

Press release

Wettenberg, December 2, 2013

Focus on plasma processes and high-tech materials

Justus Liebig University Giessen and PVA TePla AG have signed a framework agreement with the Fraunhofer Institute for Surface Engineering and Thin Films – Strengthening of the high-tech location in Central Hesse.

Justus Liebig University Giessen (JLU) and PVA TePla AG, Wettenberg, today signed a framework agreement with the Fraunhofer Institute for Surface Engineering and Thin Films (IST), Brunswick, establishing a working group for research into plasma processes and high-tech materials. The aim is to perform end customer-oriented research and development work for industrial companies.

"This cooperation in the field of applied plasma physics with industry and the Fraunhofer Institute for Surface Engineering and Thin Films demonstrates the success of our long-term strategy for developing the profile of material sciences in Giessen and establishing it as a center of excellence", said JLU President Prof. Joybrato Mukherjee. For the university, the Laboratory for Material Research (LaMa) is involved. LaMa is a grouping of the Chemistry and Physics faculties that jointly run the material science courses and work on large-scale research projects. Many of the research topics of LaMa are closely linked with the aspects covered by

the new working group. For instance, in the LOEWE initiative RITSAT, which focuses on plasma and ion sources for aerospace propulsion, plasma diagnostics methods and the theoretical description of plasma processes are also being developed. And in the LOEWE initiative Store-E – a project on the storage and conversion of energy – the scientists are producing items including high-tech materials for energy applications by means of plasma-based deposition methods.

In particular, the expertise bundling within LaMa in the area of material synthesis, solid-state analysis, plasma diagnostics and the theoretical description of plasmas are a valuable supplement to the expertise of the Fraunhofer IST.

Prof. Günter Bräuer, head of the Fraunhofer IST, is delighted with progress so far: "An ever-growing number of high-tech SMEs with the potential to expand their market position worldwide with their products and services or even become global market leaders are working at the Giessen-Wetzlar location, which focuses on optical, vacuum and plasma technologies. However, many SMEs cannot meet the necessary research and development capacity requirements for this growth by themselves. We try to fill this gap with our cooperative approach and support the companies by offering them our research and development capacity, just like all Fraunhofer institutes operating throughout Germany." The working group is set to come into being on January 1, 2014.

Dr. Arno Knebelkamp, CEO of PVA TePla AG, will provide the working group with modern premises and infrastructure. He referred to the importance of the end customer-oriented research and development work that the interested companies have entrusted to this working group.

Project coordinator Peter Abel believes that the cooperation agreed here between the Fraunhofer Society, the university and industry strengthens the research and development location in Central Hesse. In particular, he feels that bundling the regional resources in terms of manpower and research equipment will result in an effective, cost-optimized development platform that will make the region more competitive, especially with regard to future technologies.

Ahead of the cooperation agreement, various regional high-tech companies have already declared their interest in collaborating with the project group. "They believe that it will strengthen the future viability of our region of Central Hesse", said Abel.

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