

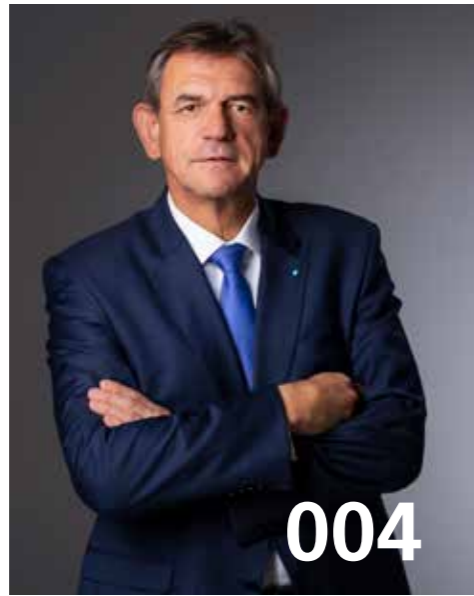
# K»MOBIL

THE KIRCHHOFF GROUP MAGAZINE



**Sustainable. Digital. Efficient.:**  
**FAUN, ZÖLLER and OCTRION**  
set new trends at IFAT in  
Munich, the world's leading  
trade fair for environmental  
technologies. [Read more on](#)  
pages 008, 068, 072 and 084 ▶

# Content



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Dr Johannes F. Kirchhoff, Chairman of the  
KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE supervisory board

## Dear customers and friends of our group of companies, dear employees,

What can we, as citizens, employees, and entrepreneurs, do in these geopolitically and economically challenging times to preserve, perhaps even strengthen, our position in the world, our competitiveness, our prosperity, and the cohesion of our society?

First and foremost, we must “put our own house in order.” Complaining about events we cannot change does not help. We must accept them, adapt, respond flexibly to changes, develop new ideas, demonstrate strength both externally and internally, and strengthen cohesion within our workforce and our society.

In these uncertain times, we must not overburden our social security systems. Calls for what our community or the state can do for us must take a back seat. Instead, we must be aware of our strengths: the advantages of our dual education system, the potential of our universities in teaching and research, our innovative capacity, and the strength of our social partnership between employees, works councils, trade unions, and employers. We must utilize, strengthen, and expand this foundation through our own efforts. ▶



Despite current challenges, we see numerous opportunities in our business areas of automotive mobility and logistics for the circular economy. The ongoing global desire for individual mobility continues to be a significant driver of growth and should be supported by policymakers through non-ideological and technologically flexible frameworks. This requires a swift adjustment of existing regulations; clearly defined emission limits for the future, structured in a sensible timeline, are sufficient. However, the concrete implementation – the “how” – must remain firmly with market participants within our proven system of the social market economy: companies, their employees, and customers.

There is great potential for our companies in the further development of low-emission automotive mobility. Body structures and optimized packaging for the safe and lightweight integration of drive batteries offer development and sales potential for our KIRCHHOFF Automotive companies. AI-supported analysis and control processes improve the efficiency of our manufacturing. In KIRCHHOFF Ecotec vehicles, AI is used for preventive maintenance and to increase operational safety and efficiency. The newly founded company OCTRION consolidates the digital solutions developed within the KIRCHHOFF Ecotec Group into a platform that our customers can use.

The initial approaches to autonomous driving also present great opportunities for us. The integration of sensors into vehicle structures, as well as driver shortages in vehicles for the circular economy and street sweepers, offer development and future sales potential. Our autonomous sweeper, TROMBIA FREE, is already available for use by our customers.

Further significant growth potential lies in transforming industrial value creation from a linear use of materials to closed material cycles. The current linear model – extracting raw materials, production, use, and subsequent disposal – will no longer

be sufficient to meet the increasing demand for raw materials from a growing global population. At the same time, volatile supply chains resulting from geopolitical tensions require a more resilient raw material supply. Therefore, the consistent circulation of materials used must become a core strategic element of our value creation. A study presented in May at the IFAT trade fair in Munich – the world’s leading trade fair for environmental technologies and the circular economy – by the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and conducted by Boston Consulting Group, estimates the potential at up to €880 billion in cumulative gross value added by 2045.

Key levers for realizing this value potential for our companies include:

- Circular product design
- Take-back systems and reverse logistics
- Ownership of products and materials, linked to their integration into new business models

With our company FAUN, part of the KIRCHHOFF Ecotec Group, we have already taken the lead here: In collaboration with Mercedes-Benz Trucks, TSR, and many other partners, we unveiled the reNew VARIOPRESS on a reEconic chassis at IFAT in Munich – a waste collection vehicle made primarily from recycled materials.

Our companies, with a focus on automotive mobility, have performed well and continue to hold strong in this challenging environment, supported by family ownership, a strong financial base, and the dedication of our employees. Through our investments this year, we are promoting organic growth, enabling the use of AI in manufacturing and in our Ecotec vehicles, and working intensively on our competitiveness. Our acquisition efforts will allow us to consistently tap into additional opportunities and leverage the potential of changing global conditions.

#### Finally, a personal note:

Over the past 32 years, following the acquisition of FAUN Umwelttechnik AG in 1994, I have had the privilege of building the waste logistics vehicle division within our family business. I have been supported in this by our customers and our employees, both nationally and internationally. I would like to express my sincere thanks to you in particular. Serving our customers and building a strong team have always been a special driving force for me. At the turn of the year, I was therefore able to hand over my active role into trusted hands within the company. The responsibilities that became available were also successfully filled by internal talent – some of whom began their careers as apprentices or students. You can all be proud of the development of our corporate community – I certainly am.

Wishing you a relaxing, joyful, and inspiring summer on behalf of my siblings Arndt, Eva, and Wolfgang, with a heartfelt “Glück Auf!”

Yours,

Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff

*Dr. Johannes Kirchhoff*



# Today's Waste. Tomorrow's Resource.

What once sounded like a political vision is now becoming reality. Circular economy does not end with waste collection; it starts in vehicle manufacturing. Together with 32 partners, including Mercedes-Benz Trucks and TSR Group, FAUN is demonstrating how a refuse collection vehicle itself can become part of a closed material loop.

**AUTHOR: CLAUDIA SCHAUÉ**  
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER  
FAUN GROUP



**reNew**  
**VARIOPRESS**

[www.fاون.com/re-new-variopress/](http://www.fاون.com/re-new-variopress/)

**A**t IFAT 2026, the FAUN Group unveiled the reNew VARIOPRESS mounted on the Mercedes-Benz Trucks reECONIC chassis. A vehicle concept that not only supports circular economy, but actively embodies it. Because the body does not just collect recyclable materials. It is increasingly made from them.

At the core of the concept is the consistent use of recycled materials in structural and functional components. An independent analysis verified by TÜV SÜD highlights the potential of the approach: up to 88 percent of the relevant material groups could theoretically be replaced by recycled content. Already today, the vehicle achieves an actual recycled material share of around 39 percent.

One of the biggest contributors to the improved material footprint is the use of steel with a high recycled content produced through CO<sub>2</sub>-reduced manufacturing processes. This approach is complemented by sustainable materials and optimized production methods throughout the vehicle. High recycling shares have already been achieved in plastic components as well. At the same time, the project opens the door for future developments. Vehicles are being designed so that materials can be recovered and returned to the loop at the end of their service life. The goal is clear: creating closed material cycles from raw material selection and vehicle operation through to recycling and reuse.

With the reNew VARIOPRESS, FAUN is already addressing key challenges facing municipalities and waste management companies. Sustainability criteria are becoming increasingly important in public procurement. CO<sub>2</sub> footprint, recyclability and lifecycle costs are now decisive factors in tender processes worldwide.

Convinced of the feasibility of a refuse collection vehicle made with recycled materials (from left): Matthias Harms (President of the German Association for Waste Management, Water and Circular Economy), Dr. Johannes F. Kirchoff (Chairman of the Supervisory Board of KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE), Hildegard Müller (President of the German Association of the Automotive Industry), Christian Wilz (CEO Mercedes-Benz Trucks), Bernd Fleschenberg (Managing Director of TSR Group GmbH & Co. KG), Burkard Oppmann (President of the German Association of Municipal and Industrial Vehicle Equipment Manufacturers and Managing Director of FAUN), and moderator Carina Bastuck.

The project was realized through a strong partner network including Mercedes-Benz Trucks, TSR and 30 additional partners. The vehicle will enter real-life operation with REMONDIS in the second half of the year, generating insights that will directly feed into future series production. Step by step, a new benchmark for sustainable commercial vehicle manufacturing is taking shape.

“With the reNew VARIOPRESS, we are proving that sustainability and economic efficiency are not opposites – they belong together,” says Malte Sonnenburg, CEO of the FAUN Group. ■

#### Fact Check:

- Up to 88% of relevant material groups can theoretically be represented by recycled materials
- Around 39% actual recycled content already achieved in the current vehicle
- Use of steel from CO<sub>2</sub>-reduced production with high recycled content
- High recycling shares in plastic components
- Developed together with Mercedes-Benz Trucks, TSR and 30 additional partners
- Focus on recyclability, CO<sub>2</sub> reduction and lifecycle costs
- Goal: industrial-scale circular economy in vehicle manufacturing



# For Lower CO<sub>2</sub>-Emissions

KIRCHHOFF Automotive and the Italian steel manufacturer Arvedi are further strengthening their long-standing collaboration. In Cremona, Italy, Chairman of the Board and CEO J. Wolfgang Kirchhoff signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Arvedi. The aim of the agreement is the gradual integration of Arvzero steel grades into KIRCHHOFF Automotive's product portfolio.

In doing so, both partners are making an important contribution to reducing so-called Scope 3 emissions – indirect emissions that occur along the value chain, for example through purchased materials, services, or transport and logistics processes.

## Arvzero Steel

Arvzero is a certified CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral flat steel. It is produced exclusively in electric arc furnaces (EAF) rather than blast furnaces, resulting in very low CO<sub>2</sub> intensity. In addition, it contains a high proportion of recycled scrap.

Arvedi's modern electric arc furnace steel plant impresses with the performance of its production processes: the entire path from liquid steel to the rolled coil takes place within less than two hundred meters, exemplifying efficient and highly disciplined industrial manufacturing. J. Wolfgang Kirchhoff and Michael Rank (Global EVP Procurement) were able to see this firsthand during a plant tour.

## Arvedi

Arvedi (Acciaieria Arvedi), headquartered in Cremona, is one of the largest flat steel producers in Italy. The company has been conducting researching EAF and ESP technologies for more than 30 years and is regarded as a technological pioneer in the decarbonization of the steel industry.

With the signing of the MoU, J. Wolfgang Kirchhoff (on the left in the picture) and Fabio Baldrighi, Commercial Director of the Arvedi Group, defined a clear roadmap for the use of CO<sub>2</sub> reduced and CO<sub>2</sub> neutral steel in KIRCHHOFF Automotive's products. "The partnership under-scores the importance of long-term, trust-based collaborations for the consistent implementation of our sustainability and innovation strategy," says J. Wolfgang Kirchhoff. ■

AUTHOR: MICHAEL RANK  
GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT PROCUREMENT  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

# Driving electrification forward

AUTHOR: STEFANIE STÜTING  
EDITORIAL TEAM ZOELLER GROUP

The electrification of waste collection logistics is gaining momentum at remarkable speed. Switzerland and Austria are emerging as European pioneers in this transition. Basel is leading by example – and STUMMER is actively helping shape the change.

**T**he transformation is visible – and measurable. In Switzerland, around 90 percent of newly procured refuse collection vehicles are already fully electric. Austria currently stands at roughly 40 percent, with a strong upward trend. Municipal operators and private waste management companies alike are driving the development forward. Manufacturers, body builders, and operators are working closely together to establish electric mobility as part of everyday operations.

One example of this momentum is the city of Basel. Together with STUMMER and system partner CONTENTA OCHSNER, one of Europe's most advanced municipal waste collection fleets is being created here. The first Meili Micro XL already entered service in 2025. Today, 15 fully electric refuse collection vehicles are in operation, including six compact vehicles designed for narrow streets as well as high-capacity bodies mounted on eActros chassis for main collection routes. ▶

## Electromobility in Basel at a glance

- 210,529 residents within the service area
- Up to 11 daily collection routes for municipal waste and 12 routes for paper and cardboard
- Electric vehicles in operation: three-axle vehicles, MEILL compact vehicles, and crane trucks
- Annual collection volumes:
  - Municipal waste: approx. 26,700 tonnes
  - Commercial waste: approx. 4,300 tonnes
  - Paper and cardboard: approx. 6,500 tonnes
  - Glass: approx. 4,000 tonnes
- Areas of operation: waste collection, recyclable materials logistics, street cleaning, and specialized services



“For Basel, electric mobility is part of a long-term climate strategy – vehicles, infrastructure, and operations must be considered together,” says Roger Reinauer, Cantonal Engineer and Head of Civil Engineering for the City of Basel. The strategy is clear: the fleet is being converted step by step, with measurable results. Beyond CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, one of the biggest advantages is the significantly quieter operation in residential areas.

STUMMER understands exactly what matters in this process. CEO Johann Streif explains: “The key is ensuring that the solutions work reliably in practice and meet the specific requirements of cities.”

Basel is far from an isolated example. From Geneva and Zurich to private waste management companies such as Leisibach and Obrist, electrification continues to advance. In Austria as well, cities like Vienna and Linz, together with companies such as Saubermacher and Brantner, are actively driving the transformation forward.

The range now extends from compact Meili vehicles for inner-city operations to powerful four-axle trucks equipped with cranes for complex tasks. Electric mobility has arrived in waste collection logistics – and is evolving from a specialised solution into the new industry standard. ■

**Left:** The MEILI vehicles equipped with the MICRO XL body are purpose-built for urban operations. Narrow, highly manoeuvrable and featuring all-wheel steering, they provide access to areas that were previously difficult to reach while delivering high operational efficiency through their integrated compaction systems. **Right:** In early 2021, the first two roof-mounted crane vehicles for the emptying of underground waste containers were delivered to the City of Basel. They have since proven their value in daily operation. Additional vehicles of this type are planned. © Department of Construction and Transport of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, Civil Engineering Office, Operations Division.



**Left:** Brantner green solutions – another contribution to the transition to electric mobility in Austria. © Brantner green solutions **Right:** Stummer electric vehicles in operation for Linz AG.

Renato Heiniger, CEO Contena Ochsner:

**„Electromobility is not a trend; it is a necessary step toward a sustainable future. Municipalities need to take a holistic approach to this transformation – and that is exactly how we support them.“**



Electric power made in Austria: Saubermacher MEDIUM X4 IHC SK351 PP equipped with an integrated body weighing system (GAV) and a cable winch (SW).

## AUTHORS:

SVEN PFLÜGER, GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT IT KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

DR. KEVIN BERK, GLOBAL DIRECTOR KAPS KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE

# Artificial Intelligence – Our Path to the Future



Artificial intelligence (AI) has long been part of our everyday lives – both privately and professionally. In industry, it helps us make processes more efficient, use knowledge more effectively, and reach decisions faster. But what does this specifically mean for KIRCHHOFF Automotive, and what measures are required to enable the purposeful use of AI within our company in the future?

Our production environment, our global teams, and increasing complexity demand intelligent tools that support us in our daily work. AI can help us with:

- creating more efficient IT and business processes
- increasing quality, speed, and transparency
- providing faster answers to technical questions
- enabling better-informed decisions through improved data analysis
- relieving the workload of our specialists

However, for AI to truly deliver value, one thing must be right: the data foundation. Without clean, up-to-date, and well-structured data, AI results are flawed or not usable at all. This principle is not new – “garbage in, garbage out” describes it perfectly. That is why we must make comprehensive investments in data quality and professional data management.

Our starting point: Nearly 400 terabytes of data are stored worldwide on our file servers. A closer look reveals that around 35 percent of this data has not been modified for more than five years. In addition, a large portion consists of so-called “dark data” – storage-consuming information without business value, such as duplicates or outdated documents. Through a global data clean-up initiative, we aim to remove at least half of this unnecessary data. This is a key prerequisite for any future use of AI.

In parallel with building a solid data foundation, we have launched various AI pilot projects in administration and production. For example, our employees now have access to Microsoft Copilot Chat as a secure, internal AI assistant. Unlike public AI tools, it guarantees enterprise-level data protection.

Since last year, we have also been developing so-called **AI agents** – digital assistants that independently perform tasks. They understand instructions, plan the necessary steps, carry out actions, and learn from the results. This allows them to automate processes, solve problems, or prepare decisions. To enable this, we have built our own AI platforms that

ensure all data is processed securely and exclusively within the company. Development examples include:

- automatic creation of IT tickets
- a user-friendly translation agent for all company languages
- additional automations for recurring tasks

At the same time, we are exploring **AI-supported solutions for our production operations:**

- **Automated error detection** through real-time analysis of AI-based image and process data to identify potential sources of defects at an early stage and reduce scrap
- **Use of humanoid robots** for potentially monotonous or ergonomically demanding tasks. These systems are designed to collaborate flexibly with humans, relieve employees, and ensure stable, reproducible processes

## Conclusion: Laying the foundation today for tomorrow

Artificial intelligence will sustainably transform the way we work. With our new AI platform, AI agents, a strong focus on data quality and data security, and the modernization of our IT landscape, we are creating the foundation for forward-looking applications – both in administration and in production. AI makes our processes more efficient, our decisions more robust, and our plants sustainably more capable. ■



# OCTRION: A digital DNA for the waste management industry



The three OCTRION managing directors (from left): Dr. Bojan Ferhadbegović (CPO), Rafael Kutz (CEO), Markus Fick (CTO).

**“WE SEE OURSELVES AS  
THE DIGITAL RIGHT HAND  
OF OUR CUSTOMERS.”**

AUTHOR: STEFANIE STÜTING  
EDITORIAL TEAM ZOELLER GROUP

Vehicles in the waste management industry are becoming increasingly intelligent. To drive these developments forward within the company itself, KIRCHHOFF Ecotec has brought together its digital specialists from ViSy, KOCO, and ScanTec under one new roof with the creation of OCTRION.

**F**or decades, metalworking and the assembly of refuse collection vehicles and sweepers have shaped daily operations in the production halls of ZOELLER and FAUN. Yet a look inside the driver’s cabins and at the rear sections of modern vehicles reveals just how dramatically the technology has evolved: sensors, camera systems, and high-performance computing now complement mechanical precision. The hardware is ready for the future – but its full potential is only unlocked through intelligent software. That is exactly where the story of OCTRION begins: in the close integration of machine and software.

Markus Fick, OCTRION CTO, emphasises the strategic dimension: “In a volatile world, OCTRION creates security for critical infrastructure and brings our expertise together exactly where it can deliver the greatest impact: in the intelligent networking of machines, people, and the environment.”

#### The mission: Radical simplification

A modern waste collection vehicle generates thousands of data points on every route: GPS positions, hydraulic pressures, fill levels, container identification numbers, or safety alerts from camera assistance systems. The challenge lies in transforming this data into information that drivers and dispatchers can use intuitively.

OCTRION CEO Rafael Kutz describes the approach as follows: “Our task is radical simplification: we transform enormous amounts of data and complex data flows into a simple, intuitive user experience – so that technology supports people instead of overwhelming them.”

To achieve this, OCTRION relies on a state-of-the-art digital customer portal where all information converges in one place. ▶



Applications range from fleet management and route optimisation to safety solutions. Systems continuously monitor the technical condition of vehicles and detect wear at an early stage, helping to prevent potential breakdowns before they occur. Safety also benefits: AI-supported camera systems can reliably detect people in hazardous areas and automatically brake or stop the lifter in critical situations.

**The customer's "Digital Right Hand"**

Despite all the technology, people remain at the centre of OCTRION's thinking. The software is designed to ease the workload of drivers while helping municipal operators work more efficiently and sustainably. Unnecessary trips can be avoided and energy consumption optimised.

CPO Dr. Bojan Ferhadbegović sees this as OCTRION's real value: "We see ourselves as the digital right hand of our customers – making complex processes tangible and ensuring that innovation creates real value in everyday operations: simplifying and accelerating workflows, reducing costs, and increasing vehicle availability."

**The Vision:**

**OCTRION is designed to establish itself as the standard platform for digital solutions in the waste management industry – serving as the digital DNA of KIRCHHOFF Ecotec and as a reliable interface between vehicles, people and infrastructure.**

**The future of waste management is digital, connected, and from now on, it has a name: OCTRION.**

**Intelligent together, locally empowered.**

**This is how we make complexity manageable.**



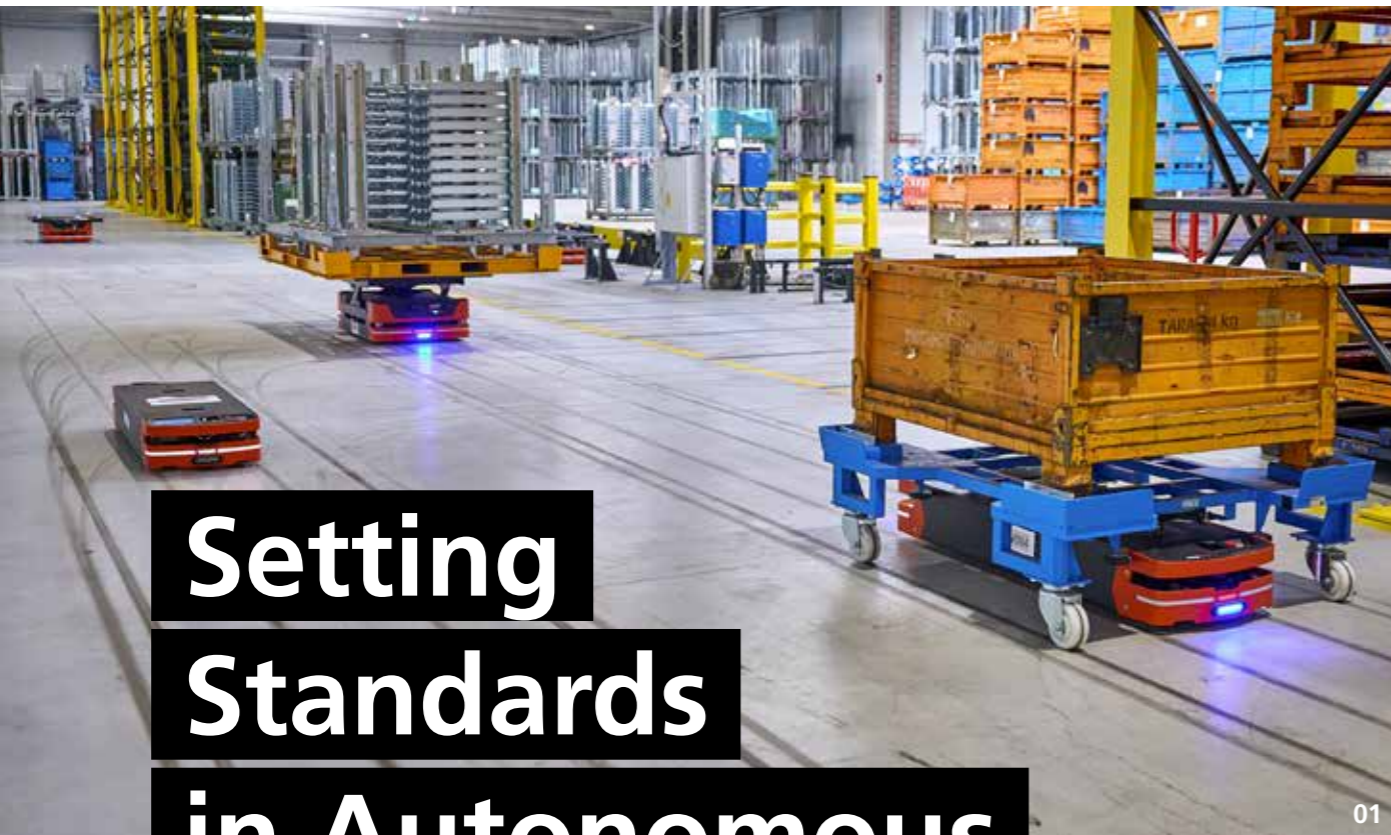
Solution Architect Jens Kock built the new cloud platform for OCTRION.

**"AS CENTRALISED AS NECESSARY, AS INDIVIDUAL AS POSSIBLE."**

Within KIRCHHOFF Ecotec, OCTRION represents the group's digital solutions division. Jens Kock, Solution Architect at KIRCHHOFF Ecotec, is currently leading the development of a new cloud platform. It will provide a shared digital foundation for the group's companies and their customers. The goal is to deliver digital services in a structured, secure, and sustainable way for the long term.

Beyond OCTRION itself, Kock is also shaping the strategic alignment and connectivity between the different companies within the group. His mission is to organise collaboration across locations and business models in a way that ensures reliable shared processes while preserving local strengths. His guiding principle: "As centralised as necessary, as individual as possible."

For him, integration is not created through standardisation alone, but through trust, transparent interfaces, and modular solutions. Or, as Jens Kock puts it: "Real added value emerges where collaboration is designed consciously." ■



01



02



03

# Setting Standards in Autonomous and Fully Networked Intralogistics

**AUTHOR: ANDREAS DENSO  
GLOBAL DIRECTOR MATERIAL  
PLANNING AND LOGISTICS  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE**

KIRCHHOFF Automotive is setting new benchmarks in digitalized intralogistics. As production and logistics processes continue to be digitalized, the implementation and efficient use of autonomous and fully networked systems is becoming increasingly important.

**S**tate-of-the-art AGV technology, swarm-intelligent control of material flows, high-speed camera gates for label barcode capture, and real-time asset tracking are becoming decisive factors for productivity and process reliability. Using three examples, KIRCHHOFF Automotive demonstrates different approaches to entirely new forms of production logistics: intelligent, agile, and fully automated.

## 01 Autonomous AGV Fleets

At the Esztergom site, a fully networked fleet of eight AGVs has been introduced. Production systems automatically transmit material and load carrier requirements directly to available vehicles – without a central control system and without manual intervention. The AGVs navigate freely, communicate in a swarm, optimize their routes, and increase safety, efficiency, and layout flexibility. “With this AGV solution, we are connecting production and logistics more closely than ever before. The system operates autonomously, proactively, and with absolute reliability – a real quantum leap in efficiency and process security,” says Tamas Pirokska, Logistics Engineer. Zero-touch logistics as a scalable technology for additional production sites was considered from the very beginning of the project and will also be applied in future initiatives.

## 02 Real-Time Asset Tracking in Portugal

A tracking system localizes forklifts and tugger trains in indoor areas in real time and visualizes positions, driving status, and routes via a BI (Business Intelligence)-based dashboard. The data enables more efficient resource planning, AI-based

identification and elimination of bottlenecks, predictive maintenance, and increased safety. By integrating the system into MES and SAP, system-generated replenishment transport orders can be optimally sequenced and prioritized. “The introduction of a real-time asset tracking system for industrial trucks represents an important step toward digitalization and transparency in intralogistics – initially at our plant in Portugal and subsequently at other selected locations,” says João Sousa Silva, Senior Digitalization Consultant.

## 03 High-Speed Camera Gate in Shenyang

For automated SAP goods receipt posting, infrared LED-supported, high-resolution industrial cameras capture label barcodes as pallets pass through. The system replaces manual scanning and posting processes. Industrial cameras, sensors, and edge computing enable a permanent real-time connection between physical data capture and SAP. “For our plant in China, this means not only higher efficiency in day-to-day operations, but also a sustainable improvement in data quality and process stability across the entire supply chain,” says Selina Qi, Director Logistics China. ■

**AUTHOR: NATASHA PHILPOTT  
COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALIST  
KIRCHHOFF AUTOMOTIVE**

# Building Bridges Between Continents

KIRCHHOFF Automotive’s international exchange program gives employees the opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. At the same time, it strengthens the awareness of what it means to be successful as part of a globally connected team – united by shared goals, diverse perspectives, and connections that span continents.



Chen Zhang



Michael Siebert



Nick Dimowski

**C**hen Zhang, Process Planning Supervisor in Aurora (Canada), and Michael Siebert, Process Planning Assembly Specialist in Attendorf (Germany), recently completed a six month international exchange. The experience took both of them far beyond their comfort zones and brought them closer to colleagues who had previously been working at distant locations.

In Attendorf, **Chen Zhang** focused on analyzing and optimizing processes, working closely with cross functional teams to identify improvement potential and document best practices. However, the value of the direct exchange went far beyond technical skills: “I felt very welcome and truly enjoyed building close relationships in a friendly and supportive environment,” Chen Zhang reflects. For **Michael Siebert**, the exchange offered valuable networking opportunities and direct insight into working with the Aurora team. “It was a great experience to connect personally with the team on site,” he says, emphasizing the benefits of face to face communication and close coordination in projects.

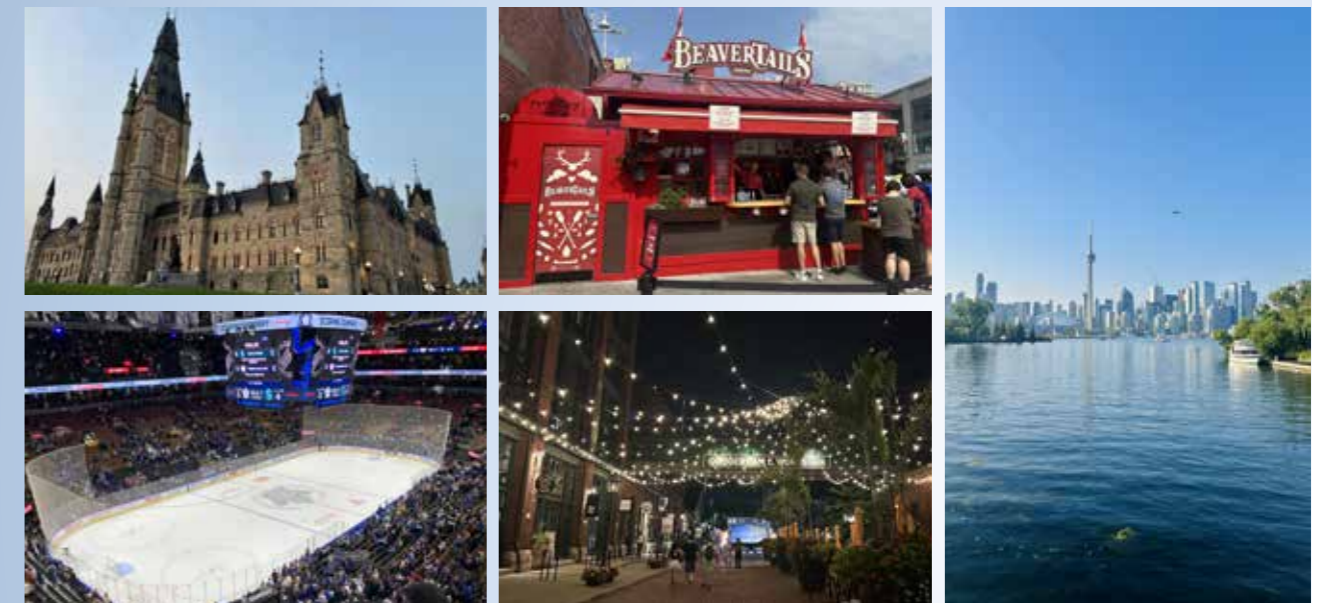
For several months now, **Nick Dimovski**, Program Manager from Troy (Michigan), has been working at the Attendorf site as part of a one year international exchange program. From the very beginning, Nick has been fully integrated into the technical work: he actively contributes to customer projects and particularly values the close, open collaboration with colleagues in Germany and Poland. The international

assignment enables him to compare working methods, expand his network, and further develop his intercultural skills in a targeted way. For him, one thing is clear: the international exchange is a unique opportunity that extends far beyond everyday

professional life. “I’m trying to make the most of my time here,” says Nick. “This experience is already one of a kind – and I’m excited to see what the rest of the year will bring.” ■



Chen Zhang – Impressions of his exchange



Michael Siebert – Impressions of his exchange

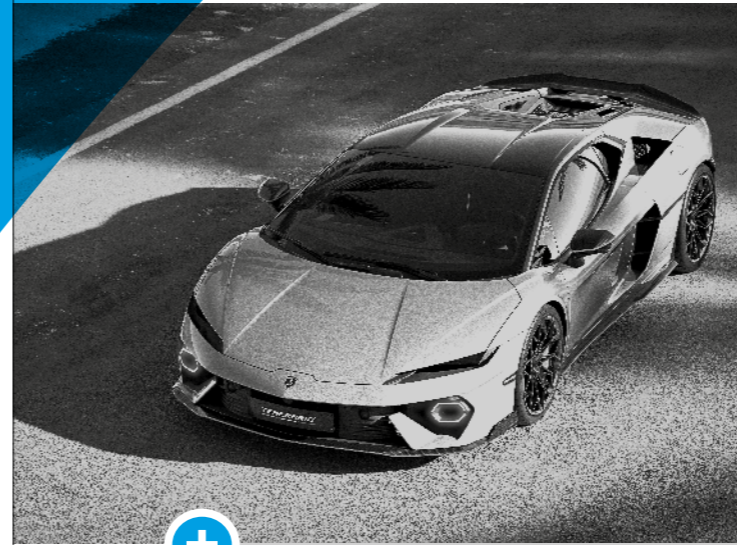


Nick Dimowski – Impressions of his exchange

AUTHORS: SABINE BOEHLE, COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING MANAGER  
EVA RADEMACHER, COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALIST

# New Products on the Road

From super sports cars to electric mobility: our current projects showcase the full spectrum of modern body structure development. With innovative technologies, maximum precision, and strong collaboration, components are created that set benchmarks in design, safety, and efficiency.



## Lamborghini Temerario: V-brace and BIW Aluminum Assemblies

### Technologies

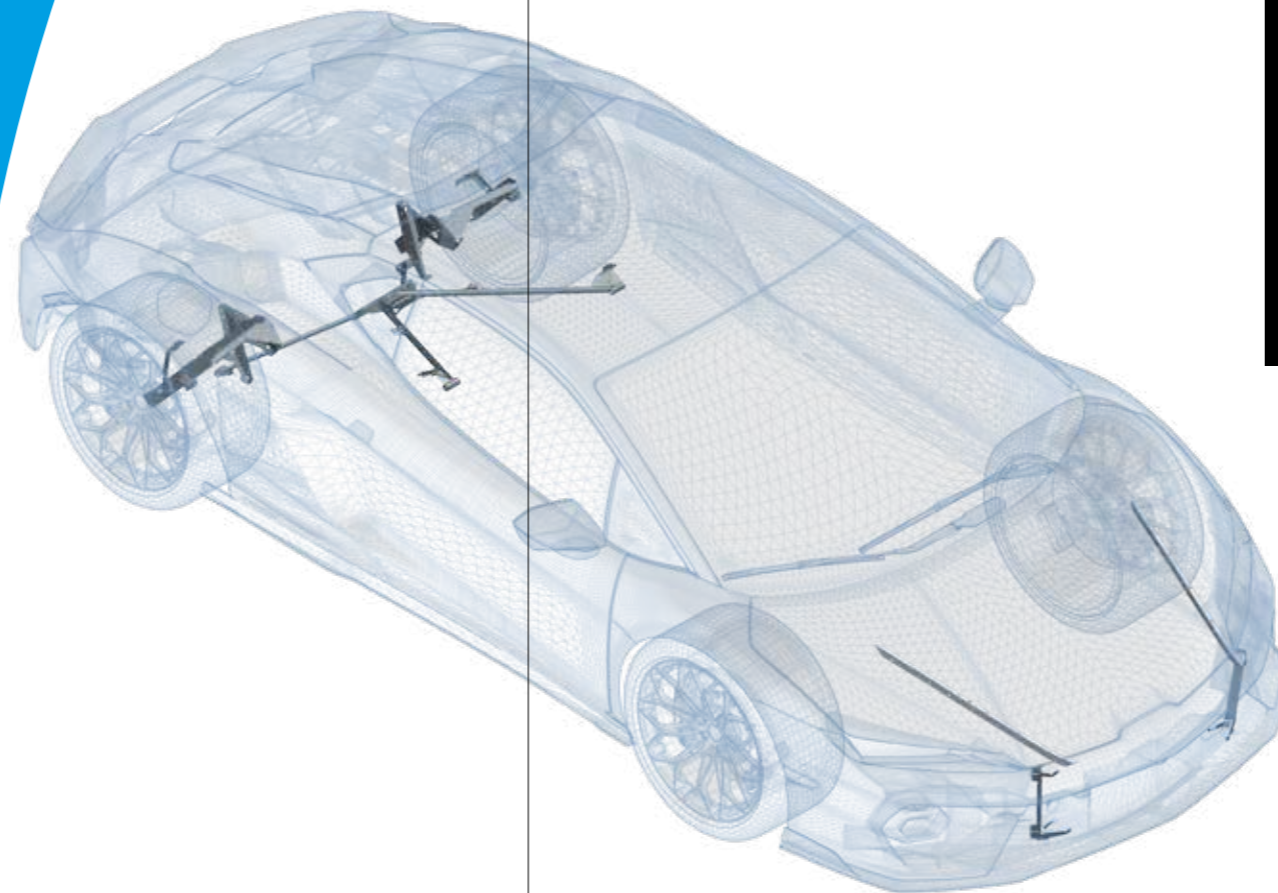
Aluminum forming, aluminum profile machining, riveting, MIG welding

### Production Plant

Prototype/low-volume center  
Attendorn/Germany

### Customer/Model

Lamborghini Temerario Coupé and Spyder



## Iconic Premium Element for a New Super Sports Car

For the new **Lamborghini Temerario**, KIRCHHOFF Automotive supplies several high-quality aluminum assemblies for the body-in-white.

The collaboration between Lamborghini and KIRCHHOFF Automotive has steadily evolved over the years. What began with components for other models within the group has led to direct involvement in the new hybrid super sports car project. The cooperative and creative partnership was a key factor in successfully meeting the demanding requirements.

For the Lamborghini Temerario, we manufacture several highly complex aluminum components that require the highest precision in dimensional accuracy, surface quality, and manufacturing technology. A particular highlight is the V-brace, developed jointly with the customer, positioned directly above the engine – the “heart” of the vehicle. This visible component for the driver bears the iconic V8 logo and combines several functions: it contributes to the stiffening of the body structure while also meeting the highest demands in design, precision, and surface quality.



**Kia EV4: Front Crossmembers, Rear Side Member (right/left)**

**Technologies**

Hot forming, laser cutting, heat treatment

**Production Plant**

Gliwice/Poland

**Customer/Model**

Kia EV4

**Important Milestone on the Road to Electromobility**

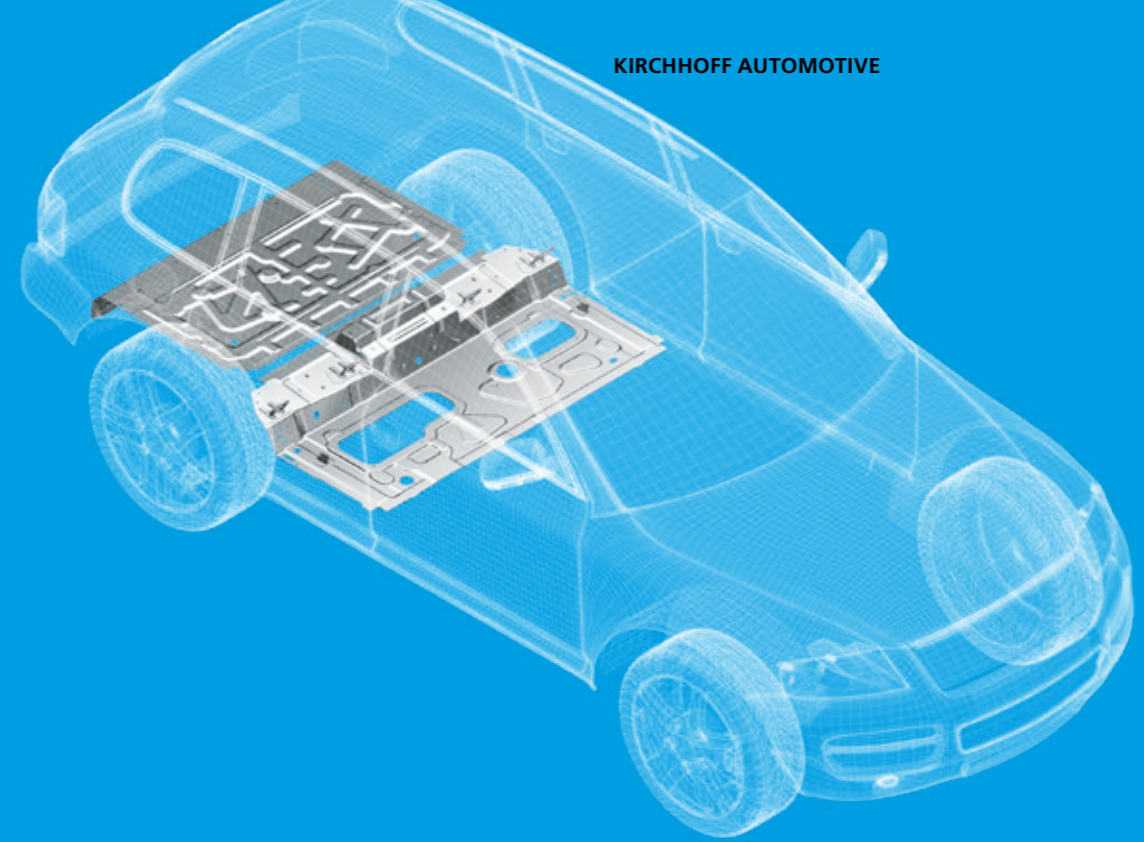
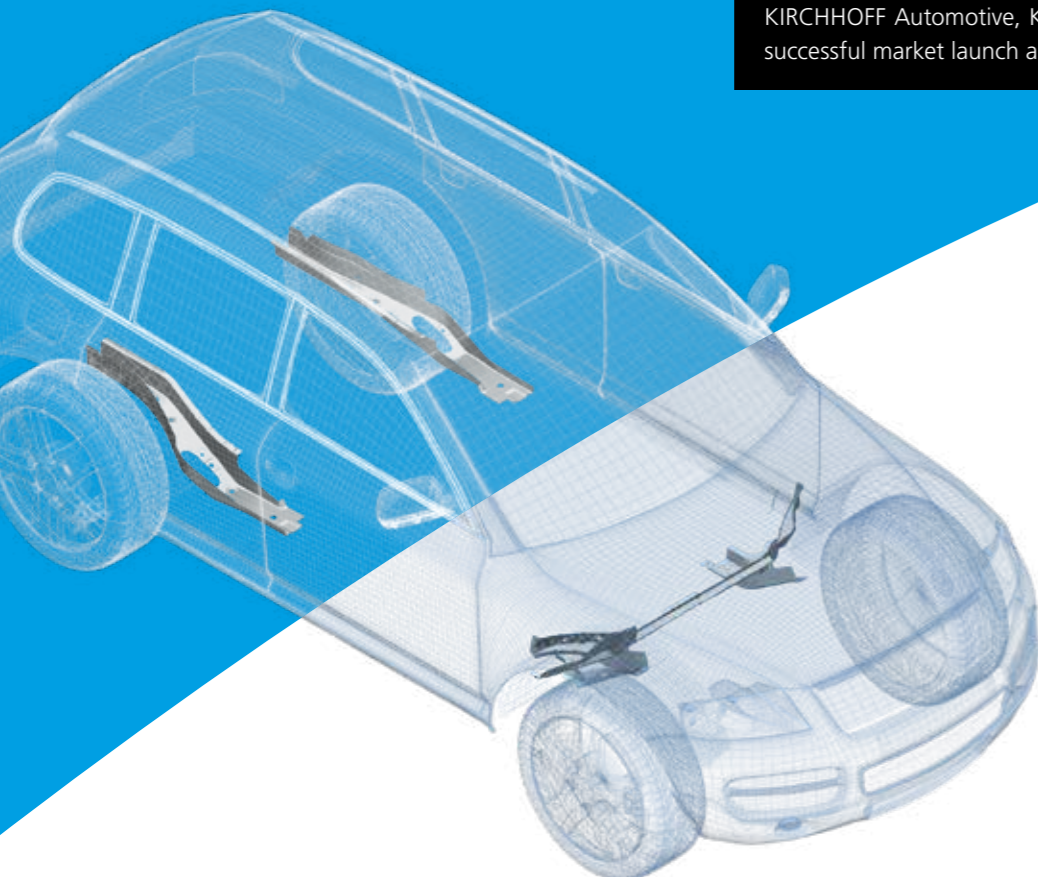
The start of production of the new **Kia EV4** at the Žilina plant in Slovakia marks a major milestone in the continued electrification of Kia's product portfolio and highlights the flexibility and technological expertise of its European production sites.

For the newly introduced Kia EV4, KIRCHHOFF Automotive manufactures a package of hot-formed components. The Gliwice plant has expanded its product portfolio by using high-strength steel SABC 1760 50/50. Introducing a hot forming process with this material requires consistent and strict process discipline. In addition, a new heat treatment process was implemented to ensure the required material properties in the final stage of production according to the customer's specific requirements.

The technical process validation was carried out by the Gliwice team in cooperation with Kia's research and development department in Korea.

The goal now is to further expand the existing collaboration and sustainably strengthen the long-term partnership with Kia.

The EV4 series is the first electric vehicle produced at Kia's plant in Slovakia. It represents Kia's consistent focus on modern design, technological innovation, and sustainable mobility. With the support of strong partners such as KIRCHHOFF Automotive, Kia has laid the foundation for a successful market launch and stable series production.



**Mercedes-Benz GLC: Rear Floor**

**Technologies:**

Forming, hot forming, projection welding, resistance spot welding

**Production Plants:**

Pitești/Romania, Esztergom/Hungary

**Customer/Model:**

Mercedes-Benz GLC

**Structure for the Future**

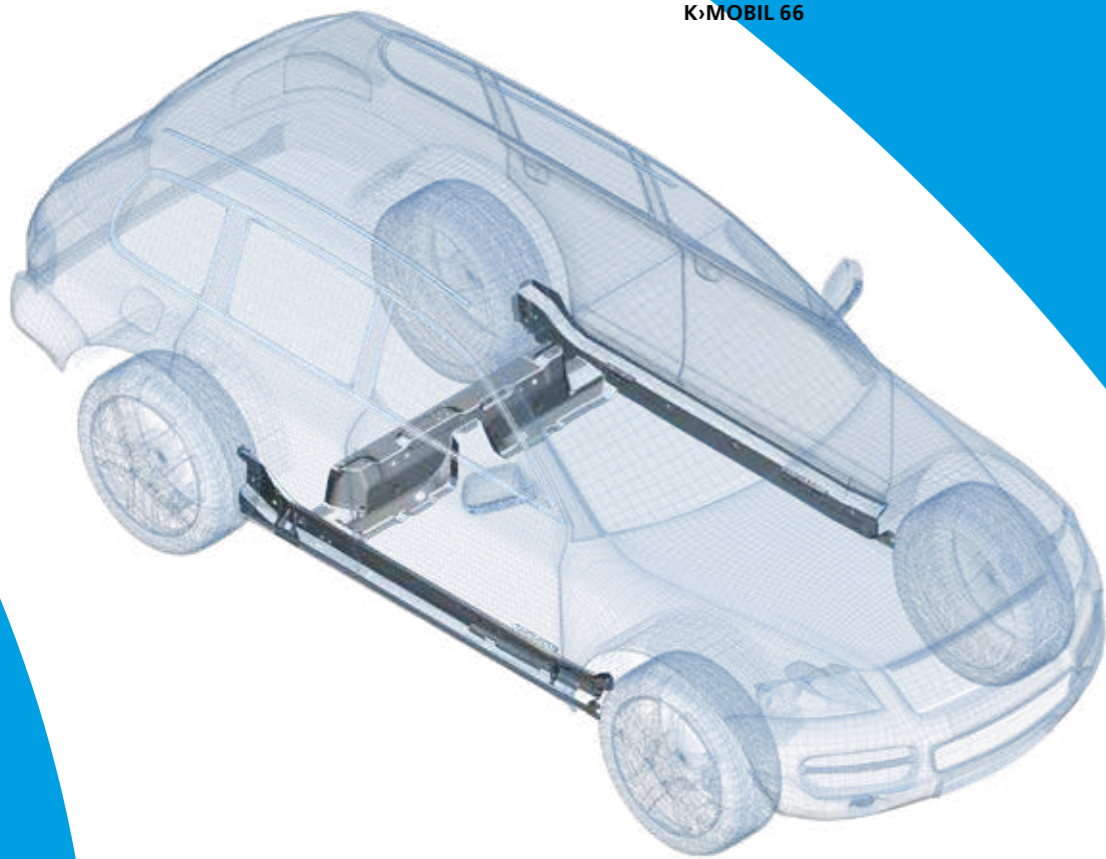
At the plants in Pitești (Romania) and Esztergom (Hungary), KIRCHHOFF Automotive manufactures the rear floor for the fully electric Mercedes-Benz GLC as a central, safety-relevant structural component. This part marks several premieres for the automotive supplier.

The rear floor is the first major assembly to be produced in the new hall at the Esztergom site. At the same time, this is the first time at KIRCHHOFF Automotive that a rear floor made of hot formed components is being used. The project therefore marks an important milestone in the further development of the product and technology portfolio.

The rear floor performs a load-bearing function within the body structure and is specifically designed to meet the increased requirements of modern electric vehicles. It supports defined load paths in the rear area and makes a significant contribution to structural stiffness and crash safety. Additional safety-relevant features include integrated ISOFIX mounts, seatbelt attachment points, and crash hooks to support defined load paths in a frontal impact. Thanks to the high level of functional integration, the component reduces the number of separate individual parts and contributes to efficient assembly in the vehicle plant.

The successful implementation of this project confirms KIRCHHOFF Automotive's competence as a high-performance partner for complex structural components – particularly in the context of fully electric vehicle platforms.





**Audi Q3 NAR – Rocker Panel and Heel Part**

**Technologies**

Forming, hot forming, spot and projection welding, bonding

**Production Plant**

Esztergom/Hungary

**Customer/Model**

Audi Q3 NAR

**One Million and More**

The new **Audi Q3** is conquering the North American market – and with it, our rocker panel and heel part components in a new configuration are being used.

After surpassing the impressive milestone of over one million vehicles produced, the new Audi Q3 entered production last year at the Győr plant in Hungary. On board: rocker panel and heel part components from the KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Esztergom, Hungary.

These proven welded assemblies are now taking the next step: KIRCHHOFF Automotive is now producing components specifically tailored to the requirements of the North American market.

For this market, the welded assemblies have been further developed. A reinforced design with additional individual parts, along with a tailored assembly concept, ensures the necessary robustness and functionality. Despite their proximity to the VW MQB evo platform, these are independent, new assemblies produced on specially designed production lines.

The components supplied to Audi plants in Győr/Hungary and Ingolstadt/Germany therefore represent another important building block in the rollout of the MQB evo platform – and at the same time a strong example of the international performance and flexibility of KIRCHHOFF Automotive.

**AUTHORS:**  
**ANDREAS HEINE, GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING**  
**NATASHA PHILPOTT, COMMUNICATION MARKETING SPECIALIST**

# Two Auto Shows, Two Perspectives



Mercedes-Benz impressively presents its automotive heritage at Auto China in Beijing.

The international automotive world is currently looking at the future from very different perspectives. This became particularly evident during our visits to the Canadian International AutoShow in Toronto and Auto China in Beijing. The two events differ significantly in size, dynamics, and strategic relevance.

**Toronto:  
Market Proximity,  
Continuity, and Predictable  
Evolution**

The Canadian International AutoShow traditionally stands for customer proximity and a strong visitor experience. The focus was on models that are available in the short term and build on proven concepts – particularly from established manufacturers such as Volkswagen, Ford, Toyota, and Hyundai. Electrification remains a key topic, though less as a radical transformation and more as a consistent evolution of existing platforms.

For KIRCHHOFF Automotive, particularly relevant: many of the vehicles on display feature components from our plants. This was visible, among others, in the 2026 Dodge Charger, which not only attracted significant attention but had also shortly before been named North America’s Car of the Year.

The show thus presented a clear picture of the North American market: stable volumes, evolutionary development of body structures, and a noticeable focus on efficiency, cost, and sustainability. For suppliers, this means reliability – while at the same time increasing demands on material usage and cost efficiency.



**Beijing:  
Maximum Speed of  
Innovation and Extreme  
Price Pressure**

A completely different scenario was presented at Auto China in Beijing – today, without exaggeration, the most important automotive trade show in the world. This is where the pace is set for new vehicle architectures, drive concepts, and market dynamics.

The dominant trend remains fully electric mobility. However, it was noticeable that several manufacturers are attempting to adopt the successful range extender concept (EREV) of Chinese brands. This became especially evident with the Volkswagen ID.9 ERA, the first production VW with a range extender, specifically aimed at competitors such as our customer Li Auto (Lixiang). At the same time, the market shows how quickly technologies can become outdated: Lixiang’s current best-selling model is already fully electric – suggesting that range extenders may prove to be merely a transitional technology.

**German OEMs: Localization vs. Brand DNA**

Volkswagen and Audi are increasingly adapting design, technology, and software to Chinese customer requirements. Partnerships such as the one with XPENG are becoming visible in new models – up to nearly identical interior and infotainment concepts. Audi also presented China-exclusive NEV models and its consistently digitized “Audi without rings” strategy.

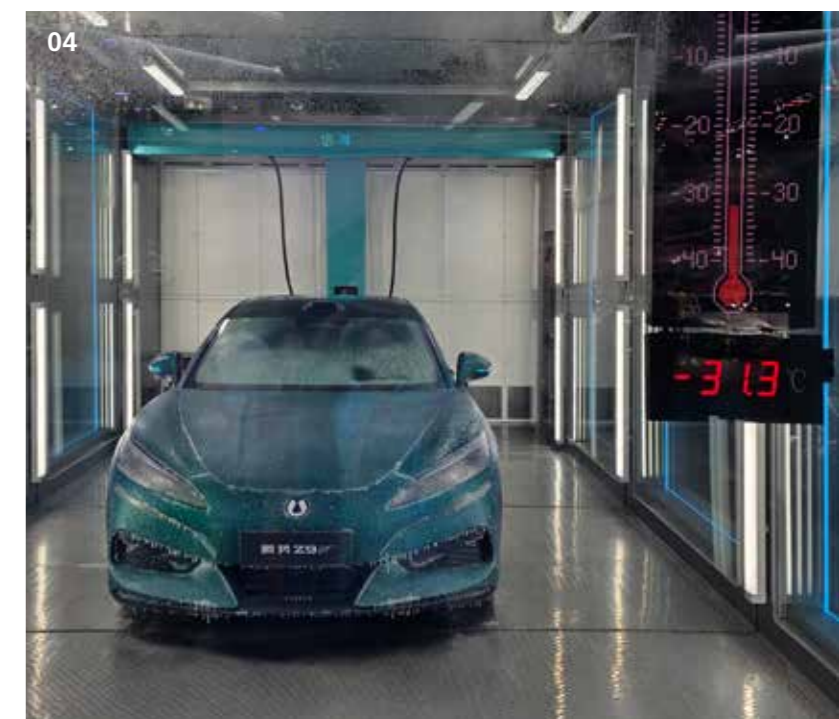
Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, and BMW, on the other hand, continue to deliberately emphasize their global brand identity. Porsche once again highlighted its sporting heritage (“There is no substitute”) and presented, among other models, the electric Cayenne. BMW introduced the Neue Klasse for China, including the long-wheelbase iX3.

These differences illustrate a key area of tension: maximum localization versus global recognizability.

**China as a Driver of Innovation – Also for Vehicle Structures**

Our customer BYD delivered a particularly impressive presentation, setting new benchmarks with a new battery and charging technology: charging from 10 to 97 percent in nine minutes makes charging effectively faster than conventional refueling (when including the payment process). The planned roll-out of 20,000 proprietary charging stations underlines the system-wide approach of Chinese manufacturers – from battery to infrastructure.

For us as structural specialists, the supplier halls were also highly insightful. In our relevant environment, aluminum clearly dominated – especially aluminum die casting. Traditional steel concepts played almost no role at the Chinese show. The trend toward highly integrated, function-optimized lightweight structures is therefore continuing consistently. ■



**01** Toronto AutoShow featuring the “Car of the Year,” the 2026 Dodge Charger, equipped with various metal structural components from KIRCHHOFF Automotive (see also page 53). **02** At Auto China in Beijing, the world’s most important automotive trade show, Volkswagen presented, among others, the ID.9 ERA, the first production VW with a range extender. **03** Lixiang’s current flagship model, the L9, with range extender. **04** Our customer BYD is setting new standards with a new battery and charging technology: charging from 10 to 97 percent in nine minutes, and only 3 minutes longer at minus 30°C.



Around 100 employees look back together with the management team on two decades of successful development.

# 20 Years of Commitment to China's Automotive Industry

Together for the mobility of tomorrow: On April 22, 2026, the KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Suzhou, China, celebrated its 20th anniversary – 20 years of commitment to China's automotive industry, with a clear focus on innovative light-weight technologies.

**AUTHORS:**  
 ANDREAS HEINE, GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING  
 JANET GE, COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING MANAGER



Impressive stage performances: Modern meets tradition.

IN SUZHOU  
**20** Years



**Suzhou Industrial Park:** The KIRCHHOFF Automotive Suzhou plant was founded in 2006 and is located in the Suzhou Industrial Park, one of China's most competitive state-level development zones. Covering just 278 square kilometers, the park concentrates the country's economic dynamism: in 2025, its GDP reached RMB 416.31 billion (approx. USD 58 billion) – around two-thirds of Luxembourg's economic output. KIRCHHOFF Automotive Suzhou is one of the key industrial contributors in this region.

**T**ogether with government representatives, leaders of industry associations, customers from renowned automakers, and around 100 employees, the company looked back on two decades of successful development while also focusing on the future.

Since its founding in 2006, the Suzhou plant – KIRCHHOFF Automotive's first wholly owned subsidiary and at the same time its headquarters in China – has developed rapidly. In the course of the strong growth of the New Energy Vehicle (NEV) industry, the plant is now a key supplier to many leading OEMs. The LI Auto "Quality Excellence Award" particularly

CEO J. Wolfgang Kirchoff emphasized in his speech the importance of stability, long-term thinking, and a strong team:

**”** In order to maintain a strong position in this changing world, a strong team and solid corporate structures are essential. Our family business has existed for 241 years, and during this time we have always taken responsibility for our customers and consistently committed ourselves to the highest quality and best service. This is only possible thanks to dedicated employees – such as those we have at KIRCHHOFF Automotive – and strong structures within the company. I would like to emphasize that my family is clearly committed to a long-term future. There are currently many changes, not only in our industry but worldwide. Yet together with our customers and our employees, our management team, we are not afraid to actively shape this future.”



highlights KIRCHHOFF Automotive's outstanding quality performance.

In his speech, CEO J. Wolfgang Kirchoff emphasized the importance of stability, long-term thinking, and a strong team.

Wen Leyendecker, Managing Director KIRCHHOFF Automotive China, hosted the event. She highlighted that over the past 20 years, KIRCHHOFF Automotive has evolved from a newcomer to a central hub of the group in the Asia-Pacific region.

Yang Jie, Deputy Secretary General of the China Auto Lightweight Technology Innovation Strategic Alliance / SAE China, also acknowledged the company's role: since joining the alliance in 2010, KIRCHHOFF Automotive has brought European cutting-edge technology to China and established one of its three global R&D centers in Suzhou – an impressive example of local innovation capability.

Looking ahead, Jimmy Gu, Operations Director KIRCHHOFF Automotive China, stated that the focus will remain on intelligent transformation, lean production, and operational excellence. "Twenty years is a milestone – but also a new starting point. Together with our partners and employees, we will write a new chapter for KIRCHHOFF Automotive."

In the future, the Suzhou plant will remain committed to its mission, "Making Mobility Safe." Through innovations in lightweight materials, low-CO<sub>2</sub> manufacturing, and smart connectivity, KIRCHHOFF Automotive will continue to shape the next successful 20 years together with China's automotive industry. ■



**Above:** Together with government representatives, industry association leaders, customers from renowned automakers, and around 100 employees, the KIRCHHOFF Automotive plant in Suzhou celebrated its 20th anniversary. **Below:** The symbolic ceremony was the emotional highlight of the anniversary celebration.





## Back Home – Experiences That Last

**AUTHOR: PIOTR TOMASZEWSKI**  
GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING

For two and a half years, Piotr Tomaszewski lived and worked in the United States with his family. As Vice President Manufacturing Engineering, he supported major projects at the North American plants – and gained impressions that have had a lasting impact on him. Back in his home country, in April 2026 he succeeded Armin Berthold as Global Executive Vice President Manufacturing Engineering, following Berthold's retirement after 35 years with KIRCHHOFF Automotive.

**“I wanted to understand how North America ticks,”** he says, looking back. The step across the Atlantic appealed to him both professionally and personally. However, the start was challenging: a visa issued for too short a period, and a tornado that cut power to their new home for a week. “Fortunately, the neighbors were incredibly helpful. That openness supported us right from the beginning.” Professionally, too, the time demanded everything: new standards, different working cultures, rapid site expansions – especially in Mexico, where two new plants were built under intense time pressure.

**“What made us successful? One team, one goal. Everyone pulled together – that was impressive.”**

He was particularly moved by the encounters he experienced: American calmness, trust in everyday life, and the breathtaking nature from Virginia to Arizona. “On television, you might see one percent of it,” he says with a laugh. His family also found their footing: the older son got off to a flying start, while the younger one initially struggled with the language – until after just a few weeks he was “talking the most and the loudest.”

**Left:** Armin Berthold (left), Global Executive Vice President Manufacturing Engineering, is retiring after more than 35 years during which he played a decisive role in shaping the development of our global plants. Looking ahead to the succession, Armin Berthold emphasizes: “My personal wish has always been that KIRCHHOFF Automotive would hardly notice my departure. With Piotr Tomaszewski, we have, over the past several years, developed a highly competent successor in every respect.”



Every six months, the family traveled to Poland during the summer holidays and at Christmas. “That’s why returning didn’t feel like we had been away for two years – but packing nine suitcases weighing a total of 250 kilos was still an adventure. And my garden urgently needs attention now. In spring, when garden work usually starts, I simply wasn’t there,” Piotr Tomaszewski recalls.

**What remains?** Gratitude. New perspectives. And the knowledge that major projects only succeed when people trust each other and work together toward a shared goal. Today, one year later, Piotr Tomaszewski has taken the next step, assuming the role previously held by Armin Berthold. After more than 35 years in which he decisively shaped the development of our global plants, Armin Berthold is now entering his well-deserved retirement.

We wish Armin all the best for this new chapter in his life and Piotr every success in his new, major responsibility. ■

AUTHOR: ALEXANDER GUENTHER  
PRODUCT PRE DEVELOPMENT SUPERVISOR

# DigiTain: On the Path Toward Fully Digital Development of Sustainable Power- train Architectures

How can future vehicle generations be developed faster, more sustainably, and with less reliance on physical testing? This is the central question addressed by the publicly funded research project "DigiTain – Digitalization for Sustainability," which is supported by a consortium of 26 funded and two associated partners from industry and academia.



DigiTain Project Completion: Battery housing technology demonstrator by KIRCHHOFF Automotive, integrated into the vehicle underbody.

The aim of the project is to develop processes, methods, and models for the fully digital product development and certification of sustainable electric powertrain architectures and to demonstrate them in a technology demonstrator. In conventional development approaches, ecological assessments typically take place only at a relatively late stage. DigiTain therefore focuses on end-to-end digital development processes that represent, evaluate, and optimize a vehicle's ecological and technical characteristics at an early stage. By combining simulation, digital twins, and intelligent evaluation methods, the project seeks to significantly reduce the need for physical testing over the long term and to shorten development times substantially.

KIRCHHOFF Automotive is making a key contribution to the DigiTain project through the development of the high-voltage battery housing. As a safety-critical structural component, the housing influences not only crash behavior and protection functions, but also weight, resource efficiency, and the effective integration of the battery into the overall vehicle. Starting from a wide range of possible approaches, a lightweight, functionally integrated battery housing concept was developed step by step. The basis is a hybrid design consisting of sheet metal with a steel-intensive lower section and an aluminum upper section, specifically tailored to the requirements of the overall vehicle. ▶



DigiTain kick-off event at Mercedes Benz in Sindelfingen in spring 2023.

A particular focus was placed on a novel structural approach in which the battery modules themselves assume a load-bearing function and thus contribute to overall stiffness. This concept was driven significantly by KIRCHHOFF Automotive and builds on experience gained from earlier in-house developments.

**The result is a substantially more efficient housing structure that requires less material while still meeting high safety requirements.**

Today, this solution forms the basis of the technology demonstrator, which has already been built as a

real vehicle and put into operation with a complete battery integrated into our housing.

In addition to the physical technology demonstrator, KIRCHHOFF Automotive is also developing two fully digital vehicle variants, each focusing on steel-based battery housing concepts. In parallel, other project partners are developing alternative variants using aluminum and fiber-reinforced composite designs. All approaches use the same modular set, enabling direct comparison of different material strategies with regard to efficiency, sustainability, and structural behavior.

### Collaboration Within the Consortium

Collaboration within the DigiTain consortium has highlighted both the opportunities and the challenges of interdisciplinary development projects. Due to the large number of partners – including major OEMs such as Mercedes Benz and BMW – and the diversity of technical focus areas, coordination and communication were often demanding. At the same time, this intensive exchange proved to be one of the most valuable aspects of the project.

Different perspectives from complete vehicle development, simulation, production engineering, and battery technology led to a broader evaluation of solution concepts and helped identify constructive improvements more quickly. For KIRCHHOFF Automotive, this meant contributing its core expertise in sheet metal and structural components while simultaneously expanding its understanding of adjacent systems.

Ultimately, the project's value lies not only in the technical results achieved, but also in the network of contacts, skills, and shared experience that has emerged – a benefit that extends far beyond DigiTain itself. ■

Battery housing technology demonstrator: efficiency-focused variant.



Battery housing technology demonstrator: sustainability-focused variant.



# E-Mobility Becoming Increasingly Successful

For a long time, Europe's automotive industry was criticized for having missed the boat and failing in the development and marketing of electric vehicles. In Europe – and especially in Germany – however, more than just a turnaround has now been achieved.

## The Difficult Period Leading Up to the Turnaround

The automotive industry, a prime example of German engineering and a favourite among Germans, has had a tough few years. First, the diesel scandal shook customer confidence, and then its late entry into e-mobility caused the former lustre of this key German industrial sector to fade further. To be fair, it must be said that – with the exception of China – sales of electric cars rose only slowly in most markets around the world, and companies' profits depended almost exclusively on the sale of combustion-engine vehicles.

## America is Banking on Oil, China on Electricity

This remains the case in the US, particularly since the current administration has scaled back support for e-mobility and is dismantling charging points instead of ensuring the necessary expansion of a

nationwide charging network. Whether it will pay off in the long term to rely now almost exclusively on burning fossil fuels is also open to doubt, given the rise in oil prices due to the war in Iran. In contrast, China is continuing on its path of electrifying everything possible. Even in the mobility sector, many electric vehicles in China are not pure BEVs, but have recently been fitted with range extenders. Here, a small combustion engine supplies electricity for the drive at a constant speed, though the vehicle is then powered exclusively by the electric motor. ▶



AUTHOR: ANDREAS HEINE  
GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING

**Europe: E-Mobility is Really Taking Off**

Compared with these well-known scenarios – few electric cars in the U.S., many in China – the picture in Europe, and particularly in Germany, is now changing sustainably. E mobility is truly taking off. Last year, 1.7 million electric vehicles were produced in Germany, accounting for 40 per cent of total vehicle production. This places Germany second worldwide in terms of electric vehicle production, behind China.

What may surprise many is that it is neither Tesla nor new Chinese brands that dominate the growing electric vehicle market. The ten most registered electric cars in Germany all come from German manufacturers or their brand groups.

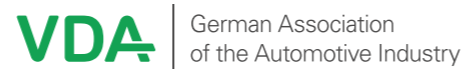
**Expertise from South Westphalia**

KIRCHHOFF Automotive is benefiting from this trend towards greater e-mobility. The company is one of the pioneers of electric mobility in Germany in the field of bodywork and chassis. The body of the Streetscooter, made famous by Deutsche Post, was developed by KIRCHHOFF Automotive in collaboration with other German suppliers as early as 2010, with the aim of developing body solutions for the emerging e-mobility sector well before they were ready for the market. This is now paying off. The expertise from South Westphalia in the field of vehicle safety is in high demand. This is because, without an energy-absorbing combustion engine, the entire crash management system of an electric vehicle, for example, has to be completely redesigned – not to mention the bodywork modifications required by the use of large batteries.

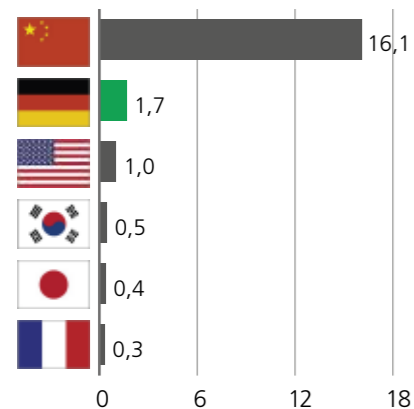
The success achieved through development expertise is clearly evident in the order books. At KIRCHHOFF Automotive, 71 per cent of the new orders acquired in 2025 for its plants in Europe and Asia relate to components and systems for electric vehicles. ■



**Germany is second-largest producer of electric cars**  
Comparison production of passenger cars and electric passenger cars (BEV, PHEV & FC)



Electric car production in 2025, in millions

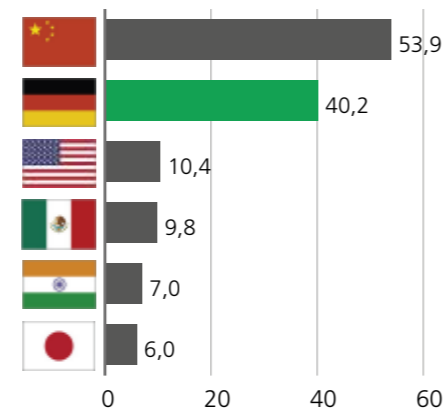


In 2025, 4.1 million passenger cars were produced in Germany

Germany ranks fifth in global passenger car production – and second in electric passenger car production

The share of electric vehicles in Germany's passenger car production is particularly high

Share of electric passenger cars in production 2025, in percent



Source: VDA , S&P Global Mobility

# 14 Years of Growth and Responsibility in Mexico

After 14 successful years at KIRCHHOFF Automotive, Wolfgang Scholkowski is retiring. In his leadership role, he significantly shaped the development and expansion of activities in Mexico and successfully implemented key strategic projects.

One of his greatest professional achievements was the establishment and commissioning of the new plant in San José Iturbide in 2025. Under his leadership, the Mexican plants were stabilized, further developed, and firmly established as a key part of the international production network. His leadership style – characterized by trust, closeness to employees, and a clear sense of direction – made a decisive contribution to sustainable growth.

“Wolfgang Scholkowski always managed KIRCHHOFF Mexicana with great dedication to the company and its employees. Numerous new product launches were implemented successfully, and new plants in Mexico were also built and ramped up successfully. KIRCHHOFF Automotive and my family owe him a great deal! I wish him, above all, good health, all the best, and continued good fortune for the future,” says J. Wolfgang Kirchhoff, Chairman of the Board & CEO. ■



AUTHOR: SABINE BOEHLE  
COMMUNICATON AND MARKETING MANAGER

# New Orders Are Driving the Plant Expansion Forward

The Gniezno plant in Poland is growing – across multiple stages. The reason is both new customer orders and increasing demand for existing products. To meet the additional production and logistics requirements, the site is currently undergoing a significant expansion.

**C**onstruction work to enlarge the loading area and logistics hall has been underway since autumn 2025. By summer 2026, around 2,200 m<sup>2</sup> of additional space will be created, enabling a more centralized organization of plant logistics. The space freed up in the production area will be used to install a new manufacturing line for newly acquired orders.

In the next expansion phase, a further approximately 2,400 m<sup>2</sup> of production space will be added. This area is specifically designed for the installation of six new welding cells equipped with

end-of-line inline measurement. On this line, we will manufacture an instrument panel carrier with tight tolerance requirements for a premium OEM. This expansion is scheduled for completion by the end of 2026 and will provide the foundation for state-of-the-art manufacturing processes and long-term plant utilization.

However, demand continues to grow: not only new projects but also increasing call-offs for existing parts require additional logistics space. Further potential expansions are already being planned. ■

AUTHOR: PIOTR TOMASZEWSKI  
GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING

Plant expansion in Gniezno, Poland, with new hall.



# THE ADVANTAGE OF MULTILINGUALISM

AUTHOR: ANDREAS HEINE  
GLOBAL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING



Even in times of nearly perfect AI language translations, mastering multiple languages remains important for communication in internationally positioned companies.

Anyone who has ever taken part in a video conference in which they heard a person who normally speaks English speaking almost perfect German starts to wonder. Do we even still need foreign language skills if AI, with a slight time delay but in our own voice, can make us speak all the languages of the world? Yes, we do, because 1) as a team, we can work together better when, thanks to foreign language skills, we communicate in a common language and can see and feel what is moving a colleague, simply through their choice of words and intonation. 2) We change and even feel different when we speak another language. With another language, we also gain access to another culture and thus a different perspective on the world. 3) Many languages have expressions for everyday situations and interpersonal encounters for which there may not even be a word in our native language. And this does not even have

to be as spectacular as the Finnish word "kalsarikännit," which roughly means "sitting at home alone in your underwear, drinking alcohol and watching TV." Experts in mastering multiple languages are especially colleagues who grew up with several languages and therefore have a special sensitivity to such linguistic nuances. Here are a few examples:

**Zeliş Camur**, HR working student in Iserlohn, grew up with German and Turkish as her native languages. "Even though I was born in Germany, I grew up strongly connected to Turkish culture. At home, almost only Turkish was spoken. Among us siblings, however, we now almost always speak only German," she says. For Zeliş Camur, the Turkish native language is more than a means of communication. "It is part of my identity, my feelings, and above all my heritage. We use the expression *ellerine sağlık* to thank someone for something they have



ZELİŞ CAMUR  
Working student Zeliş Camur grew up with both German and Turkish.



ROBERTA FERRIERI  
Roberta Ferrieri grew up bilingual in an Italian family. Her native language helped her learn additional languages and successfully complete her training as a foreign language assistant.



LULU JUNGE  
Lulu Junge speaks Chinese and German. Both languages have shaped her everyday life since childhood.

done with effort or manual work, for example when cooking." The appreciation expressed in it is much stronger than in the German "Thank you, you did that well."

**Roberta Ferrieri's** native language is Italian. "My parents are both Italian and raised my brothers and me completely in Italian," says the Assistant to the Global EVP Process Development. Growing up bilingual made it easier for Roberta Ferrieri to learn additional languages. This helped her complete her training as a foreign language correspondence assistant. "That's also where I learned English, Spanish, and French with a business focus." She describes the expression *abbocco* as a word that is difficult to translate. "It describes the typical drowsiness after a rich meal. It is often translated as tiredness, but the specific 'after eating' aspect is missing."

**Lulu Junge**, Sales Manager in Attendorn, speaks Chinese and German. "Chinese is my native language, but I grew up early on with both Chinese and German. At home Chinese was spoken, at school and with friends German," she says. A word that is difficult to translate is *人情* (*rénqíng*): "It describes

the complex network of interpersonal obligations, favors, and social sensitivity. It's about relationship maintenance, unspoken expectations, and reciprocity," explains Lulu Junge. ■

KIRCHHOFF Automotive supports its employees worldwide in developing their foreign language skills in a targeted way. With the digital learning platform Speexx, a modern and flexible offering is available to deepen proficiency in the languages most commonly used in the company: English, Spanish, and German.

The program is characterized by a wide variety of practical and interactive learning formats. Employees can choose from a broad range of learning materials, use AI-supported conversations, or participate in moderated group training sessions – either via mobile app or desktop. The content is designed to build and continuously improve confidence in using languages in everyday (professional) situations.

# We Build Parts for the Cars of the Year!

The European Car of the Year jury named the new electric Mercedes-Benz CLA “Car of the Year 2026” at the Brussels Motor Show in Belgium. In North America, the Dodge Charger was awarded “Car of the Year 2026.” KIRCHHOFF Automotive manufactures components for both of these outstanding vehicles.



Voted “Car of the Year 2026” in Europe – the electric Mercedes-Benz CLA. KIRCHHOFF Automotive manufactures the rear floor and rear center section assemblies for this exceptional vehicle.

In a press release, Mercedes-Benz describes the new **CLA** as “the most intelligent and flexible Mercedes-Benz model of all time, turning every journey into something special.” At our plants in Esztergom (Hungary), Attendorn, and Saarwellingen, we produce the rear floor and rear center section assemblies for this exceptional vehicle. “We are proud to support Mercedes-Benz on its transformation toward electromobility with our products and expertise. As part of our strategic

partnership, this represents an important milestone on which we build every day to successfully implement future projects together. We are therefore very pleased with the positive market response to the CLA,” emphasizes the Mercedes-Benz customer team at KIRCHHOFF Automotive. The CLA has been available in Europe since mid 2025 and will soon be launched in the U.S. and other markets as well.

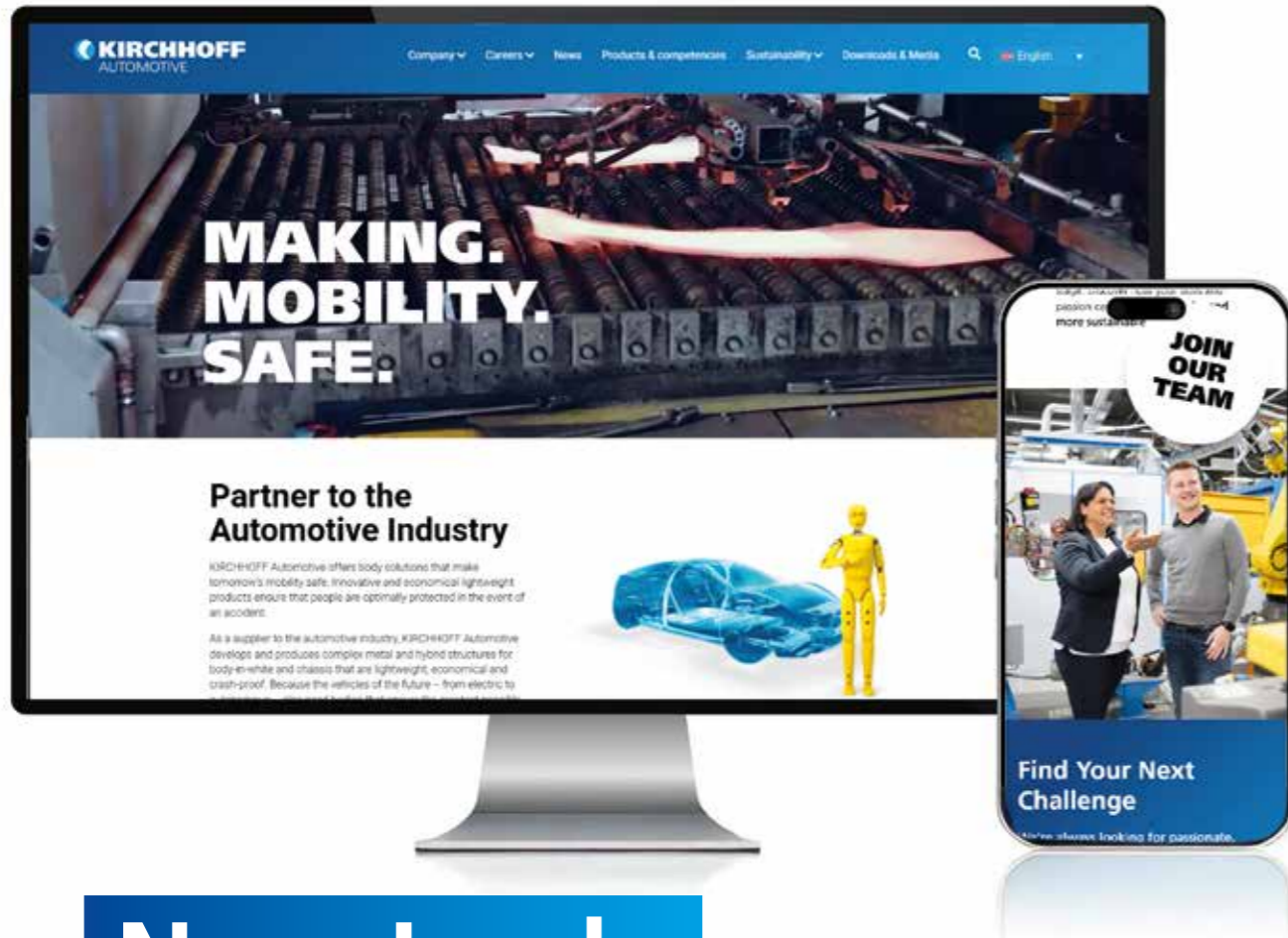
AUTHORS: EVA RADEMACHER, COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALIST  
NATASHA PHILPOTT, COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALIST

At the Detroit Auto Show, the **Dodge Charger** was also honored as “North American Car of the Year 2026.” This model, too, includes a KIRCHHOFF Automotive product: a steel cross car beam module manufactured at the Lansing (USA) plant. The advantages of the MIG welded cross car beam made from stamped sheet metal include optimal use of installation space on the driver’s side, efficient load transfer through the concentric connection between

the driver and passenger sides, and reduced weight. “Congratulations to the entire Stellantis team on this prestigious award. We are pleased to support Stellantis with our cross car beam module for this vehicle and to continue contributing to the vehicle’s success in the future,” says Art Tingey, Sales Director at KIRCHHOFF Automotive in Troy responsible for Stellantis. ■



The Dodge Charger, named “North American Car of the Year 2026,” features a steel cross car beam module from KIRCHHOFF Automotive.



# New Look, New Structure: Our Website in a Fresh Design

**AUTHOR: STEFANIE FELDMANN**  
**COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALIST**

KIRCHHOFF Automotive has completely revamped its digital presence – more modern, more visual, and clearer in structure. The goal: a contemporary, well-organized website tailored to the needs of our key target groups: applicants, customers, suppliers, and other interested audiences.

The new website focuses on large-format, emotional imagery and short, concise texts. Photos of employees deliberately reflect the company's diversity and internationality. The modern design guides visitors intuitively through the content, with a maximum of two navigation levels.

## New features for an improved user experience:

- Interactive visualization of a vehicle body illustrating the position of KIRCHHOFF Automotive's core products within the vehicle, including further details on products and technologies
- New careers section with authentic employee testimonials from around the world
- Direct access to key topics such as Sustainability
- Clearly structured download center

The relaunch was developed in collaboration with an agency based in Iserlohn and numerous departments across the company. Interfaces to other systems, such as a recruiting tool, were implemented to ensure smooth and efficient processes. "Our new website shows who we are today: international, innovative, and open to new ideas," says Andreas Heine, Global Executive Vice President Communication & Marketing.

**A special thank-you goes to everyone worldwide whose commitment made this result possible. ■**



Take a look for yourself:  
[www.kirchoff-automotive.com](http://www.kirchoff-automotive.com)



Interactive visualization of a vehicle body illustrating the position of KIRCHHOFF Automotive's core products within the vehicle. By clicking on the plus icons, users can access further details about products and technologies.

AUTHOR: EVA RADEMACHER  
COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALIST

Anyone who clicks through KIRCHHOFF Automotive's new digital company history embarks on a journey: back to the beginnings of the corporate group in 1785 – right in the middle of the Industrial Revolution – into production halls of past decades, accompanied by images that have long since become history, yet feel more relevant than ever today. With the new online chronicle, we make visible what continues to shape us to this day: the courage to explore new paths, the commitment to continuously expand our knowledge, and the determination to preserve our values. All of this is driven by a passion that connects our employees around the world.



Click here to view our digital company history:  
<https://history.kirchhoff-automotive.com/en/timeline/>



# Time Travel

## Company History Goes Digital

### History That Comes to Life

Over the course of several months, historical documents, photos, and film footage were reviewed, catalogued, and brought back to life. Some of these materials were previously accessible only at individual plants. Many come from our international locations and show moments that would be difficult to capture today: Machinery and working environments of the 1960s, significant milestones in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, and personal stories that have shaped the company.

By combining short video clips, rare photographs, and carefully selected background information, a chronicle has been created that goes beyond

presenting facts – it evokes emotions. It illustrates how closely the company's history is intertwined with the Kirchhoff family, our employees, and our present-day self-image.

### Looking Ahead

Our digital company history is not a finished project. It will continue to grow – with new milestones, projects, and stories that will emerge in the future. For us, tradition does not mean standing still, but rather providing orientation. And every good story lives on by being told further. Be part of this journey – and rediscover our past, present, and future. ■



# Customized Mobility: How Two Companies Are Driving the Future Together



The Mercedes-Benz eSprinter was converted by KIRCHHOFF Mobility into a BTW 9-seater for passenger and accessible transport (up to 4 wheelchair users).

It begins with an idea: mobility should be accessible to everyone. What may sound like a given today is in fact the result of development, conviction, and collaboration. Two companies have shaped this path with courage and a spirit of innovation: Groupe Leuba SA and KIRCHHOFF Mobility AG.

**AUTHORS: ALEXANDRA BRABENDER  
COMMUNICATON AND MARKETING SPECIALIST  
ANASTASIYA KOVALOVA  
DISTRICT MANAGER SWITZERLAND**

**G**roupe Leuba SA was founded in 1946 in Western Switzerland and has developed over three generations into a firmly established part of the regional automotive industry. As a family-owned business, it continues to stand for close customer relationships, trust, and high professional expertise. With several hundred employees and a strong commitment to training, the group combines economic strength with responsibility. What truly defines it is its mindset – a combination of precision, passion, and the determination to create tailored mobility solutions.

It is precisely here that the partnership with KIRCHHOFF Mobility comes in. For over 30 years, the company has been developing specialized vehicle solutions for people with limited mobility – with the aim of enabling independence in everyday life, freedom, and quality of life. While the technology is sophisticated, it is above all driven by a human dimension.

Almost seven years ago, the paths of the two companies crossed. It was a meeting of shared values and visions. While Groupe Leuba SA contributed its strong regional roots, customer proximity, and service expertise, KIRCHHOFF Mobility complemented these strengths



It is not about short-term projects, but about a sustainable partnership that begins where standard solutions end – and that takes a close look at where the need is greatest. This is what (from left to right) Vincenzo Cattano (Directeur Commercial Groupe Leuba), Anastasiya Kovalova (District Manager Switzerland KIRCHHOFF Mobility), and Francesco Cassella (Responsable de Marque Mercedes Véhicules Utilitaires Légers Groupe Leuba SA) stand for.



**Technical specifications Mercedes-Benz eSprinter: Wheelbase 3,665 mm, 420 PRO panel van, 81 kWh with a real-world range of 250 km (including conversion).**

**Special features:**

- Entry via an electric lifting platform with a lifting capacity of 400 kg for wheelchair users
- Electric step at the right sliding door for easier access
- Custom conversion with a modular seating configuration combining swivel-fold and removable individual seats
- Head and back supports for maximum safety of wheelchair passengers

with specialized technical solutions – from simple driving aids to complex vehicle conversions. Together, they created a holistic offering: from customized vehicle adaptations and personal consultation to support with financing and regulatory requirements.

But true innovation becomes evident where new ground is broken. As the first providers in Switzerland, the companies enabled the conversion of electric vehicles such as the Mercedes-Benz EQV and Vito for the safe transport of wheelchair users. The next milestone followed with the fully electric Mercedes-Benz eSprinter as a vehicle for accessible transport. Nine seats combined with capacity for multiple wheel-

chairs – a concept that sets new standards and makes the future of mobility tangible.

Behind these projects are the people who drive this vision forward. Personalities such as Vincenzo Cattano and Francesco Cassella on the side of Groupe Leuba SA, as well as Anastasiya Kovalova at KIRCHHOFF Mobility, embody this progress. What makes this collaboration so special is its depth.

At a time when mobility must be reimagined, these two companies provide a clear answer: innovation happens where technology meets humanity. And progress means leaving no one behind. ■



## Made in Germany on the International Stage

“Made in Germany” was at the heart of WITTE Tools’ presence at the International Hardware Fair in Cologne – the key industry meeting point for the global tools and hardware sector.

A first this year: For the first time, German Hardware Experts® joined WITTE Tools as guest exhibitors at the established booth, clearly underscoring their shared commitment to quality.



Markus Engel (right) has been heading the WITTE Tools division since February 1 of this year. With his international and cross-industry expertise, as well as over 20 years of professional experience in the tool industry, he is the ideal addition to the WITTE Tools team in Hagen. The Cologne Hardware Fair provided the perfect opportunity to get to know both long-standing and new customers and to set a new course together with a motivated team.

Accompanied by Chairman of the Board and CEO J. Wolfgang Kirchhoff, the new Head of the WITTE Tools business unit, Markus Engel, and his team made intensive use of the four days of the trade fair to strengthen existing customer relationships and unlock new potential. Markus Engel draws a positive conclusion:

**“The Hardware Fair is a perfect and irreplaceable place to connect in person. The very positive response to our premium products shows that genuine quality continues to impress worldwide.”**

Especially against the backdrop of increasing uncertainty in global markets, it became clear that customers today expect added value that goes beyond the “Made in Germany” label – an expectation that WITTE Tools meets and was able to convincingly demonstrate in numerous discussions. ■

**AUTHOR: ANI TEUBNER-FEILER  
MARKETING, MEDIA DESIGNER  
DIGITAL AND PRINT**

**W**ith around 33,000 trade visitors from 125 countries and approximately 2,500 exhibitors from 53 nations, the event provided a high-caliber environment for innovations, trends, and in-depth professional exchange. High visitor quality and strong international participation – over 70 percent of attendees traveled from abroad – created ideal conditions for personal discussions, new business contacts, and the expansion of international networks.

At WITTE Tools, the focus was once again on high-quality premium tools “Made in Germany.” The products impressed with precise workmanship, durability, and ergonomic design, attracting strong interest from both long-standing partners and new international trade visitors. Particularly in the private label business, there was a noticeably positive development – ranging from stable, reliable supply chains to resilient partnerships in a challenging geopolitical environment.



WITTE Tools Hand Tools – that means precision craftsmanship, durability, and ergonomic design.



AUTHOR: GLENDA UNKHOFF  
MARKETING ASSISTANT OF MANAGEMENT  
KIRCHHOFF ECOTEC SE

# Leadership in new Hands

On January 1, 2026, a change in leadership took place within KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE as well as the FAUN Group: Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff, who has led the company since November 1, 1994, moved from his position as Chairman of the Board of Management to the Supervisory Board, where he now assumes the chair.

Das Beste für unsere Kunden  
*We give the best for our clients*

Starke Fahrzeuge, starke Menschen und starker Service! Das ist die FAUN-Philosophie.  
Strong vehicles, strong people and strong service. That's the philosophy of FAUN.



myFAUN Telematiksystem



Umweltfreundliche ECOPOWER-Optionen

"After more than three decades of operational responsibility, the right time has come for me to place leadership in new hands and to support the company from the Supervisory Board in the future," says Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff. "I am convinced that the new leadership structure ensures both continuity and future viability."

Patrick Hermanspann will become the new Chairman of the Board of Management of KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE. During his 27 years at FAUN, he has held many positions and has significantly shaped the development of the company. He now assumes overall responsibility for KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE with

its two brands FAUN and ZOELLER. "KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE stands for technological expertise, internationality, and entrepreneurial responsibility," says Patrick Hermanspann. "I would like to thank Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff, Arndt and Wolfgang Kirchhoff, and the Supervisory Board for their trust and look forward to continuing the successful development of the group together with the teams." ■

**Left:** As of January 1, 2026, Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff (r.), who has led the company since November 1, 1994, has handed over overall responsibility for KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE with its two brands FAUN and ZOELLER to Patrick Hermanspann.

AUTHOR: STEFANIE STÜTING  
EDITORIAL TEAM ZOELLER GROUP

# OCTRION: Premiere at IFAT 2026

At IFAT in Munich, the world's leading trade fair for environmental technologies, OCTRION stepped onto the industry's biggest stage for the very first time in May – marking the official launch of the new company at the same time.



**A**t the centre of the 15 x 5 metre exhibition stand stood a striking feature that immediately drew attention: the large "O". It represents what defines OCTRION – a central hub, a kind of cockpit where the threads of a wide-ranging network of data and information flows come together. Here, information is connected, analysed, and transformed into concrete operational insights.

Enrico Skrypzak, Head of Sales at OCTRION, describes it this way: "Radical simplification of overwhelming amounts of data – that is how you create transparency, predictability, and above all the confidence that vehicles become safer, operate more efficiently, and unlock their full economic potential."

**"Our presence at IFAT 2026 presents OCTRION as a clearly positioned player in digital vehicle solutions. The combination of technological openness, industry expertise and a central platform provides the foundation for a new level of quality in fleet operations."**

OCTRION CEO Rafael Kutz

OCTRION's trade fair presence followed a clear concept: safety, quality, and "Flottenblick." These three ideas ran consistently throughout the entire stand and merged within the OCTRION cockpit into one integrated overall picture. What would normally remain hidden inside isolated systems was brought together and made visible.

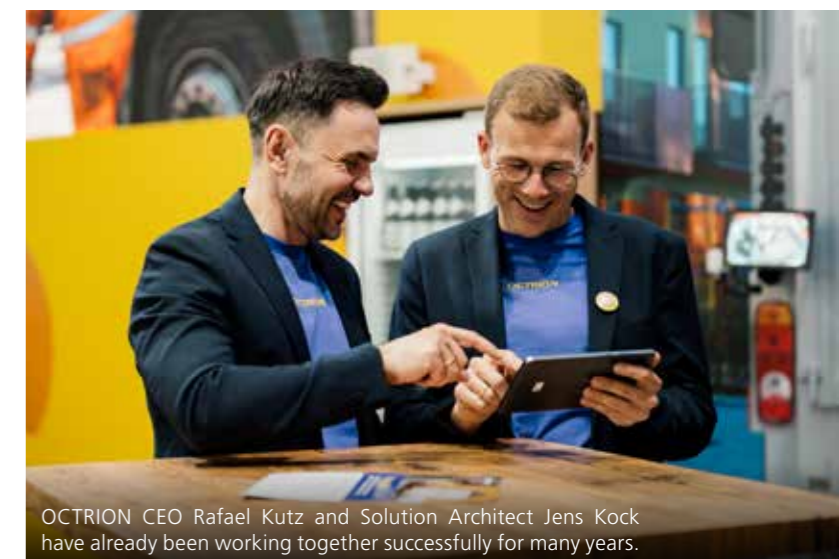
This became especially clear in the centrally staged vehicle visualisation. Like an open system view, it revealed what is normally happening in the background: The Z-Cam monitors the area around the lifter in real time, detects potential hazards at an early stage and responds automatically. With solutions such as DeepScan and SmartScan, waste analysis is performed directly inside the bin and the collection vehicle. In addition, the system provides insights into vehicle setup and lifter performance. Step by step, this creates a clear picture of the vehicle in operation – precisely controlled, transparently traceable and driven by data.

The system approach was carried through consistently. OCTRION demonstrated how workflows across an entire waste collection route can be digitally monitored, managed, and optimised.

With this first major appearance, OCTRION succeeded in presenting complex technical relationships in a way that made their practical benefits immediately tangible. In doing so, the company has already set itself apart from the isolated stand-alone solutions commonly found on the market, creating an integrated system that can continue to expand and evolve alongside future requirements. ■



Chief Product Officer (CPO) Dr. Bojan Ferhadbegović is responsible for the technical developments as lead engineer.



OCTRION CEO Rafael Kutz and Solution Architect Jens Kock have already been working together successfully for many years.

# The bigger picture

Since January 2026, Malte Sonnenburg has been serving as CEO of the FAUN Group. A native of Northern Germany, he knows the company from firsthand experience and is determined to shape the Group's next stage of development together with its teams. He succeeds Patrick Hermanspann, who has taken over as Chairman of the Executive Board of KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE at the beginning of the year.

**AUTHOR: CLAUDIA SCHAUE  
COMMUNICATON AND MARKETING MANAGER FAUN GROUP**

**W**hen Malte Sonnenburg began his apprenticeship as an industrial clerk at FAUN in Osterholz-Scharmbeck in 2006, one thing quickly became clear: he wanted to understand how things work. He immersed himself deeply in processes, products and interrelationships. Following his apprenticeship, he held positions in sales support, took on leadership responsibilities across various business areas and later became Head of Operations at the company's main plant in Osterholz-Scharmbeck.

Almost two decades later, Sonnenburg is now taking over responsibility as CEO of the FAUN Group. Accompanying him all along has been his profound understanding of the company, its products and, above all, its people. "I learned FAUN from the ground up. That helps me today. I know our vehicles, our processes and how people think and work. That still shapes my perspective today," says Malte Sonnenburg.

Patrick Hermanspann also looks back on their shared journey with great appreciation: "FAUN has always been far more to me than just a company. I am deeply grateful for the trust, support and team spirit I experienced throughout all these years. For his new role, I wish Malte every success, sound judgement in making the right decisions and, above all, the same strong support from the teams that I was fortunate to receive."

For Malte Sonnenburg, the new role primarily means taking responsibility for employees, customers and the long-term development of the Group. "It is a commitment you make." For him, the direction ahead is clear: the FAUN Group is to further strengthen its position as a technological, ecological and economic innovation leader in municipal vehicles.

Sonnenburg identifies three key areas for the future: greater sustainability across the entire

"FAUN has given me many opportunities. Now it is about successfully shaping the next chapters together."  
Malte Sonnenburg, CEO FAUN Group

product life cycle, enhanced safety and performance for customers and operators, and the consistent digitalisation of products, processes and services. "Our vehicles make an important contribution every single day to keeping cities and municipalities running. Our ambition must be to continuously improve them – making them more sustainable, safer, more efficient and smarter."

His understanding of leadership is defined by clarity, responsibility and the ambition to drive progress together. For Malte Sonnenburg, it is essential to maintain a holistic perspective on both the company and its responsibilities. To him, innovation should not be limited to the individual product, but should encompass the entire value chain – from development and production to customer service. Initial initiatives within the Group already demonstrate what this development can look like: closer dialogue with customers through formats such as the FAUN User

Conference, new approaches to more sustainable vehicle concepts, and the bundling of digital expertise within OCTRION.

Despite the increased responsibility, Sonnenburg intends to remain close to the companies, the vehicles, the customers and the teams. He believes in being present at the different sites, engaging in conversations and maintaining direct dialogue with customers. "The best ideas often emerge where people work with our products every day. That is why listening is just as important to me as making decisions."

In his private life, Malte Sonnenburg describes himself as down-to-earth and family-oriented. Shaped by his Northern German roots, he now lives with his family in the Sauerland region. "FAUN has given me many opportunities. Now it is about successfully shaping the next chapters together." ■

# HOME OF ORIGINALS

AUTHOR: CLAUDIA SCHAUE  
COMMUNICATON AND MARKETING  
MANAGER FAUN GROUP

Originals are what make the FAUN Group unique. People, trucks and services that stand out through innovation, character and purpose. At IFAT 2026 in Munich, visitors experienced these originals brought together in one place.



The Future Truck 2.0 with its new Safety & Performance Systems, innovative fire protection concept and the FAUN AI-Cube became one of the major crowd-pullers throughout the exhibition.



**C**elebrating its 60th anniversary this year, IFAT 2026 reached new record figures. Around 3,400 exhibitors and approximately 142,000 visitors from all over the world gathered in Munich from May 4–7. Across 300,000 square meters, the industry presented the latest solutions for water, recycling and circular economy.

At the same time, waste management companies are facing growing challenges. Traffic density is increasing, cities are becoming more crowded, skilled labor is scarce and safety requirements are more complex than ever. This is exactly where FAUN's Future Truck 2.0 and the new Safety & Performance System come into play.

At the heart of the concept is the FAUN AI-Cube. A central platform that processes data from cameras and vehicle controls in real time, evaluates situations and actively intervenes in operational processes. The approach deliberately goes beyond traditional assistance systems. The AI-Cube does not simply observe, it actively thinks ahead. People and objects within the working area are detected, critical situations are assessed at an early stage and vehicle functions are automatically adapted. Whether turning, reversing or operating in public spaces, the system significantly increases safety levels. ▶



For the first time, FAUN's new Shared Screen combines all relevant vehicle information within one central 12.3-inch display. Camera images, vehicle functions and assistance systems are integrated into a single, flexible interface. This significantly reduces the number of displays inside the cab and improves clarity, response times and driver focus. Third-party systems can also be seamlessly integrated.

FAUN also received second place at the VAK Innovation Awards for its new operating concept.



At IFAT 2022, FAUN achieved first place and won Gold at the IFAT Sustainability Award. Since then, the company has continuously worked to make every trade fair appearance even more sustainable. Following 2024, FAUN was once again honored in 2026 with the GoGreen Exhibitor Award for its IFAT exhibition stand.



[www.faun.com/gogreen/](http://www.faun.com/gogreen/)



With the Safety Zone Illumination (SZI), FAUN projects visible hazard zones directly onto the ground, creating additional safety within the working environment.



The company Wurzer from Eitting received the 31,746th ROTOPRESS since the invention of the iconic vehicle in 1927. For 99 years, the FAUN original has been operating around the world. During IFAT, Malte Sonnenburg (CEO FAUN Group), Daniel Hausner (Managing Director Wurzer Logistik), Patrick Hermanspann (Chairman of the Executive Board of KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE) and Markus Engbert (FAUN Sales Representative) took the opportunity to celebrate the milestone together. Daniel Hausner was presented with a detailed scale model of the 16 m<sup>3</sup> two-axle ROTOPRESS.



All Safety And Performance features at a glance:



[www.faun.com/sps/](http://www.faun.com/sps/)



01



02

**01** One of the first distinguished guests at IFAT was Jessica Roswall, European Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and Circular Economy (center). She was accompanied by Messe München CEOs Dr. Reinhard Pfeiffer (left) and Stefan Rummel (second from right), as well as Dr. Johannes F. Kirchhoff (Chairman of the Supervisory Board of KIRCHHOFF Ecotec SE), Malte Sonnenburg (CEO FAUN Group) and Arndt G. Kirchhoff (Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the KIRCHHOFF Group).

**02** The VARIOPRESS URBAN celebrated its premiere at IFAT. Compact in size but powerful in performance, the new URBAN model brings all the strengths of the larger VARIOPRESS into modern city environments.

With the VARIOPRESS URBAN, FAUN responds directly to the demands of dense urban areas. The vehicle is compact, highly maneuverable in narrow streets and still offers impressive collection capacity – making it ideal for inner-city operations. With a body width of just 2.20 meters, the VARIOPRESS URBAN combines agility with economic efficiency while relying on proven VARIOPRESS technology.

**03** The new VIAJET 8 POWER was specifically developed for demanding construction site applications. The sweeper combines high performance with robust engineering and long operating times. The objective was clear: creating a machine that delivers reliable results even under the toughest conditions.

A powerful auxiliary engine, large water capacity and an advanced recirculation system ensure high cleaning performance and effective dust suppression. At the same time, ease of operation and serviceability were key development priorities. The VIAJET 8 POWER is currently undergoing field testing.

Even seemingly small details make a real difference in daily operations. Illuminated grab handles, glove dryers and the Hygiene Board noticeably improve comfort and occupational safety. "For us, safety is the foundation of every development. At the same time, we consistently integrate efficiency and sustainability into everything we do," says Malte Sonnenburg, CEO of the FAUN Group.

Another topic gaining increasing importance across the industry is vehicle fires caused by lithium-ion batteries and changing waste streams. Fires in refuse collection vehicles are becoming a growing risk. In response, FAUN has developed an intelligent fire protection concept designed to detect hazards as early as possible. Thermal imaging cameras and fire gas detectors react before flames even become

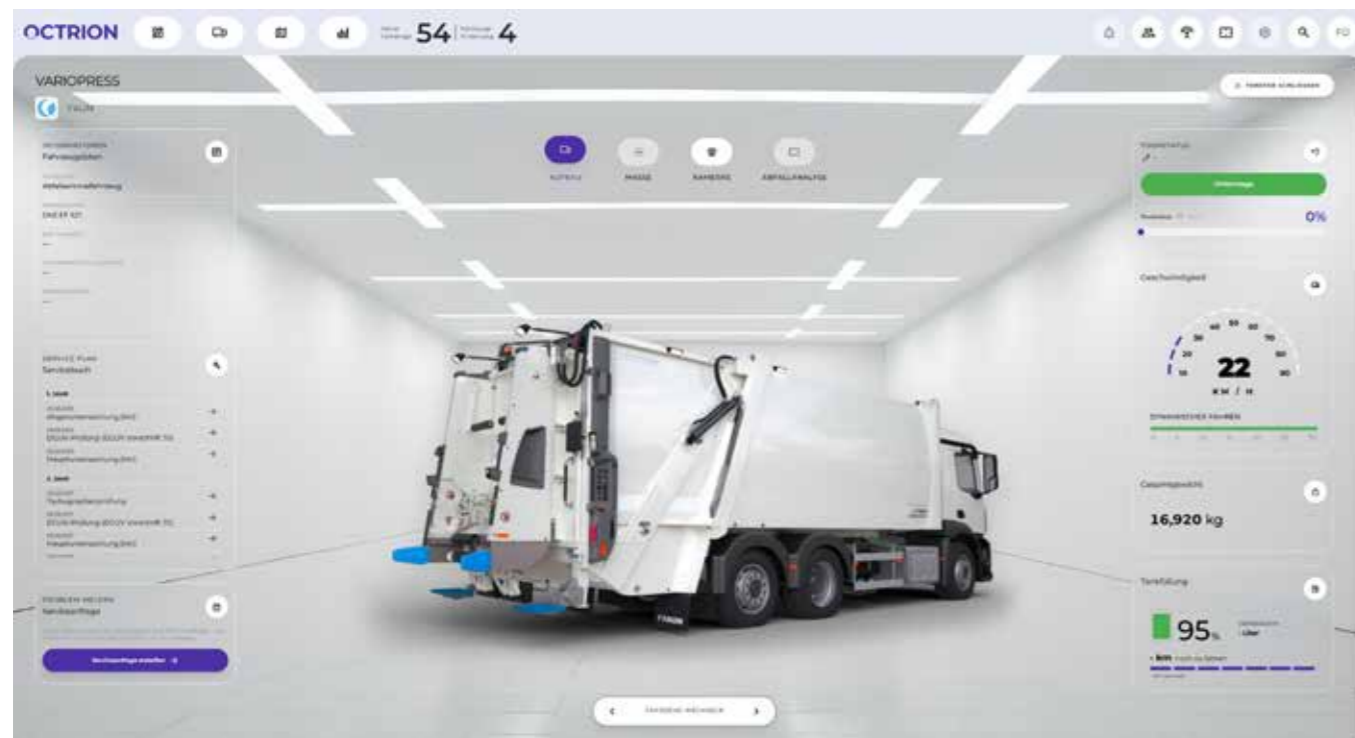
visible. The system automatically adapts vehicle functions and, in an emergency, can enable controlled unloading procedures. The concept was developed together with fire departments and independent experts with the goal of protecting vehicles, personnel and infrastructure more effectively. For this innovation, FAUN received third place at the VAK Innovation Awards.

At IFAT 2026, FAUN demonstrated that modern waste management can become not only more efficient, but also safer, more sustainable and more attractive for the people working with it every day. And one thing always remains clear: we work with people, for people and every one of them is an original.

See you again in Munich at IFAT 2028 from May 29 to June 1 or hopefully before then. ■



03



AUTHOR: MATTHIAS JUNGER  
PROJEKTMANAGEMENT AFTER SALES & DIGITALISIERUNG

# Connected for Maximum Uptime

FAUN Connect connects vehicles, lifter systems and workshops.

As digitalisation in the waste management industry continues to accelerate, the key is no longer the isolated view of individual components, but full transparency across the entire system.

**D**owntime is expensive. In both municipal and private waste management operations, vehicle availability increasingly determines profitability, workforce planning and the quality of service delivery. At the same time, technical requirements for control systems, sensors, weighing technology, identification solutions, driver assistance systems and intelligent lifter systems continue to grow. Against this backdrop, FAUN is expanding the digital service capabilities of FAUN Connect. The aim is to make service processes simpler, faster, more transparent and easier to understand.

“Service does not begin when a vehicle breaks down,” explains Karsten Schwanke, Head of After Sales & Service at FAUN Umwelttechnik. “Our ambition is to digitally connect vehicles, bodies, lifter systems and workshops in order to identify issues at an early stage and sustainably improve vehicle availability.”

The concept deliberately goes far beyond conventional vehicle telematics. Under the FAUN Connect umbrella, FAUN combines digital services across the entire vehicle life cycle – from vehicle and operational



data to AI-supported diagnostics and digital service communication, all the way to training solutions in both physical and digital formats. Operational data can be provided in a structured way, enabling faults to be narrowed down more quickly, service interventions to be prepared more efficiently and spare parts logistics to be optimised. “The future does not lie in isolated dashboards, but in intelligently connected service processes,” says Schwanke. “Our goal is a digital service ecosystem that keeps vehicles operational and noticeably reduces complexity for our customers in their day-to-day business.” Looking ahead, this ranges from data-based fault analysis and more targeted spare parts supply to digital quotations as well as software-supported service and update processes. With FAUN Connect, FAUN demonstrates where service in the waste management industry is heading:

**„We want to move away from reactive troubleshooting towards a digitally supported partnership between operators, vehicles and workshops.“**

At the heart of this approach is the customer portal FLOTTENBLICK, a service platform developed by OCTRION and presented at IFAT 2026. Here, information from the vehicle, body and lifter systems is brought together in one central interface. Operators gain full transparency regarding vehicle status, notifications and service information. At the same time, a direct digital connection is established between the customer workshop and the FAUN service organisation. Based on this infrastructure, FAUN’s service concept goes one step further: from a defined number of fleet service contracts including FAUN Connect modules onwards, a dedicated Personal Assistant will be assigned to individually support customer fleets. FAUN Connect also integrates the lifter system more deeply into the digital service environment. Error messages, status information and relevant operating data can be transmitted directly and evaluated more efficiently.

“Only in this way can we build sustainable trust,” says Julian Neuhaus, Sales Director Refuse Collection Vehicles Germany. ■

# Great ideas in action

AUTHOR: CLAUDIA SCHAUE  
COMMUNICATON AND MARKETING MANAGER  
FAUN GROUP



How can our refuse collection vehicles become even safer and more comfortable?  
That was the key question driving the very first FAUN User Conference.

**W**e know our vehicles inside out. But are they really as good, safe and efficient as we believe? What do our customers think – the people working with them every single day?

So we asked them. 15 decision-makers and industry experts, one innovation workshop and a team of creative professionals. No PowerPoint. No theory. Just structured innovation methods combined with deep practical experience.

The result: genuinely strong ideas and tangible approaches. A big thank you to everyone in-

involved for their perspectives and valuable input. One concept from the workshop – a projected warning symbol on the control panel support – was directly implemented on the Future Truck 2.0 presented at IFAT.

Guided by the innovation agency Lead Innovation from Vienna, participants developed ideas together, refined solutions and even had them visualised live by an illustrator. And this was only the beginning. The FAUN User Conference will return for its second edition next year. Want to join us? ■



# Built to Lead

**AUTHOR: LISA LAWSON**  
**NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER SUPERIOR PAK**

Leadership programmes are also held annually at Superior Pak. Employees are given the opportunity to further develop their skills while inspiring them to take on leadership roles.

**GOOD LEADERSHIP DOESN'T HAPPEN BY CHANCE. IT IS DEVELOPED INTENTIONALLY.**



**W**e are proud to celebrate a milestone for our employees who have successfully completed our Leadership Development Program. This achievement marks more than the end of a course – it signifies the beginning of an exciting new chapter in their professional journeys.

The Certificate IV in Leadership & Management is designed to strengthen core capabilities and the ability to lead effective workplace relationships with confidence and integrity. The course was over 12 months, with all participants investing significant time and effort into expanding their leadership tool kit, collaborating with peers, and putting new skills into practice.

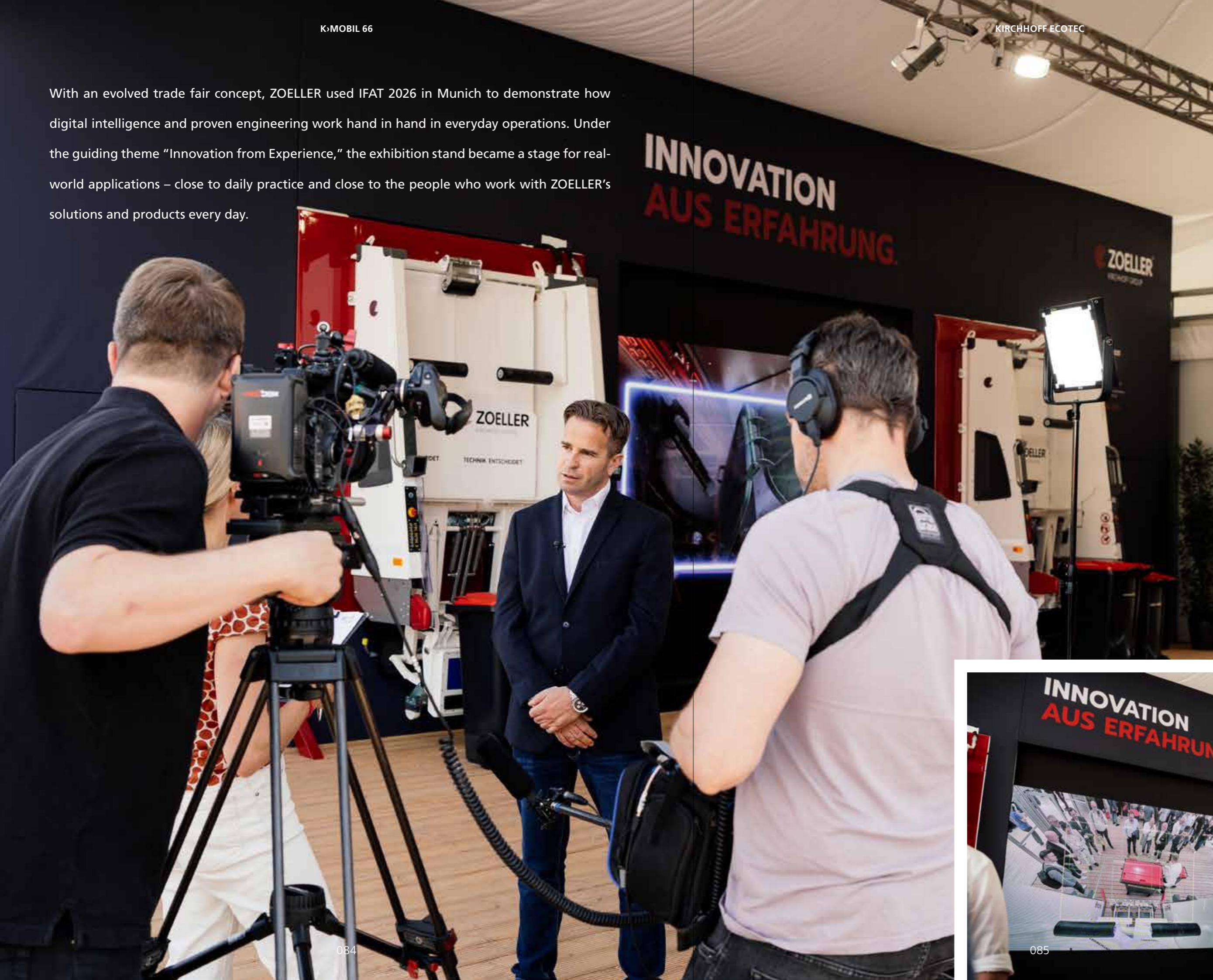
**Why This Achievement Matters**

Completing the Certificate IV in Leadership & Management isn't just a certificate on the wall. It strengthens our organisation in three powerful ways:

- **Empowering future leaders** – Demonstrating leadership in the workplace
- **Building a high-performance culture** – Bringing contemporary ideas, improved communication, and stronger collaboration into their roles.
- **Supporting our long-term strategy** – Investing in leadership capability is an investment in the future of our business, ensuring we continue to innovate, adapt and excel in support of our Operational plans and our teams.

Congratulations again to all graduates. ■

With an evolved trade fair concept, ZOELLER used IFAT 2026 in Munich to demonstrate how digital intelligence and proven engineering work hand in hand in everyday operations. Under the guiding theme "Innovation from Experience," the exhibition stand became a stage for real-world applications – close to daily practice and close to the people who work with ZOELLER's solutions and products every day.



# IFAT 2026

084



085



K-MOBIL 66

INNOVATION  
AUS ERFAHRUNG.

ZOELLER  
KIRCHHOFF GROUP

ZOELLER DELTA 2325

Z-CAM

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KIRCHHOFF ECOTEC



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**Top:** Sebastian Jamrozik, COO of the ZOELLER GROUP and Lisa Hill, Marketing **Bottom:** Laurin Weber, Product Manager Lifting Systems (left), Jürgen Kowalke, Head of Sales and Service

## Commitment that pays off

### Green Exhibitor

Sustainability played a central role right from the design phase of the IFAT exhibition stand. As a result, ZOELLER received the "Green Exhibitor" award during the trade fair, accepted by Sebastian Jamrozik (COO ZOELLER GROUP) and Lisa Hill (Marketing).

### VAK innovation award

For its AI-supported innovation Z-CAM, ZOELLER received second place at the 2026 VAK Innovation Award in the category "Assemblies, Components and Control Technology."

ZOELLER arrived at IFAT 2026 with a clear message: innovation built on experience. Proven engineering. Digital intelligence.

Since January 1, 2026, Markus Dautermann has been leading the company with a strong focus on service, safety, efficiency, and environmental expertise. Digitalisation, AI, and service are becoming increasingly interconnected, and ZOELLER has been investing in digitalisation and automation for years.

"Our goal is to make our customers' daily work as simple, predictable, and safe as possible. By using AI and digital processes, we see significant potential to achieve measurable improvements and create clear competitive advantages."



Martin Esper: Embedded Systems Software Development

Fabian Pauls, Operations Manager Germany (left), Philipp Hörner, Team Lead Electrical and Software Development

We believe hardware will increasingly become a platform for software and services. Assistance and safety systems will continue to gain importance and gradually evolve toward semi-autonomous solutions. Over the past months, we have worked intensively on our new IFAT stand concept. This was not only about a visual redesign, but about connecting our digital innovations with an environment that truly reflects them."

ZOELLER's appearance at the trade fair was defined by moments where technology became an experience. Visitors entering the stand stopped, took a closer look, and started asking questions. That was the special quality of this presentation: the technology could not only be seen, but genuinely understood. The "Lifter Tunnel" itself became an interactive space.

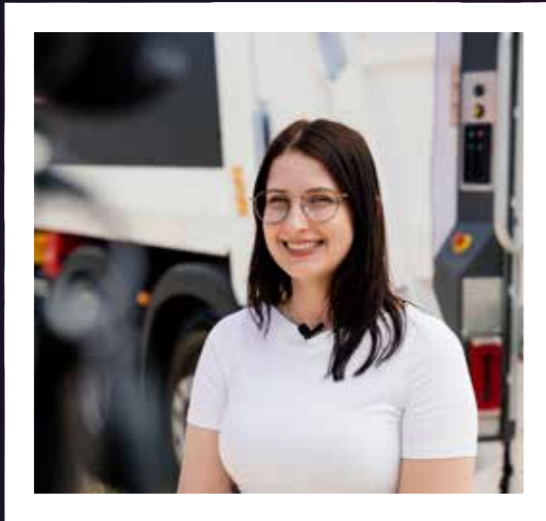
Close to people, close to technology: inside the "Lifter Tunnel," ZOELLER translated high-tech into real-life experience and demonstrated directly on site how modern vehicle technology, digitalisation, and AI work together. High-tech became tangible, functions could be experienced firsthand – and that is exactly what makes technology both fascinating and accessible.

### Right at the heart of industry change

Fabian Pauls, Operations Manager Germany: "IFAT clearly showed where the industry is heading: mechanically, our products are highly mature. The major advances now come from digitalisation, connectivity, and intelligent assistance systems. That is exactly what we were able to demonstrate at the trade fair."

Philipp Hörner, Team Leader Electrical and Software Development: "What I particularly appreciated at IFAT was the openness of our customers. Many conversations were personal, direct, and on equal footing. At the same time, the trade fair confirmed that we are striking exactly the right note with our new Lifter Delta 2325 and the ZCSII control system."

Robert Streif, Operations Manager STUMMER Bischofshofen: "IFAT is the world's largest trade fair for our industry and, every two years, the most important meeting point for international customers as well. We welcomed customers from Slovenia, Hungary, and Croatia, as well as friends and partners from Switzerland and Austria. Our retailer from Dubai visited the stand, along with a delegation of new customers from Israel." ▶



Jenny Gehres, Marketing

Jenny Gehres, Marketing: "At IFAT 2026, the ZOELLER GROUP presented a completely new exhibition concept that marks the beginning of a new era. Our goal was to make technology and digital innovation truly visible and tangible. It was a major task that required not only creativity, but also extensive conceptual work behind the scenes. The response and recognition we received during the trade fair were simply overwhelming – a strong confirmation of our direction and something we are very proud of."

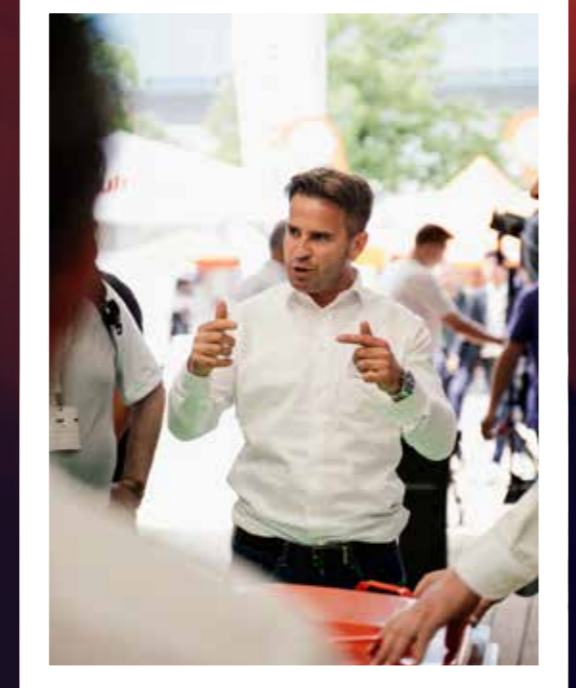


Robert Streif, COO of STUMMER (left), Ing. Andreas Augeneder, Linz AG

Jürgen Kowalke, Head of Sales & Service: "Our message here at IFAT was clearly understood. And with the new stand concept, we have taken a path that excites our customers while also bringing us new contacts and conversations. Every day was packed with activity as we continuously demonstrated our vehicles and digital innovations. We were able to engage every visitor effectively – including on the important subject of service at ZOELLER."



Jürgen Kowalke, Head of Sales and Service



Markus Dautermann, CEO of ZOELLER GROUP



You can find more impressions of ZOELLER at IFAT 2026 here:



**Service Takes Centre Stage**

In the Service Lounge, ZOELLER demonstrated how its new service philosophy is being consistently expanded and will play an even more central role in the future. A key focus was the new "Flottenblick" service app. Developed together with OCTRION, a subsidiary of Ecotec, the digital tool opens an entirely new chapter for ZOELLER. Visitor interest was exceptionally strong, conversations were intensive, and the demand for follow-up meetings became so high that the calendars of the service experts filled up quickly.

Julian Reinbott, Workshop Manager and Service Organisation Specialist: "I presented the new service app nonstop in exciting customer discussions. Above all, we wanted direct feedback and aimed to compare customer questions and needs with our current stage of development. The feedback was overwhelming." ■

Julian Reinbott, Specialist Service Organization (left), and Sascha Neumann, Head of Service, Northern Branch

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## Ready to go

Final stretch in Bischofshofen: over the past few months, the STUMMER site has expanded by an impressive 7,500 square metres.

**A**t the end of May, STUMMER's site expansion project reached the finish line exactly as planned. A modern new assembly hall will now serve as the centrepiece for chassis preparation and the so-called "marriage" of body and truck chassis. The facility includes space for four preparation stations, a dedicated assembly area for prototype construction, and an additional parking bay for incoming chassis deliveries – a clear gain in efficiency and flexibility.

One of the hall's key features, the new overhead crane system, is already fully operational and supports both heavy assembly work and prototype construction. Integrated underfloor heating powered by a modern air-source heat pump provides

not only state-of-the-art technology but also a high level of workplace comfort. The outdoor facilities are also largely complete, including around 85 new truck parking spaces.

The precision STUMMER applies in manufacturing its municipal vehicles was equally evident throughout the construction process – and it paid off. Despite the many trades working side by side on the project, the planned completion date at the end of May was never in doubt.

The result: more space, optimised workflows, and a strong foundation for even greater efficiency and innovation at the Bischofshofen site. ■



**Top:** Construction work began at the end of 2025. From the very beginning, great importance was placed on maintaining an open and informative dialogue with local residents **Bottom:** While the exterior walls were being completed, preparations for the interior fit-out of the hall were already underway in parallel.



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From left to right: VÖA President Dr. Alexandra Loidl, STUMMER CEO Hannes Streif, and VOEB President Gabriele Jüly.



# Expert interview: The waste management industry in transition

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**A**t the “Austrian Waste Management Conference 2026” held at the Conference Center Schwechat, Gabriele Jüly, President of the Association of Austrian Waste Management Companies (VOEB), Dr. Alexandra Loidl, President of the VÖA and representative of municipal waste management operators, and STUMMER CEO Hannes Streif discussed the industry’s current challenges and future direction.

Economic pressure is increasing – including for Europe’s recycling industry. Declining recycling capacities and low-cost imports, some incorrectly declared as recycled materials, are creating major challenges for the sector. As Gabriele Jüly explains: “What we need are fair competitive conditions, legally secure equivalence criteria for recycled materials from third countries, and binding quality and sustainability standards. Industrial electricity pricing must also apply to the recycling sector, which competes directly with primary production.”

Another key issue is safety. In Austria alone, 36 major fires caused by incorrectly disposed lithium batteries were recorded in 2025, highlighting the urgency of the problem. “We need a solution – ideally yesterday,” says Gabriele Jüly. “Collection rates for these batteries remain low while volumes continue to rise. National incentive systems could deliver results faster than European-wide solutions,” the VOEB President suggests.

From the perspective of municipal operations, Dr. Alexandra Loidl also places strong emphasis on sustainability. One major opportunity lies in improving waste separation, as around 35 percent of organic waste still ends up in residual waste. “This is where we rely on awareness campaigns, incentive systems, and supporting scanning technologies.”

Looking at practical implementation, STUMMER CEO Hannes Streif adds: “Precisely coordinating collection volumes, routes, and operating areas reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increases efficiency.” Connected vehicles and AI-supported systems improve both operational efficiency and safety.

Another important shift can be seen in leadership itself. More and more women – including Gabriele Jüly and Dr. Alexandra Loidl – are taking on responsibility within the industry. Both share a clear vision: a leadership culture that connects generations and actively empowers women. ■

The full interview is available at:  
<https://stummer.net/en/2026/04/abfallwirtschaft-wandel/>



The waste management industry is undergoing profound change. Traditional waste disposal companies are becoming resource managers. New environmental technologies, digitalisation, and growing demands for efficiency and safety are reshaping the sector. Efficiency has become the key priority.

# When the workplace becomes a running track

A first for SEMAT: 2,500 people, a course winding through their everyday surroundings, and an evening to remember. The first Urban Trail La Rochelle (UTLR) turned into a real sporting success.

**T**hings got moving at SEMAT right at the start of the year. Around the company site in La Rochelle, an unusual corporate run brought people together as part of a cross-company challenge combining movement, encounters, and a fresh perspective on familiar places.

As night fell, around 2,500 participants took to the string line, including 30 runners representing SEMAT. They experienced a race that blended athletic performance with the discovery of the local environment, offering a completely new view of everyday working life. What a fantastic experience!

Twelve kilometres, twelve checkpoints: the route led through a wide variety of locations – from the fishing and commercial harbour to a baseball club, a neighbourhood bar, and industrial facilities where boats are built. For one evening, SEMAT's own site also became part of the running course. The event was made possible thanks to the commitment of the Comité Social et Économique (CSE) and the many employees who helped organise and support it with tremendous dedication.

The SEMAT team approached the challenge with energy and strong team spirit – and their efforts paid off. The team led by Sébastien Verdier, joined by two club teammates, claimed victory.

This run will be remembered as a powerful example of commitment, team spirit, and shared enjoyment. A heartfelt thank-you goes to all participants, the support teams behind the scenes, and everyone who helped make the event such a success. An experience that already makes people look forward to the next edition. ■

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**Left:** The winners of the first SEMAT UTLR: Mathieu Lemouillour, Sébastien Verdier, and Stéphane Deguire. **Right:** Volunteer commitment and plenty of fun: the CSE organisers of the SEMAT UTLR.

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# Operational excellence as a driver of innovation

Since January 1, 2026, Sebastian Jamrozik has been responsible for the operational value chain of the ZOELLER GROUP in his role as Chief Operating Officer. Sebastian Jamrozik has been with the company for 19 years and played a key role in establishing our site in Rekowo.

**P**roduction, processes, international sites – many threads come together under his leadership. Yet the new COO sees operational excellence as far more than a matter of KPIs and production cycles. For him, it is about the interaction between people, technology, and clearly structured processes.

**If you had to describe the ZOELLER GROUP in three words after your first few weeks, what would they be?**

Innovative, solid, and integrated. Innovative, because ZOELLER combines a long-standing tradition with a consistent focus on developing new solutions for the waste management industry. Solid, because success here is built on genuine engineering expertise. And integrated, because despite the company's international structure, you immediately sense a shared purpose everywhere. The different sites work very closely together – you notice that right away.

**In practical terms, what is the key factor in ensuring that a high-tech vehicle leaves the plant on time and with true ZOELLER quality?**

For me, it is first and foremost a question of synchronization: people, processes, and precision all have to work together seamlessly. A refuse collection vehicle is a highly complex system. To ensure everything comes together perfectly in the end, you need stable processes, clear standards, and absolute precision in every step. At the same time, quality is not something created only during final inspection. It is built where welding, assembly, and testing take place. Our skilled employees on the production lines play the decisive role in that process.



Sebastian Jamrozik, COO ZOELLER GROUP.

**You are the director behind the scenes of production and day-to-day operations. What impresses you most about ZOELLER?**

The combination of technology and experience. ZOELLER develops highly complex vehicles and invests heavily in modern manufacturing technologies. At the same time, many employees have been with the company for decades. That depth of experience is incredibly valuable. Many have an almost instinctive understanding of our products. When you combine that expertise with modern technology, it creates a very powerful combination.

**What does a perfect day in production look like to you?**

A perfect day is a day without firefighting. Processes run reliably, workflows interlock smoothly, and the key figures are where they should be because the organisation is functioning well.

**What will be at the top of the operational agenda over the next two years?**

We need to continue harmonising our operational processes and drive automation further. If ZOELLER wants to remain an innovation leader, production also needs a modern foundation. That means more robotics and automated welding processes in manufacturing, stronger digital connectivity between sites, and clearly defined, scalable standards in assembly. In short: our products are high-tech – our processes should reflect the same standard. ■





**We wish you a restful summer.**