

The Weinberg Campus in Halle (Saale): a paradise for material and life science start-ups

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At the Weinberg Campus, East Germany's second-biggest technology park, in Halle (Saale) in Saxony-Anhalt, start-ups in the area of life sciences are particularly supported.

Networking science and business with each other, offering companies optimal starting conditions, that is the concept for success of the technology park Weinberg Campus in Halle (Saale). It was opened 25 years ago, and is now the biggest innovation site for the life sciences and material sciences industry in Saxony-Anhalt and Central Germany.

More than 70 companies and institutes, facilities, and service providers from biotechnology, biomedicine, environmental and medical technology, nanotechnology, and IT are settled in the technology park. In virtually unique spatial proximity, companies and the scientific institutes of the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, the research institutes of the Max Planck and Fraunhofer Societies, and the Leibniz and Helmholtz Associations work on a campus. As well as 5,500 employees, there are 7,500 students on the campus.

The Weinberg Campus is located on a traditional university site in the city of Halle (Saale) and on the grounds of a former barracks. "With 134 hectares, Weinberg Campus Technology Park is the biggest of its kind in Central Germany and one of the most important in Germany. Around a billion euros have been invested in the site so far since 1993", says the Managing Director of the TGZ Technology and Start-up Centre Halle and of the Bio Centre Halle, Dr. Ulf-Marten Schmieder. The development of the campus started in 1993 with the buildings of these two societies. The centres now operate nine highly modern research buildings.

A paradise for pharma start-ups

More than 200 start-ups have been supported in the development of their business ideas and company foundation during the past 25 years in the TGZ Halle and Bio Centre Halle. The technology park still offers the best conditions for innovation. One example is Okmed Biotech GmbH. This two-man company was founded on the campus in 2016, and develops biotechnological processes for the manufacturing of pharmaceutical products with the aim of later setting up a production facility of its own on the campus. The company Okmed Biotech rented rooms and laboratories at the TGZ for its research. There was also starting assistance in the areas of know-how and management. "The Weinberg Campus combines science with business. Thanks to the immediate proximity of companies to the institutions of the university and other research facilities and the active promotion of collaborations, an outstanding breeding ground has been created for science and technology-based companies", says Okmed's Managing Director Oguzcan Koyutürk. "Through my masters course at the MLU I got to know professors, scientists and the campus, and decided to start up here."

Space for success stories

Oguzcan Koyutürk found support for this via the project AIMS (Accelerate Innovation in Material- & Life Sciences), which enables young companies with science-based business models to make a good start both at the campus and in the state of Saxony-Anhalt. AIMS will be running for another two years; a total of 20 companies have already benefited from the assistance – infrastructural and technological support, and the preparation for certifications. The funds for the project come from the EU and the state. enspring GmbH, a developer of electronics and energy stores, is also among the participants. "The greatest benefit of AIMS, for us, is that in the start phase we can concentrate on our core competencies thanks to the supporting of the project. Our chemists, physicists and material scientists drive forward technological development, and AIMS drives forward our growth with know-how in the areas of management, important networking, subsidy consultancy, and supporting marketing measures", says Dr. Robert Schlegel of enspring GmbH. Other participants of the project include, for example, Verovaccines GmbH, a manufacturer of yeast-based veterinary vaccines, and TrustFood GmbH, manufacturer of allergen-free, vegan foods.

Varied start-up support

The state of Saxony-Anhalt still gives comprehensive support to start-ups on the Weinberg Campus. This year, a "founders' garage" was opened at the TGZ, the "Weinberg Campus Innovation Hub". Here, support and resources for technology-based company start-ups can be found concentrated under one roof.

At the Innovation Hub, the two incubators "IT & Media" and "Nutrition & Agricultural Technology" of the University are operated, for example, in which interdisciplinary project teams independently further develop innovative products and concepts from their research-based results and – with further assistance from the start-up service – implement them in business models. In the incubator, a laboratory, a 3D and virtual reality workshop, a co-working area and a consultation room are at their disposal.

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