# Waverly

The Waverly plant has expanded its machinery and product range to include parts for the Ford F250, Mustang S650, and Honda CRV vehicle models. During the start-up process of these parts, process engineer Kamil Konieczka, production manager Paweł Majewski, and two setters Maciej Zaremba and Krystian Złotogórski from Gniezno provided on-site support for several months.

"The time we spent in the USA was surrounded by a pleasant atmosphere. The American colleagues were very friendly and helpful, and the good cooperation helped us achieve the set goals together," said Maciej Zaremba and Kamil Konieczka. The Polish colleagues took on tasks such as the introduction of new processes, mainly regarding layout, material flow, product, and process development. "Despite the large number of projects, we tried to move on to the next phases of the defined plan without interruption so that our colleagues would receive as much support as possible from our side. Hopefully, we succeeded in this!" Maciej Zaremba recalls.

The time in Waverly meant intensive work, but there was also time for conversations and for learning about local customs and culture in the state of Ohio: "A visit to the Air Force One Museum, jet skiing on the Ohio River, and 'fish and beans' around the campfire will definitely be in our memories," says Kamil. "We're glad our job at KIRCHHOFF Automotive offers us such opportunities."

While many challenges still lie ahead for the Waverly plant, the colleagues from Gniezno are confident that their close-knit team, together with the North American teams, will overcome anything. ■





# Two Outstanding Women

MetalForming magazine recognized Missy Smith, plant manager in Tecumseh, USA, and Kathleen Kane, global vice president quality in Troy, USA, as Women of Excellence. In an interview with Andreas Heine, global EVP of communication and marketing, they talk about the award and what challenges they faced in becoming successful women in the automotive industry.

**INTERVIEW: ANDREAS HEINE**  
**GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**  
**COMMUNICATION & MARKETING**  
**KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE**

**Andreas Heine:** What do you think it takes to be a good and successful plant manager?

**Missy Smith:** For me, a good and successful operations manager is someone who engages with employees at all levels. You have to talk to the people on the shop floor, whether they are assembly technicians, forklift operators, team leaders, or production managers, and show them that you care about them. I also believe that you have to have a certain level of technical knowledge that goes hand in hand with soft skills.

**Andreas Heine:** Kathleen, you are globally responsible for the quality of our production. Where does your passion for quality come from?

**Kathleen Kane:** It comes from the early days of my time in manufacturing. I started as a quality inspector many years ago, before I even started college. Quality is about doing the right thing and doing it consistently. Then I became a quality engineer, and later a quality manager, so I was able to implement what's right for the company and the customer on multiple levels. Passion grows when you see what you're accomplishing.

**Andreas Heine:** The award is called "Women of Excellence." You could say that the existence of this award makes it clear that women and men are still not considered equal in our industry. What do you think about that?

**Missy Smith:** I think that over the years, the ratio of women to men in leadership positions in manufacturing, especially in the automotive industry, has definitely improved. I remember my early days when I was promoted to production manager and I was the only woman in all of management. Now when we go to these meetings, there are maybe six or seven women there – still more men, but it's increasing.

When Missy Smith was named plant manager in Lansing in 2016, she didn't realize she was the first woman in the position. "I was not only the first female plant manager in North America, but ever at KIRCHHOFF Automotive!" she recalls. Important to her success, she says, was her commitment to employees at all levels.



Honored as "Women of Excellence" in 2022/2021: Missy Smith, KIRCHHOFF Automotive Lansing plant manager and Kathleen Kane, KIRCHHOFF Automotive global vice president quality



**Kathleen Kane:** I spent so much of my career not being a female leader. I just wanted to be a leader who was taken seriously by everyone else who was at the table. I remember one of my former bosses saying, "You have to take your place at the table. You need to have a voice at the table." I didn't have the confidence then because my voice was not being heard. So, that can be a challenge. I'm very glad that the award recognizes female leaders, because it boosts the confidence of women in manufacturing as a whole and shows that they have a voice.

**Andreas Heine:** Missy, how can our company contribute to the necessary change of having more women in leadership positions, and how does our company do that?

**Missy Smith:** I don't think it's a good idea to promote someone to a higher leadership position just because she's a woman. You have to make sure that she can actually do the job, because you don't want to just say we have more female or women leaders. The development, the time that you put in, and the recognition of success when it happens, I think is an important part of how we can do it in the future. We've already done some of that, too.

**Kathleen Kane:** When I joined KIRCHHOFF Automotive as a female executive, I never felt like I was treated differently. Working at KIRCHHOFF Automotive has really shown how important it is to be a leader and a woman, and how you can bring the two together to make a difference.

**Andreas Heine:** Missy, how do you inspire young women who want to pursue a career in the industry?

**Missy Smith:** I start having unofficial mentoring sessions with them and showing them what they need to do to be a good leader, how they should work with their teams, and how they can develop themselves to be a role model for their teams. But, this doesn't just apply to women. I want to be an inspiration to all young people, because starting out in manufacturing can offer so many opportunities. The more we can develop from within and help our teams grow, the stronger we are.

**Andreas Heine:** Missy, Kathleen, thank you very much for this very interesting interview.

Kathleen Kane, global vice president quality in Troy, USA, was almost a little embarrassed to receive the "Women of Excellence 2021" award: "The work I try to do as a quality manager requires so many people to work with me to achieve outstanding results," she reports. She says she is very pleased that the award recognizes female leaders.





AUTHOR: EVA RADEMACHER  
COMMUNICATION & MARKETING SPECIALIST  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE



# A Decisive Step Towards More Sustainable Mobility

The two CEOs Yves Koeberlé of ArcelorMittal Europe – Flat Products (right) and J. Wolfgang Kirchhoff of KIRCHHOFF Automotive at the symbolic signing of the declaration of intent.

KIRCHHOFF Automotive and ArcelorMittal want to cooperate in the development of steel with low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for the automotive industry. To this end, the CEOs of KIRCHHOFF Automotive and ArcelorMittal Europe – Flat Products have now signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the development of low-carbon steel.



Yves Koeberlé and J. Wolfgang Kirchoff on a tour of the plant in Iserlohn.

**W**ith the MoU on the development of low-carbon steel, KIRCHHOFF Automotive and ArcelorMittal are strengthening their cooperation on sustainability issues. This includes a project to develop and test the use of ArcelorMittal's XCarb® recycled and renewably produced Usibor1500® steel. In the future, this will replace conventionally produced steel grades that KIRCHHOFF Automotive uses to produce high-strength, lightweight safety-relevant body parts that the company supplies to leading vehicle manufacturers in Europe, Asia, and North America.

Although steel with low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is significantly more expensive than the conventionally produced material, this competitive advantage is increasingly being lost due to government CO<sub>2</sub> taxes. Steelmakers' customers are pursuing ambitious climate targets, which are driving demand for green materials to such an extent that a supply gap of up to 20 million tons is expected by 2030 (source: Handelsblatt).

CEO J. Wolfgang Kirchoff emphasized the importance of pursuing sustainability: "I am delighted that together with the world's leading steel producer ArcelorMittal, we will be taking a further and decisive step towards more sustainable mobility. With our body-in-white solutions we ensure safe mobility, in particular through the high strength of special steels. The future use of low-carbon steel will allow us to make production significantly more sustainable, as 90% of our carbon footprint is currently determined by the use of conventionally produced steel and aluminum. Based on orders from

international automakers for upcoming generations of vehicles, we see demand for such safe and sustainable body panels growing strongly in the coming years."

Yves Koeberlé, CEO ArcelorMittal Europe – Flat Products, said, "KIRCHHOFF Automotive is a highly respected company both here in Germany and around the world, so ArcelorMittal Europe - Flat Products is very pleased to have further strengthened our relationship with them by signing the Memorandum of Understanding today. The agreement will guide the work we are doing to expand the use of low carbon steel in complex, advanced vehicle parts. As a result of the agreement, we will also collaborate with them on other important sustainability issues, particularly the role of steel in the circular economy."

As early as 2022, KIRCHHOFF Automotive began determining the location of greenhouse gas emissions in its supply chain (Scope 3), both upstream at suppliers and downstream at customers. The company is also pursuing the overarching goal of establishing a high level of sustainability in automotive supply chains, which is also reflected in the fact that KIRCHHOFF Automotive is one of the founding members of the "Responsible Supply Chain Initiative RSCI e. V." association. ■



AUTHOR: ANDREAS HEINE  
GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATION & MARKETING  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

# Sustainability Starts with Ourselves

As an automotive supplier, we also play an important role in sustainability. This became clear at the sustainability workshop held by our sales team in the wintry Wildewiese in the Sauerland region.

When it comes to sustainability, not only does the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) play an important role, but we as automotive suppliers and our customers, the automotive manufacturers, are also challenged. All of us can do something to stop the climate crisis. This became clear at the sustainability workshop held by our sales team in the wintry Wildewiese in the Sauerland region. As a result, this means new requirements for us, but also new opportunities.

**S**ince our products are important safety-relevant parts of every car body, every manufacturer must also include our production in its CO<sub>2</sub> balance. A premium manufacturer has set itself the most ambitious goals. It wants to be completely CO<sub>2</sub> neutral as early as 2030. For us, this currently means that our plants must only use green electricity, which we have been meeting for some time.

For the future, it will mean that we will use more and more green steel in our production. This is because around 90% of our products' CO<sub>2</sub> footprint is caused by the raw materials steel and aluminum. To produce CO<sub>2</sub>-reduced steel, for example, hydrogen is used instead of carbon in the steel mill. Another method is to increase the use of steel scrap, which is melted down in electric arc furnaces and then reused. If green electricity is used in this process, the steel is significantly "greener" than comparable blast furnace steel. As we expect a significant increase in demand, we are in discussion with leading steel producers to secure a supply of CO<sub>2</sub> e-reduced products through cooperation agreements. We confirmed such a memorandum of understanding with the world's leading steel producer ArcelorMittal Europe at the beginning of March (please also read the article on page 20).

It will still be particularly challenging for us to prove to our customers where we currently stand on our path to greater sustainability. This is because almost all customers have different systems for recording and evaluating our corporate data. On a positive note, the "Responsible Supply Chain Initiative RSCI e.V." association, of which KIRCHHOFF Automotive is a founding member, should be mentioned here. The association has set itself the goal of contributing to an easier evaluation of the sustainability performance of companies in automotive supply chains with a standardized audit mechanism. Our plant in Mielec, Poland, successfully passed the first audit conducted in July. ■





# A Saxon success story

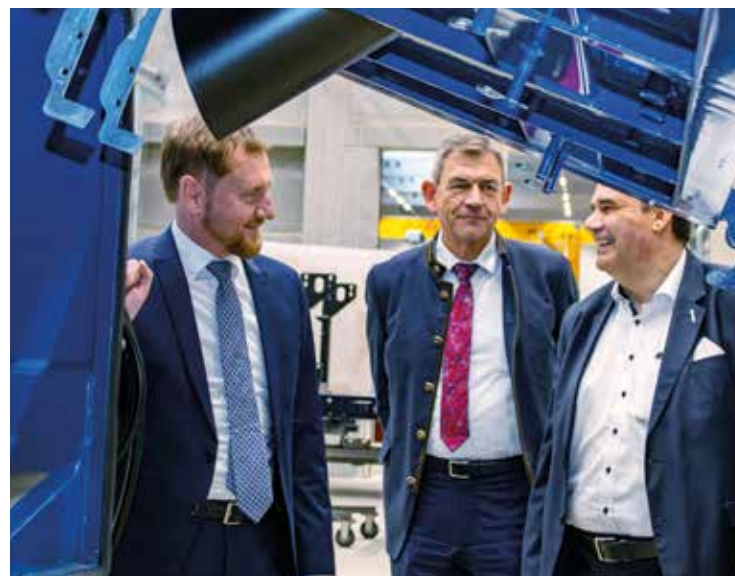
After only 18 months of construction, the FAUN Viatic team opened the new production plant for road sweepers in April.

AUTHOR: CLAUDIA SCHAUE  
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER FAUN GROUP





Five years ago, it was still mostly meadows and fields that lined the A14 highway toward Dresden at the Grimma exit. Then Helmut Schmeh, Managing Director of FAUN Viatic GmbH, and Matthias Berger, Mayor of Grimma, talked and initiated one of the largest construction projects in Saxony. Helmut Schmeh was looking for a new location for his sweeper plant, he needed space, wanted to expand. And he didn't want to leave Grimma either. Since 1992, FAUN and the sweepers have been closely connected with Grimma and its people. Grimma, on the other hand, is beautiful, attractive as an industrial location, conveniently situated and growth suits every small town.



Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer (left), as the father of the state, did not miss the opportunity to personally congratulate on the opening. Together with Helmut Schmeh (right) and Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff, he went straight into medias res at the sweeper.

And now? Now, five years, planning, 12 months of approval procedures and 18 months of construction later, FAUN Viatic has a new home. This is thanks to the courage, determination and cooperation of everyone involved, local authorities and industry. A true Saxon success story.

With the new industrial area north III, one of the largest development projects in Saxony has been created on 54 hectares. FAUN Viatic is the first company to settle here. A new production hall, offices and outdoor areas have been built on 58,000 m<sup>2</sup> at a cost of € 20 million. 140 skilled workers are employed here and in the future 500 sweepers and kits are to leave the factory per year and go into operation worldwide. The long-awaited new building was officially opened at the end of April. In addition to the team

and their families, prominent well-wishers were also present at the Am Hengstberg site. Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer came the day before the opening and took plenty of time to let Managing Partner Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff and Managing Director Helmut Schmeh show him around.

#### Michael Kretschmer, Prime Minister of Saxony

"The plant opening is a great signal for Grimma as a business location. Family businesses like FAUN stand for highly specialized products, innovative spirit and first-class quality. This is the recipe for success of our Saxon industry and creates well-paid jobs in the Free State." ▶





Gave the official starting signal together: Helmut Schmech, FAUN Project Manager Fabian Otto, Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff, District Administrator Henry Graichen, State Secretary Ines Fröhlich, Grimma's Lord Mayor Matthias Berger and Elke Krüger, Golbeck Project Manager. (from left)

On the day of the celebration itself, State Secretary Ines Fröhlich was the keynote speaker, along with customers, suppliers and partner companies.

**Ines Fröhlich, State Secretary in the State Ministry of Economics, Labor and Transport**

"The sweepers from FAUN Viatec have been successfully used worldwide for years and at the same time you are thus part of our joint Saxon success story, as the sweepers produced in Grimma are also available with an innovative hydrogen-based fuel cell drive. This means that in the future the vehicles "Made in Saxony" will not only be able to ensure cleaner roads, but also cleaner air in inner cities. I thank and congratulate FAUN Viatec for this innovation, which at the same time makes an important contribution to the mobility turnaround, on the successful new plant opening in Grimma and wish all the best!"

As co-initiator and proud mayor, Matthias Berger congratulated the first company in the new industrial park. In the future, more companies will settle, four large industrial halls are to be built and create between 1,200 - 1,500 jobs.

**Matthias Berger, Mayor of Grimma**

"With the new building of FAUN Viatec GmbH, the foundation for the development of the new commercial and industrial area on the A14 has been laid. FAUN's decision to expand in Grimma is an enormous gain for Grimma as a business location. It proves that we are taking the right path for the city with the development of a new commercial area in a perfect location. Numerous other settlements will follow in the coming years. We hope to create around 1,000 industrial jobs for Grimma and the region".

Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff addressed his congratulations to the team with a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

**"When children are small, give them roots. When they are big, give them wings."**

"I am very pleased that we can now open another new plant here in Grimma. Our group of companies has been active in Grimma since 1992 and we are firmly rooted here. With the support of the city and the state, we can continue to write Saxon sweeper history. Because 31 years ago, we founded FAUN Müller Umwelttechnik here, today's FAUN Viatec. It is our motivation to create value and give the team a home where they feel comfortable." Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff, Managing Partner KIRCHHOFF Group

**Sustainability, also in construction**

FAUN also relied on sustainable and environmentally friendly methods for the new plant construction. A photovoltaic system is installed on the roof of the hall, which covers approx. 80% of the company's own electricity consumption and saves a total of 31,968 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Hot water is reused in the process via waste heat from the paint shops through modern, highly efficient heat wheels. Rainwater seeps away locally on the site. Hot water is generated by waste heat from the air compressors and the offices are heated or cooled by a reversible air-to-water heat pump. The ventilation system is also operated using heat recovery.

The new building in Grimma underlines FAUN's claim to continue offering vehicles Made in Germany. This makes FAUN the only body manufacturer with a very high vertical range of manufacture in Germany. In addition to road sweepers, autonomous sweepers will also be developed and built in Grimma in the future. FAUN Viatec is thus a pioneer in the industry and once again demonstrates quality, progress and passion.

**Helmut Schmech, Managing Director FAUN Viatec**

"On behalf of the FAUN Viatec team, I would like to thank you very much for your visit, the congratulations, gifts and kind words on our new building. It was a very nice, emotional and talkative two days. I am overwhelmed that so many of you made your way to Grimma to celebrate with us and experience a piece of "Saxon success story". I was very moved by this and I am very grateful. Now we want to fill the plant with life and, above all, with sweepers." ■

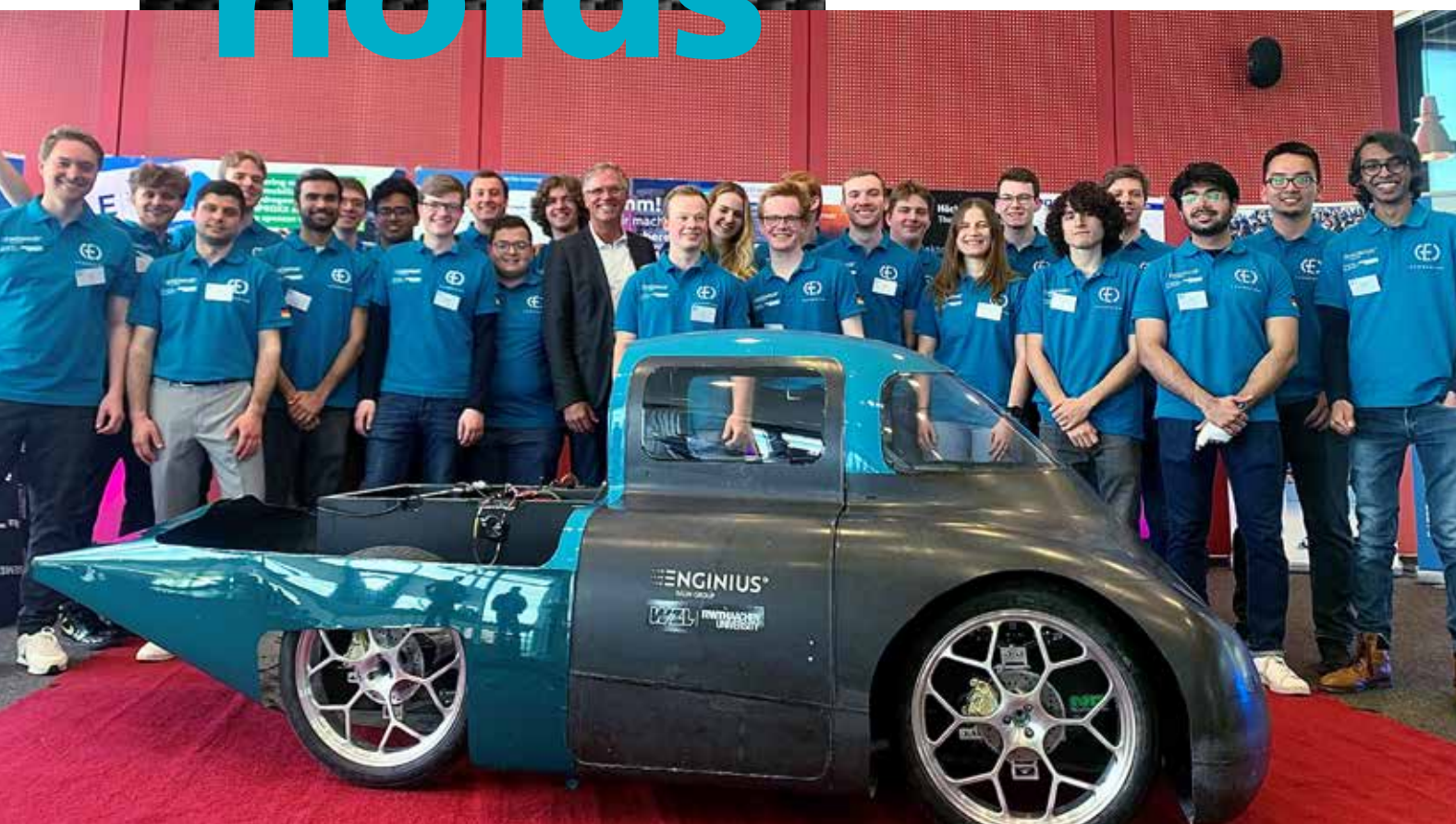


Two preparation and two painting cabins are part of the new paint line. Blasted components are painted in the customer's desired color in four process steps (body painting as standard). Heat recovery is achieved by means of high-efficiency heat wheels.



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 FAUN GROUP  
 CHANTELE ING  
 COMMUNICATION & MARKETING SPECIALIST  
 KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

# The future holds

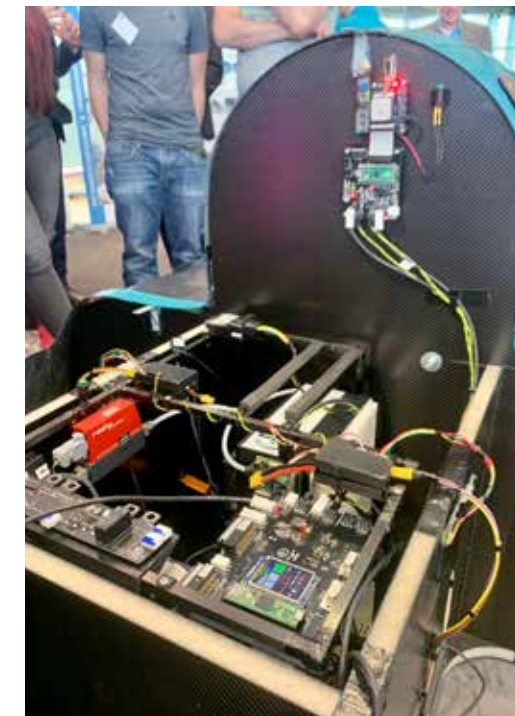


Hydraix with the Ecogenium team and Torsten Baumeister (centre)

For 2023, the hydrogen truck manufacturer ENGINIUS took over the sponsorship for Ecogenium. Ecogenium is a group of committed students from RWTH and FH Aachen University who, in addition to university, have hydrogen and mobility on their minds and want to change the transport sector in a sustainable way.

"I appreciate the pioneering spirit of the students. With their ideas, they are actively contributing to climate change and shaping the future." ENGINIUS CEO Thorsten Baumeister about Ecogenium.

For the 40 students, everything revolves around battery electricity and hydrogen. They have been tinkering together since 2020 and the highlight every year is a climate-neutral urban concept car with which the team takes part in the annual Shell Ecomarathon. As ENGINIUS, we support this collaborative platform because it is a great opportunity to gain practical experience. Students are already looking for improvements in the mobility of the future during their studies, and later they can continue to work on these topics in their companies. ▶







Hydraix on the race track in France.

- Teams at the Shell Eco-marathon: > 300
- Teams at the H2 Urban Concept class: 10
- Place Ecogenium: 7th place
- Vehicle range: 114.7 km / standard cubic metre of H2, equivalent to 1,276.15 km per kg of H2

**More to know:**

ENGINIUS: [www.enginius.de](http://www.enginius.de)

Ecogenium: [www.ecogenium.com](http://www.ecogenium.com)

About Shell Eco-marathon:



In 2023, the streamlined car is called Hydraix. A Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) that the young researchers developed and built themselves. It is light and fast.

Equipped with fuel cells and supercaps for intermediate energy storage. Because at the Shell Eco-marathon, long distances are to be covered with as little energy as possible. International student teams compete with their FCEVs in the global competition. This year, the young hydrogen elite met in Nogaro, France. The team from Ecogenium took a fantastic seventh place. We congratulate the young team very warmly and we are super proud as a sponsor. Thorsten Baumeister: "It is impressive how the young people master these challenges and also learn to deal with setbacks. They can all be really proud. The project is so important for personality development and benefits the future employers of these students." ■



**M MICHIGAN ROSS** X **KIRCHHOFF**  
AUTOMOTIVE

Four months of research and analysis of our social media platforms lay ahead for Bobby Fu, Caitlin O'Boyle, Anna Recknagel, Keilani Stone, and Xiyao Zhao – all Master of Management students at the University of Michigan. With guidance and support from the KIRCHHOFF Automotive Marketing team, they focused on three areas for benchmark analysis: recruiting, customer relations, and executive communications on social media.

"The collaboration between KIRCHHOFF Automotive and the University of Michigan provided an excellent opportunity for our company to get in touch with committed future Master's graduates in the field of management. In the process, we gained many valuable insights, especially regarding our social media presence." Student Bobby Fu adds, "It was a unique experience for me. In the process, I learned a lot about working with social media from a professional perspective as well as presentation techniques." ■

After four months of intensive work, the students were able to provide helpful recommendations and suggestions for optimizing KIRCHHOFF Automotive's social media presence. Andreas Heine (global EVP of communication and marketing) thought:

**MAP (Multidisciplinary Action Project)** is an initiative designed to foster collaboration between students, faculty and business organizations. Students must navigate a professional environment and learn to produce appropriate results according to specific specifications and with guidance. For companies, it provides an opportunity to see their business processes and company perceptions from a different unbiased perspective. At the same time, they invest in the training and development of the skilled workers of the future in the process.



# KIRCHHOFF Culture Life...



It all started with a joint employee event where puzzle pieces had to be painted. But nobody had expected the result. The picture was created at the KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Esztergom, Hungary.

... is a unique company initiative in Europe for the employees of the KIRCHHOFF Group. In all associated activities, the focus is always on the well-being of the employees. This goal is to celebrate culture in all its diversity for everyone.

**J**oin-in activities are always at the center of the events planned and organized by our cultural officer Thomas Kirchhoff. Joint paintings of abstract large-scale pictures, cooking and reading evenings, city trips to unusual art exhibitions, yoga workshops, and the joint planting of over 30,000 trees in the last three years are just a few of these events. Family members are also welcome guests. ▶



The "Culture Attack Events" held at various company locations, which focus on music in a wide variety of facets, are considered special highlights. However, a new event idea has been capturing the hearts of our employees and their relatives since 2022; huge jigsaw puzzle pictures are colored and put together. The result surprises and impresses in equal measure, as the assembled puzzle pieces tell the respective story of the company and the location on surfaces of up to 100 square meters. These paintings now adorn the production halls in Iserlohn, Mainz, and Osterholz-Scharmbeck, as well as in Vinovo, Italy, and Esztergom, Hungary. They illuminate the

halls with a very special atmosphere and provide those involved with a lasting reminder of a special joint project.

At Christmas, all employees can once again look forward to large-format photo calendars. Employees interested in photography have already worked with professional photographers to create such a calendar for 2020 and 2022 at the sites in Hungary, Germany, and the USA. Amazing photos were taken in the process, which we would love to do again for 2024 on the theme of nature and landscapes. We will present a selection of the best photos in the winter issue of K>MOBIL. ■



**At the top:** Calendar pictures by employees for employees. **Above:** The German journalist, author and columnist Harald Martenstein at the reading evening for the German KIRCHHOFF Automotive plants in Iserlohn and Attendorn. **Left:** With the help of 380 employees and their families, this 100-square-meter painting was created at the Polish Zöller plant in Rekowo Górze.



# New Products on the Road

**AUTHOR: SABINE BOEHLE**  
COMMUNICATON AND MARKETING MANAGER  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

KIRCHHOFF Automotive offers body solutions that make tomorrow's mobility safe. The elimination of the combustion engine has changed the force application and force distribution in e-vehicles in the event of a crash. Without an adaptation of the car body, the consequences of a crash can be dramatic. Therefore, our focus is on the development of resource-saving and crash-relevant body structure parts in lightweight construction for combustion and e-vehicles. ▶



## VW ID.7: Rear seat cross member

### Technologies

Press hardening with downstream laser cutting and blasting, cold forming, projection welding, spot welding

### Production plant

Attendorn/Iserlohn, Germany

### Capacity/year

224,000

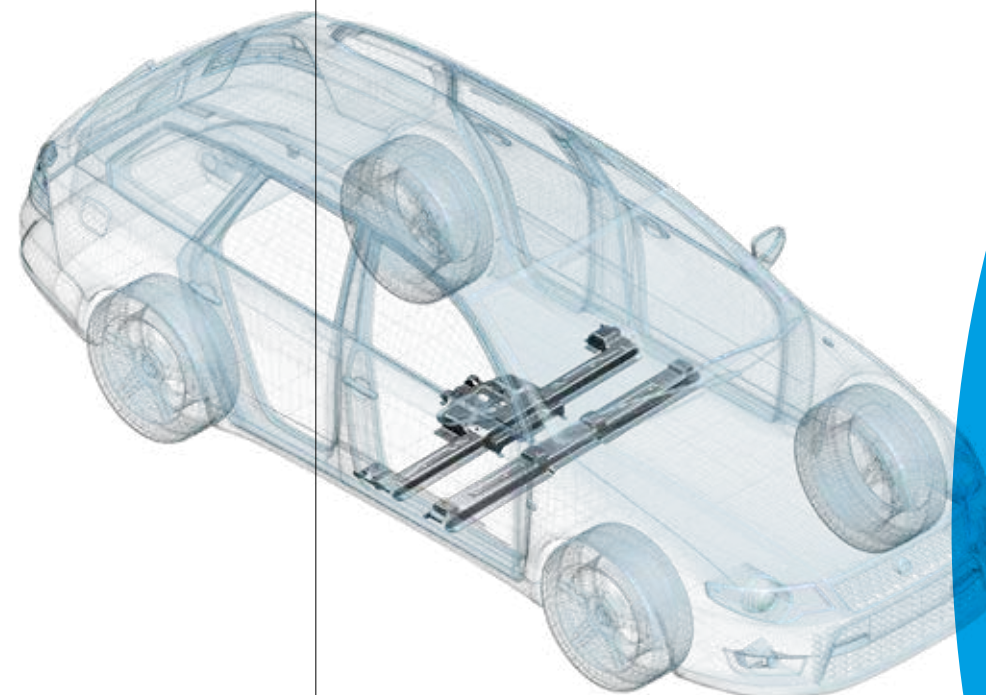
### Customer/Model

VW ID.7

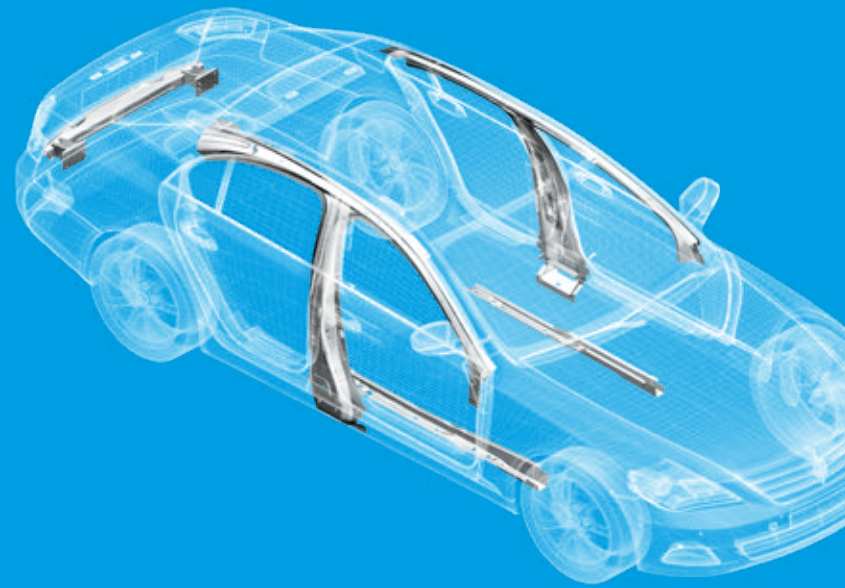
## Almost five meters long with a range of up to 700 kilometers

This is the new VW ID.7, which was officially unveiled at the Auto Shanghai in April. The top model of VW's electric cars has a decidedly aerodynamic appearance and, according to the manufacturer, is one of ten new electric models to be launched by 2026. Among other things, KIRCHHOFF Automotive manufactures the rear seat cross-member for the model, which was industrialized at the Attendorn site within just twelve months, and transferred directly to ongoing series production with full production volume.

For the production of this crash-relevant component, 1,400mm long cross members are press-hardened from cold-rolled CR1900 quenched and tempered steel. This material, with a material strength of approx. 2000 MPa allows a smaller plate thickness with the same crash performance. This enabled us to save weight and costs. High tolerance requirements are placed on the complex welded assembly. Brackets connected by spot welds serve both as rear seat fasteners and as mounting points for the high-voltage battery. Different battery sizes are bolted on via two projection welding nuts. The seat cross member plays a major role in stiffening the underbody in a pole crash, additionally protecting the battery from damage. The rear seat mount on the door side is fitted with a floating nut to allow tolerance compensation when bolting the seat. Furthermore, the seat mount is connected to the frame side member by spot welds. The welded assembly consists of 12 individual components plus 16 fasteners.







**Mercedes-Benz E-Class: A-pillar, B-pillar, roof frame, rear bumper**

**Technologies**

Forming, hot stamping, partial press hardening, laser cutting, MAG welding, spot welding, e-coating, waxing

**Production plants**

B-pillar, side member: Iserlohn, Germany  
A-pillar, roof frame, rear bumper: Mielec/Gliwice, Poland

**Capacity/year**

200,000

**Customer/Model**

Mercedes-Benz E-Class



**New technologies for the Mercedes-Benz E-Class**

In April, Mercedes-Benz presented the new E-Class sedan to the public for the first time. KIRCHHOFF Automotive contributes with a wide range of products in the latest generation of the upper mid-range vehicle. The component with the greatest complexity from this scope is the **B-pillar**, which is manufactured at the Iserlohn site. For this component, we use the technology of partial press hardening, which allows different hardness ranges to be created in the component. Subsequent production steps include laser cutting as well as bonding and welding with other individual parts in a complex joining system.

We also use comparable processes to manufacture side members for the new model series at our Iserlohn site. As with previous vehicles of this platform, this circumference is also produced by partial press hardening. At the Polish site in Gliwice, KIRCHHOFF Automotive manufactures the **A-pillars and roof frames**. For these items and the B-pillar, the "patch welding" of two blanks is used before press hardening. This process saves costs by eliminating the need for a forming die while maintaining component performance. Our company also manufactures the **rear bending beam** in Gliwice, which is installed in selected vehicle types such as the plug-in hybrid and country-specific variants. In addition to conventionally formed parts, the assembly also includes a press-hardened individual part. After the parts have been joined using various welding processes, they are first cleaned using a special procedure and then given a surface protection in a multi-stage process. The final assembly process is the application of dampers, which protect the vehicle structure from water ingress.



**BMW iX1 and other derivatives: HV clasp and assembly (ZB) thrust field at front**

**Technologies**

HV bracket: forming, MAG welding, pickling and e-coating, waxing of the cavity  
Assembly thrust field: forming of aluminum sheet and profiles, washing, heat treatment, resistance welding, MIG welding incl. optical weld seam inspection, heat treatment, e-coating

**Production plants**

HV bracket: Shenyang/Suzhou, China  
Thrust field: Mielec, Poland; Shenyang, China

**Capacity/year**

HV bracket: 200,000  
Thrust field: 130,000

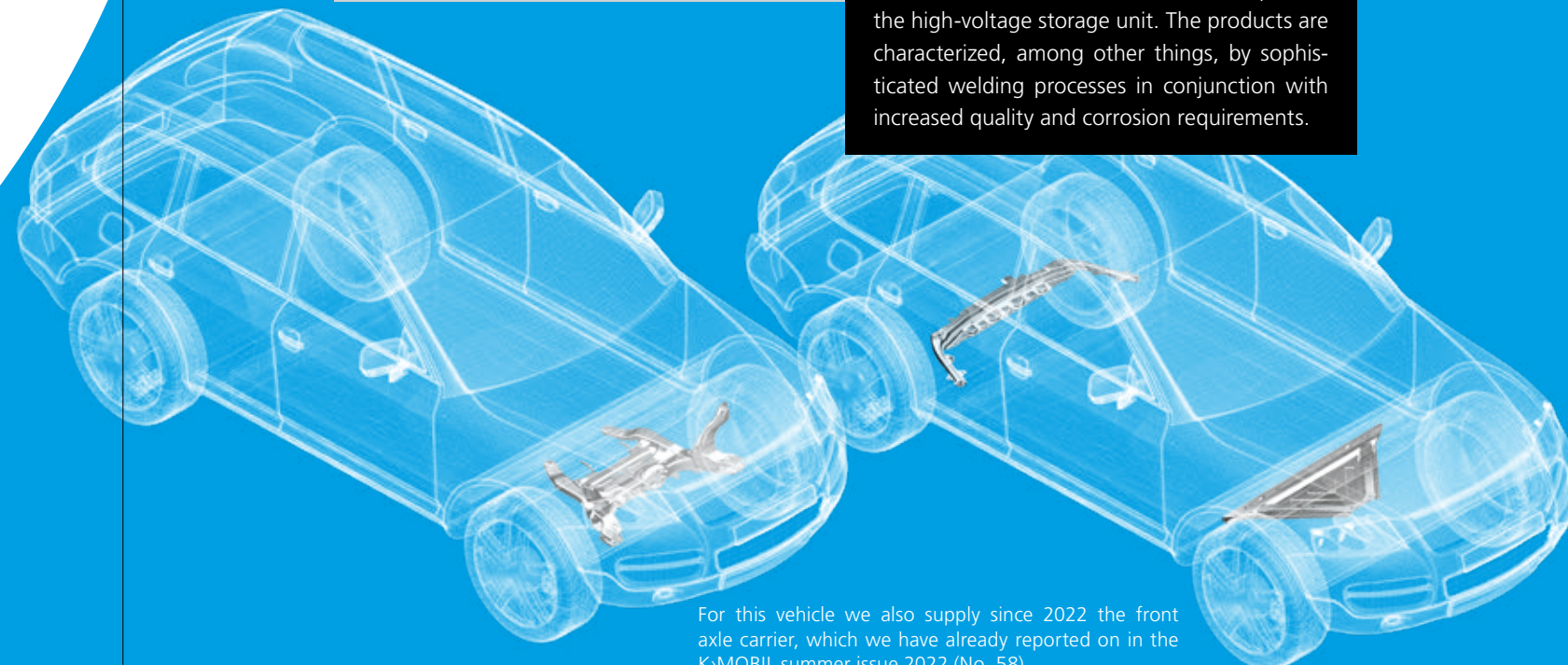
**Customer/model**

BMW iX1 and other derivatives

**Technically sophisticated products made in China**

Through the realization of the **HV bracket and assembly thrust field front products** for the customer BMW, it demonstrates how our teams work successfully across borders to introduce new products. BMW's front-wheel-drive FAAR WE platform includes a total of nine vehicles with internal combustion engine (ICE), hybrid (PHEV), and electric (BEV) drive modes.

For the all-electric **BMW iX1** vehicles of the FAAR WE in China, our plants in Suzhou and Shenyang manufacture the HV clasp and the ZB thrust field at the front, which serve to protect the high-voltage storage unit. The products are characterized, among other things, by sophisticated welding processes in conjunction with increased quality and corrosion requirements.



For this vehicle we also supply since 2022 the front axle carrier, which we have already reported on in the K>MOBIL summer issue 2022 (No. 58).





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**MANUFACTURING ENGINEER ASSEMBLY KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE,**  
**DRAGAN PETKOVIC**  
**TEAM LEADER PRODUCTION LOGISTICS KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE**

# Highly Complex and Automated

In a four-stage manufacturing process, we produce a highly complex B-pillar for the Mercedes-Benz E-Class at the Iserlohn plant. A special feature here is the use of automated guided vehicles (AGVs) in the entire manufacturing process.

**T**he manufacturing process begins with the fully automated formation of a patch plate with 47 welding points (step 1). Four robots with eight loading/unloading stations for automated guided vehicles are used. The forklift operator also prepares the raw blanks before

the patch process in special racks (stanchion racks), which are then fed fully automatically to the patch process by the AGVs. One of the two individual blanks used for the patching process consists of tailor-welded blanks of different material thicknesses, depending on the design. In the same cycle, already



**Left to right:**  
**Step 1:** fully automated formation of a patch board with 47 welding spots.  
**Step 2.1:** before press hardening, the blanks are heated to different temperatures. **Step 2.2:** Mercedes-Benz B-pillar after press hardening.  
**Step 3:** at the KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Iserlohn, driverless transport systems move the products from one production step to the next.



patched blanks are transferred to the Gateway-Station – a transfer station between the human operator and the automated guided vehicle system. There, a forklift operator exchanges the patched blanks and the starting material, and prepares the blanks for the press hardening process. Here, the blanks are first temporarily stored in cantilever racks before being fed into the press hardening process (step 2). In order to carry out this process according to customer specifications, the blanks are heated to different temperatures.

In the next step (step 3), the finished press-hardened parts are transported to the laser cutting system, just in time for the welding system. Exchanging a full container for an empty one is digitally controlled: an employee generates a transport order for the goods provided via the software installed on his tablet.

The fourth process step takes place at a complex joining system consisting of ten robots, an integrated

gluing system with quality camera monitoring, an integrated projection welding process, and four stations for unloading the special load carriers using a driverless transport system. Here, the components are welded together with other individual parts, and two adhesive strips each are bonded with self-expanding adhesive tape. These serve to seal against water and provide acoustic damping. To support the strength of the spot welding equipment, a strong adhesive is also applied to the welded assembly. In total, the final assembly consists of 83 spot welds, a 1.90 m long adhesive seam, two weld nuts, and a clip.

The driverless transport system is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Climate Protection, and financed by the European Union. ■



AUTHOR: PIOTR TOMASZEWSKI  
VICE PRESIDENT MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

# A Happy Coincidence

The KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Querétaro, Mexico. The commissioning of the Querétaro plant in Querétaro II is planned for 2025, which will then include a KLT coating line with the possible thick-film coating as well as preparations for a mild pickling process. The expected plant area will be 15,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Last year, KIRCHHOFF Automotive already received numerous new orders for production in Mexico. However, neither the plant in Querétaro or Puebla had enough hall space at the time for the necessary expansion of capacities.

"Initially, we looked for suitable space near our plant in Querétaro and considered a larger extension," reports Piotr Tomaszewski, vice president of manufacturing engineering (ME) at KIRCHHOFF Automotive. However, since the available space in Querétaro only allowed for an expansion of just over 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>, so the corporate ME team looked at alternative options near KIRCHHOFF Automotive's Mexican plant in Puebla.

"We were lucky because a suitable building happened to become available just 100 meters away and directly opposite the Puebla plant," says Piotr Tomaszewski. Now in the planning phase, the teams in Mexico are working together to install equipment there for resistance spot welding and arc welding technologies in accordance with our lean standards, which ensure an optimal production flow. On these lines we will produce body-in-white parts and cross car beams for new customer programs. The aim is to commission the building on time in coordination with our customers' production schedules – production is scheduled to start in June 2024. ■

# ONE OF US

## ” A WORKING LIFE FOR THE G-CLASS

In mid-January, the last side member manufactured for the Daimler G-Class left the Iserlohn plant. For Fikret Gerbaga, this was an emotional moment. He has worked as a plant operator on the Steyr line at the Iserlohn plant for 33 years. "On my first day of the job, I machined this product. I also machined the very last side member manufactured here," he says. "It's quite hard for me," says Fikret Gerbaga, who has dedicated his working life to manufacturing this product up to this point.



AUTHOR: ANDREAS HEINE

GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATION &amp; MARKETING

# Auto Shanghai 2023: a crowd pleaser



KIRCHHOFF Automotive CTO Dr. Thorsten Gaitzsch (r. in picture), explains the importance of safe vehicle structural parts in e-vehicles using the example of a crashed bumper with high deformation capacity from KIRCHHOFF Automotive development. (From left to right: Rick Cui (director of sales, KIRCHHOFF Automotive China), Mihaela Palca (senior manager), Edward Blogg (vice president of procurement JLR), and CTO Dr. Thorsten Gaitzsch.

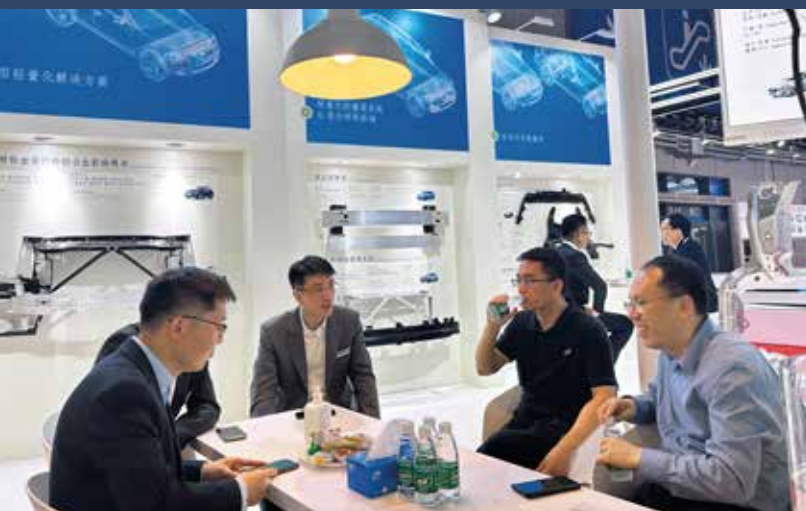
With over 900,000 visitors, the Auto Shanghai was able to build on its pre-pandemic successes. For our company too, the largest automotive fair in Asia provided an excellent marketing platform in the most innovative market for e-mobility.







Xin Xu, procurement director of MI Auto (2nd from right), is shown by Rick Cui, sales director (2nd from left) and Johan Zhang, product development manager KIRCHHOFF Automotive, the special features of processing an aluminum dashboard support.

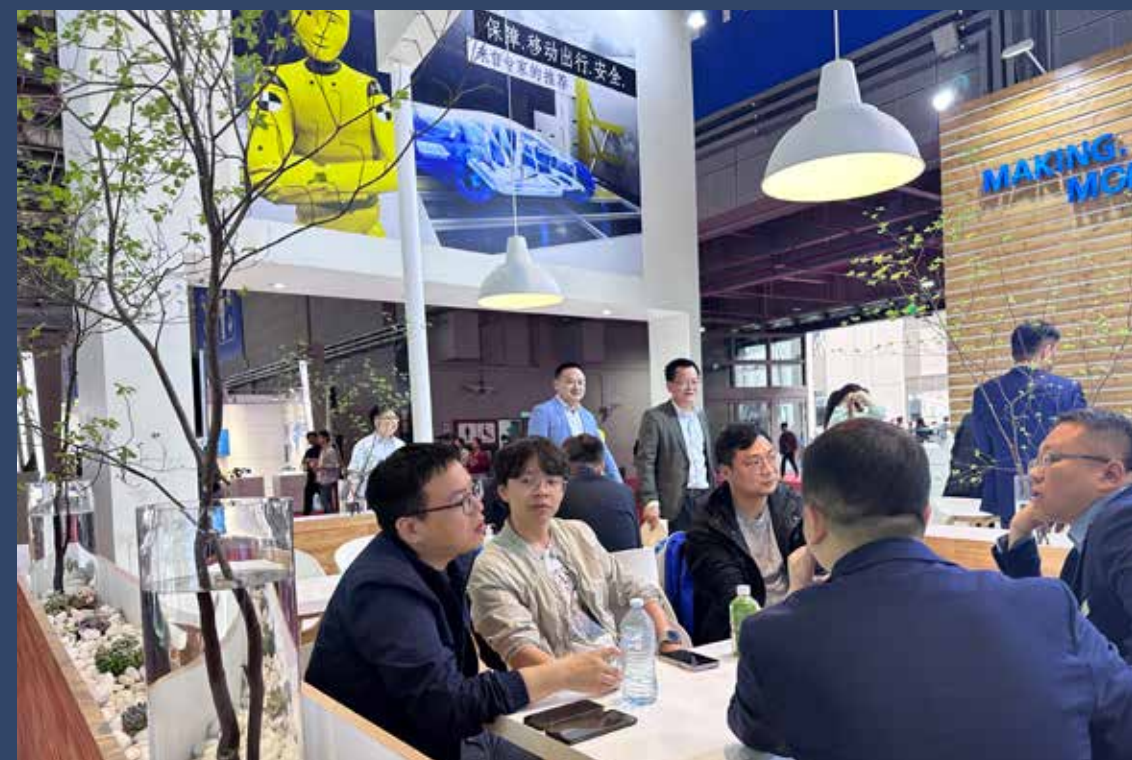


**A**lmost 300 vehicle models with alternative drives were presented in Shanghai in April, two thirds of which were vehicles from Chinese manufacturers. Since these manufacturers have not only caught up with the major international carmakers, particularly in the areas of design and entertainment systems, but are now also setting standards for innovation and connectivity, the halls of the Chinese manufacturers were virtually magnets for a mostly young audience. ▶

**F**or our Chinese sales team, our booth was the perfect basis to get in touch with the new car manufacturers in China. CTO Dr. Thorsten Gaitzsch thought: "The trade fair in Shanghai is very important for us, as we expect more sales with Chinese manufacturers in the coming years. Here at our booth, we were able to make valuable contacts with the decision makers of potential future customers." ■



**Left:** The KIRCHHOFF Automotive booth at the world's largest automobile show, the Auto Shanghai in April 2023. **Above:** VDA President Hildegard Müller (center) in conversation with KIRCHHOFF Automotive CTO Dr. Thorsten Gaitzsch (2nd from right) **Right:** Li Auto representatives at our booth (1st and 2nd from right): Jiang Ming (vehicle body director) and Yan Lu Ping (vehicle body department manager). **Below:** Optimally designed for e-mobility with great energy absorption capacity: this is the crash management system that was developed for the BMW i20 electric SUV, whose special properties were explained here to BMW visitors by Dr. Thorsten Gaitzsch (left in the picture). Our visitors included Fred Li (QMT senior manager), Vivian Wang (purchasing senior manager), and Zhang Jie (QMT senior manager).



In conversation with Liao Zhenfang, senior manager at NIO (pictured right).



# Successful inauguration.

Due to COVID-19, the official opening had been postponed repeatedly. In May, the time had finally come. Our newest plant in Atlanta, USA was ceremoniously inaugurated with customers and business representatives from the region.



**B**y May 2022, our tenth plant in America had already started production of various metal structural parts for the automotive industry. Now, one year later, 70 employees work in the 9,400 m<sup>2</sup> building, producing body-in-white components mainly for the new battery-powered vehicle generations of our customers.

The core competencies of this site include spot welding, projection welding, and assembly. In his speech, KIRCHHOFF Automotive CEO J. Wolfgang Kirchoff emphasized that the opening of the plant is an important part of our global corporate strategy: "With our newest plant in Gwinnett County, Atlanta, USA, we complete our global footprint. After all, our mission is to be close to our customers to provide them with the best possible service."

This decision was welcomed by our customers and city representatives. Several of them came to the opening ceremony, including Oliver Haase (vice president of procurement management BMW), Brian Rooney (team leader of procurement and supplier quality BIW Mercedes-Benz U.S.), and Nick Masino (president of the Gwinnett Chamber). They were happy about the investment of KIRCHHOFF Automotive as a business representative of the region. "Thank you Wolfgang for choosing us and your entire organization! Welcome to Georgia, the #1 state in the U.S. to do business. We are proud to have you here and will always support the company." In fact, KIRCHHOFF Automotive chose Gwinnett not only because of its proximity to our customers, but also because of the very positive economic environment. ■



The newly opened KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Atlanta, North America.





Visualization of the new 5,500 m<sup>2</sup> plant area in Esztergom, Hungary, where production will start in summer 2024.

# "MULTITASKING" IN HUNGARY

**AUTHOR: ARMIN BERTHOLD**  
**GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING**  
**KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE**

A lot has happened at the KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Esztergom, Hungary since the site was founded in 2004. After several expansions, almost all products in our portfolio can be manufactured at the plant. A new construction phase was initiated at the end of 2022.

It all started with the production of welded assemblies for Suzuki. In 2007, pressed parts were added to the portfolio. The acquisition of large transfer presses with press forces of up to 1,600 tons and the introduction of press hardening technology in 2012 required an expansion of the press shop. Gradually, the plant developed into a full site. This means that we can produce almost all the products in our portfolio here.

In 2022, we have also succeeded in winning orders for larger and more complex assemblies. To meet the ambitious schedule, we are temporarily using an existing production and logistics hall in nearby Dorog. Here, starting in late summer, 70 employees will produce the first assemblies on 6,400m<sup>2</sup> on state-of-the-art production lines and deliver them to our customers.

Due to extensive orders from our customers, the next construction phase at our Hungarian headquarters was initiated at the end of last year. Two production and logistics halls will be built on an area of over seven hectares. A total of 5,500m<sup>2</sup> is earmarked for the installation of new welding equipment. Beginning in summer 2024, 80 new employees will ensure smooth production processes there. For the first time, we will also implement new logistics concepts here.

To ensure that all construction projects and machinery investments are available on time, we are working together in project and start-up teams. Experienced engineers and technicians from the local departments and the global Central Service will provide intensive support for the new startups. ■



Plant layout of KIRCHHOFF Automotive in Hungary, with additional space for a new 5,500 m<sup>2</sup> plant area.



# A New Start-Up in Record Time

AUTHOR: ARTUR RATH  
DIRECTOR OPERATIONS  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

The challenge could hardly have been greater: within just two months, three new products had to be commissioned on four new welding lines.



Construction in record time! Within three and a half months, a hall with 1,125 m<sup>2</sup> of additional shipping area and 1,300 m<sup>2</sup> of additional empties area was built at the Attendorn plant.



One of the new welding lines for the VW MEB platform at the Attendorn plant.

In January, the two- to three-shift series supply of the VW MEB products wheelhouse, rear seat crossmember, and front seat crossmember for the customer Volkswagen was to start at two customer locations, new to the Attendorn plant.

"We already started this project, which involves very complex and highly demanding products, in December 2021. Series production started after twelve months at our Attendorn plant. In addition to the challenges in the project itself, this was realized in a crisis year. The successful implementation is due to the great performance of the KIRCHHOFF Automotive team and our external partners," sums up Michael Eichert, Global Executive Vice President Process Development, Program Management

However, before production could start on the welding lines, the employees in the press shop and tool shop were challenged. They had to test,

program, and adapt 14 new dies on various presses. In small groups consisting of press operators, tool-makers, tryout, and maintenance teams, this task was mastered mainly on weekends.

After just one and a half months, all the dies had been tested and were largely ready for series production. The next step focused on welding. The periphery in the building was prepared, the welding system supplier set the qualitative and economic parameters together with our local welding experts, employees were trained in equipping the welding systems, and the shipping area was redesigned and expanded.

Shortly before Christmas it was done: series production of the two wheel arches started. This was one of the fastest start-ups ever realized on such a scale. ■



AUTHOR: ALEXANDRA BRABENDER  
COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALIST KIRCHHOFF MOBILITY

# Our Passion: Mobility for People

For over three decades, KIRCHHOFF Mobility has been active as an independent vehicle retrofitter for versatile, user-friendly, and adapted mobility aids in standard vehicles. Our customers are people who can only use a motor vehicle to a limited extent due to medical conditions, age, or accidents.

**F**or example, we offer more mobility and thus a better quality of life to people dependent on a wheelchair by equipping vehicles with a rear cutout. Our goal is to offer a product that meets both our own and our customers' high quality standards. For this reason, we have further developed the NIVO ProLine Comfort rear cut-out over the past year.

We are not the only ones who are convinced that the result is something to be proud of. The new NIVO ProLine modular system is equipped as a standard with a one-piece aluminum ramp and offers easy and effortless handling by means of a damper-supported ramp lifting function. A special tub floor design allows the wheelchair to be positioned in a level position, enabling an upright and fatigue-free sitting position. Furthermore, the generous tub width of 82.5 cm offers easy entry and problem-free maneuvering of the wheelchair. Partially recessed front retractors allow an almost obstacle-free footwell, providing significantly more comfort for the wheelchair user. ▶



The new ProLine conversion with a one-piece aluminum ramp.



The bumper center section is attached to the ramp box and blends in with the vehicle in a visually appealing way. In the ProLine modular system, we have attached great importance to retaining the original tank in its entirety, despite the need for more space in the floor area. This means that the vehicle range specified by the manufacturer remains unchanged. Alternatively, we also offer the ProLine with a flex/taxi ramp without a wheelchair holder. Additional equipment such as the installation of a swivel-folding seat is also possible.



A special tub floor design allows the wheel-chair to be positioned in balance.

Technological progress and customer needs are always the focus for KIRCHHOFF Mobility. "We help people to be mobile again – that is our passion," says Holger Pape, managing director KIRCHHOFF Mobility. ■



A special tub floor design for the most upright and non-tiring sitting position possible in a wheelchair.

# ONE OF US



## ” CUSTOMER CONSULTANT WITH HEART AND MIND

Rolf Mättig was a trained retail toy salesman. After completing his apprenticeship, he had no idea what was possible in the field of vehicle construction for the disabled. Almost 30 years have passed since then, and Rolf Mättig has been working as a customer consultant at KIRCHHOFF Mobility in Hilden ever since. "The work is still a lot of fun. We work together in a well-functioning team, and we help people every day to improve their quality of life." Rolf Mättig advises customers and works with them to find the best solution to help with their mobility.



# A Guest at the Neighbor's

**AUTHOR: ANIKA TEUBNER**  
**MARKETING & MEDIA DESIGNER DIGITAL & PRINT WITTE TOOLS**

After its trade fair appearance at the international construction trade fair called "Bouwbeurs", which took place in Utrecht at the beginning of 2023, the WITTE Tools team drew a positive conclusion: "Our newly developed heavy-duty screw holder was very well received by both our existing and new customers."



It was the fourth time that WITTE Tools exhibited its high-quality tools and innovations at Bouwbeurs, which was attended by around 75,000 trade visitors this year. The WITTE Tools team with Christian Piccari (area sales manager), Nina Packwitz (international sales), and Alexander Hingst (sales and marketing manager), used this platform to present innovations such as the new "SSH" heavy-duty screw holder and the TOBI® drive system to existing and potential new customers. At the joint stand with twelve exhibitors and 28 brands, WITTE Tools also promoted private label customers who have tools produced in Hagen under their own name. Therefore, they can feel confident knowing that their products are "made in Germany" with high quality.

The WITTE Tools team with Christian Piccari (area sales manager) and Nina Packwitz (international sales) at the international construction trade fair "Bouwbeurs", which took place at the beginning of 2023 in Utrecht, Netherlands.

The popular construction trade fair "Bouwbeurs" is the destination of an international trade audience. It takes place every two years in Utrecht, the fourth largest city in the Netherlands. This year, 675 exhibitors showed a special range of products and services related to construction. The focus was on products, services, and current trends of international interest. The focus here was on topics such as finishing with sustainable building materials, roofing systems, tools, and screws, but also building elements such as windows and doors.

The WITTE Tools team expressed its great satisfaction with the positive response from visitors to the stand. "With the heavy-duty screw holder, we presented one of our new products which was met with great interest. We assume that this product will also appear in our customers' product range in the future," says Christian Piccari. ■



AUTHOR: CLAUDIA SCHAUE  
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER FAUN GROUP

# WE GROW

In May, ENGINIUS TEC was able to take over parts of the assets of the insolvent Clean Logistics subsidiaries from Winsen (Luhe).

160 hydrogen enthusiasts now work at ENGINIUS, working on carbon-neutral transport.

Clean Logistics, a young, publicly traded manufacturer and converter of environmentally friendly zero-emission trucks and buses had filed for bankruptcy in February. ENGINIUS, with its subsidiary ENGINIUS TEC, took over parts of the Clean Logistics assets as well as a highly specialized team from the areas of development, engineering and technology. The contract was signed at the beginning of May. In addition to the main plant in Bremen, developers, technicians & engineers now also work in Winsen (Luhe), Braunschweig and Potsdam. ENGINIUS TEC was founded as a development company and supporter of ENGINIUS GmbH.

**Goal of the team: the carbon-neutral transport.** In the meantime, 70 of the BLUEPOWER hydrogen refuse collection vehicles are in operation. Another 130 vehicles have been ordered. Beside this the teams work as well on the second model, the CITYPOWER for goods and distribution transport. The truck is based on the Atego chassis from Daimler Truck and will be available as a battery-electric and hydrogen version. ■

The new management of ENGINIUS gives full throttle hydrogen: Burkard Oppmann (CSO ENGINIUS), the two ENGINIUS TEC managing directors Philip Wagemann and Dennis Boller, Patrick Hermanspann (CEO FAUN Group), Thorsten Baumeister (CEO ENGINIUS) and Florian Brandau (CTO ENGINIUS) (from left)





# Great potential:

AUTHOR: GLENDA LANGE  
MARKETING ASSISTANT OF MANAGEMENT KIRCHHOFF ECOTEC

# AI in waste management

"When we think about the future use of AI in waste management, I see great potential in it for the ECOTEC Group", says Thomas Schmitz, CEO of the ZOELLER Group, and head of the AI development team.

**T**he ECOTEC Group already uses AI in products and business processes. KOCO Solutions developed a smart waste management system in which each customer pays for exactly the waste he or she has disposed of. As soon as the waste has been thrown in via the metal column, which has a card reader and display, it is weighed and paid for via chip card. Furthermore, the FAUN data glasses are used between the technicians at the customer's site and FAUN service employees. FAUN Service can directly see the customer's work area on their screen and give advice on repairs or construction plans. Sketches of the component or tips for maintenance work can be shown on the display of the glasses. ▶

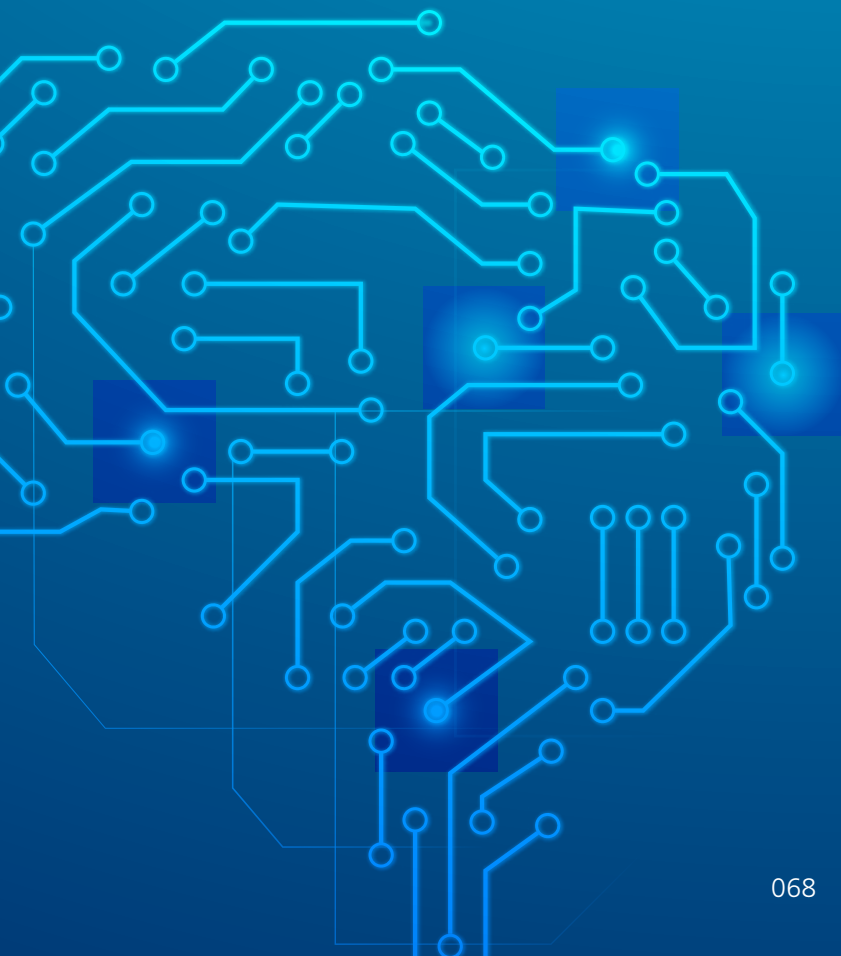


In order to be able to exploit the full potential of AI, a two-day workshop on "Application of artificial intelligence in products" in January was first about identifying areas where AI can be used. Several key areas in which the use of AI offers added value were jointly defined. These included autonomous sweeping, autonomous subsystems of RCVs, energy efficiency, health and safety, optimisation of the refuse collection route, image processing and digitalisation.

For example, one could imagine that in the future a sensor will be developed that adapts the cleaning method (e.g. suction power) to the detected dirt, an autonomous vehicle stop will be installed when bins are full, and in the area of energy efficiency, a control of vehicle parameters based on historical collection routes will be applied. In order to be able to guarantee even more safety, the safety-critical

elements such as lifting devices or running boards will be monitored by camera. Optimising waste collection routes based on traffic intensity and bin fill levels, and monitoring the wear and tear of machines to determine the length of warranty for used machines are also under discussion.

The workshop provided valuable insights into the potential of AI in waste management and the opportunities for ECOTEC Group to take a leading role in this field. With the establishment of the AI development team, the group is well positioned to take advantage of these opportunities and drive innovation in the industry. ■



# ONE OF US



## ” GO FOR IT!

The heart of Jens Hofmann, Head of Factory Service at FAUN Viatic GmbH in Grimma, Germany, has been beating for FAUN sweepers since 1994. There is hardly a street cleaning company in this world that uses our VIAJET and doesn't know him. His passion for sweepers is only surpassed by his volunteer work in his hometown Hohnbach. For eleven years as chairman in the local homeland association, he has organized clean-up events, erected maypoles, barbecued for charity and promoted the Saxon towns of Hohnbach and Colditz. We love it!





# A bärige Maschin

"A bärige Maschin" is Tyrolean dialect and means "a particularly strong machine". The VIAJET of the customer ASFINAG is used in the Vorarlberg region and has everything a sweeper's heart desires in terms of equipment.

**AUTHOR: HERBERT UTZ**  
**MANAGING DIRECTOR FAUN AUSTRIA**

Like every highway, the expressways of the Tyrolean Oberland must also be very clean. Therefore, ASFINAG (infrastructure operator and mobility partner for the operational management of the freeways and expressways in Austria) decided on a total of two FAUN sweepers. The latest VIAJET 7 with high-pressure system and HS 2000 hydrostatic drive is in sweeping operation on the highways around the Arlberg, one of the most popular winter sports regions in Europe.

ASFINAG: "With the FAUN VIAJET, we offer our guests the cleanest road conditions and thus a safe journey to their vacation. The VIAJET really leaves nothing to be desired, a thoroughly sophisticated machine, with state-of-the-art technology." The first of the two sweepers is in use on the Tyrolean side of the Arlberg in the highway maintenance department. The second is on highway patrol on the Vorarlberg side. Both sweepers were produced by FAUN Viatic in Grimma. ■

Clean for sure: Andreas Lechleitner, Andreas Klement, Mario Schöpf, Ingomar Föger, Managing Director Stefan Siegele, (all ASFINAG), Roland Ottillinger (MAN), Herbert Utz (FAUN Austria), Johann Haselwanter (MAN) (from left)

## Highlights of the VIAJET 7 R+L/HS:

- Sweeping unit on both sides
- HS2000 hydrostatic drive for maximum climbing ability
- Silent version
- Special highway warning light system
- Increased power blower
- 7 m<sup>3</sup> stainless steel dirt tank
- 4,200 l water tanks GRP plastic
- Hand suction system at the rear
- High pressure system with 240 bar with front, side and middle wash bars



AUTHOR: FREDERIK LÖSCH  
 MARKETING MANAGER ZÖLLER-KIPPER

# Individually strong, together unbeatable



**Above:** The electric truck "Designwerk MID CAB Collect 6x2R 375 E" is available stationed at the central location in Himberg and is on the roads of Lower Lower Austria to collect paper, organic waste or residual collect. **Right:** STUMMER has delivered 40 new waste 40 new waste collection vehicles to the FCC Group in the last two years.

STUMMER municipal vehicles and FCC Austria Abfall Service are linked by a long-standing partnership. This benefits not only the companies, but also the environment – and with a view to a clean future, each and every one of us.

A study by the World Bank predicts that global waste production will increase by 70 percent to approximately 3.4 billion tonnes per year by 2050. This means that waste management and waste disposal companies will play an increasingly important role. Equally, the challenges are increasing: Resource-saving waste collection, recycling and waste recovery are the major tasks of the industry.

FCC Austria Abfall Service AG is facing up to this in a special way. It specialises in the collection and recycling of waste materials from municipalities, trade and industry and operates 27 sorting plants, numerous modern landfills and a waste incineration plant in Zistersdorf, the thermal utilisation of which generates electricity for about 30,000 households every year.

In order to meet the demand for resource-saving and climate-neutral waste collection, the company relies on electric mobility – an area in which STUMMER Kommunalfahrzeuge, a company of the ZOELLER Group, has a great deal of expertise with more than 70 pressed waste bodies mounted on e-chassis. In cooperation with STUMMER, FCC Austria Abfall Service will gradually convert its entire fleet to

e-drives. The first step has been taken: since 2021, STUMMER has received orders for around 40 waste collection vehicles from FCC Austria Abfall Service – including the fully electric "Designwerk MID CAB Collect 6x2R 375 E" waste collection vehicle, which was handed over in June 2022.

Founded in 1988, FCC Austria Abfall Service AG is today one of Europe's leading companies in waste management. It is part of the FCC Environment CEE Group, the largest waste management company in Central and South-Eastern Europe with over 4300 employees.

Partnership is also practised at group level: the FCC Environment CEE Group and the ZOELLER Group work closely together when it comes to meeting individual requirements for vehicles and bodies in the various markets and regions. For example, the required useful volume is adapted depending on whether the waste is collected frequently or infrequently. The vehicle width depends on whether the route is more likely to lead through narrow alleys or over wide country roads. ■



Take a look at the new electric truck "Designwerk MID CAB Collect 6x2R 375 E" in operation on YouTube.



AUTHOR: FREDERIK LÖSCH  
MARKETING MANAGER ZÖLLER-KIPPER



Jürgen Kowalke is looking forward to a breath of fresh air in the south. **From left to right:** Marcus Lemke – Branch Manager South, Thomas Merz – Branch Manager South-West, Jürgen Kowalke – Head of Sales and Service Germany

# Redeployment in the south

In future, two new branch managers at Zöller-Kipper in Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria will guarantee optimal customer service. Thomas Merz moved to head the South-West branch in Gerlingen, Baden-Württemberg. Marcus Lemke now heads the South branch with two locations in the Bavarian cities of Augsburg and Fürth.

What has changed in the sales structure in the south apart from the two "new" branch managers? What strategy is being pursued with them?

**Marcus Lemke:** In order to serve customers in the best possible way, we have a two-location solution in Bavaria: Fürth in the north, Augsburg in the south.

**Thomas Merz:** Our sales structure in Baden-Württemberg has proven itself and is largely unchanged. Only the internal responsibilities have changed somewhat.

How are the individual branches structured, which departments are on site in each case?

**Marcus Lemke:** A total of 14 service technicians work in both Bavarian cities: eight in Augsburg, six in Fürth. Five of them work in the field. A warehouse clerk takes care of the two spare parts warehouses. Each team includes a clerk, workshop manager and, in Fürth, a sales employee.

**Thomas Merz:** We currently have 17 employees. Service technicians in the office and in the field work hand in hand with the sales department. In Gerlingen there is a workshop and a warehouse that stocks all the important spare parts. I myself am responsible for the sales division.

Where do you see opportunities/challenges, especially for the south?

**Marcus Lemke:** I see opportunities in the further development of hydrogen and electric-based vehicles. The challenge: finding good employees despite the lack of skilled workers.

**Thomas Merz:** One challenge is to make the market fit for alternative drives. Digitalisation and artificial intelligence play a major role in this. We are already involved in the topic and see good opportunities to support our customers in the best possible way in the conversion of their vehicles.

What are your plans for the future?

**Marcus Lemke:** To maintain our market presence and to further increase the satisfaction of our customers by expanding the service area.

**Thomas Merz:** We want to maintain and further expand our good position in the market. This also includes the continuous development of our employees – especially in the area of alternative drives.



Strong partner in the southwest: Branch office in Gerlingen



On site for Bavaria: Branch office in Augsburg



Service is written in capital letters here: The service centre in Fürth



We wish you a restful summer.

