

FRM

The magazine on the FrankfurtRhineMain metropolitan region

INNOVATION Why FRM is at the cutting edge when it comes to AI ____ **INTERVIEW** How a foundation strengthens civic engagement ____ **FORESTS** What FRM offers nature lovers ____ **ENERGY TRANSITION** What innovative ideas are coming out of FRM _ **TABLE TENNIS** Which athlete is a superstar in Asia ____ **FOOTBALL** How Frankfurt is planning part two of Germany's "summer fairytale"

Issue 2023

>
English
Edition

FrankfurtRhineMain and the US From football to business



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FrankfurtRheinMain GmbH International Marketing of the Region is the official point of contact for companies moving to the area from outside Germany.

[→ frm-United.com](https://frm-United.com)

Editorial



WHAT CONNECTS PEOPLE

The FrankfurtRheinMain region is diverse, multi-lingual and multifaceted – a truly international metropolis! People from around 180 different countries live here in peaceful harmony. Americans alone make up 90,000 inhabitants. The roots of the friendship between America and Germany reach back to 1677, when William Penn sought to attract settlers from Frankfurt to live in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's largest city Philadelphia is now twinned with Frankfurt. St Paul's Church and the Freedom Bell are two founding symbols of democracy and bind our two cities together, a point which has been stressed by many people, including the US Consul General Norman Thatcher Scharpf. In the end, though, it's always people who create connections, filling them with life and sustaining them. On page 18 you can find out about the unique relationship between our region and the US.

A lot of that relationship has to do with sport. It began back in 1966 with the historic boxing match in Frankfurt's Waldstadion, when Muhammad Ali took on Karl Mildenerger. Today the relationship is continuing in the very same location, with the 2023 Superbowl Champions the Kansas City Chiefs playing an NFL league game against the Miami Dolphins, followed a week later with the New England Patriots lining up against the Indianapolis Colts. On page 38 you'll find out why Chinese audiences are watching our city with particular excitement – it's all about table tennis and a global star who comes from this region. We're also looking forward to our biggest sporting event since the 2006 football World Cup – the 2024 men's European Football Championship. You can find out more about it on page 42.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of FRM!

With best wishes,



Mike Josef
Mayor of the city of Frankfurt am Main



CHANCES BENEFITS

ChatGPT and other AI language models have been impressing people around the world, and since they broke onto the scene the topic of artificial intelligence has been everywhere. But how well placed is the Frankfurt-RheinMain region? We spoke to businesses, start-up founders and academics and their message was unambiguous: the region enjoys the best conditions to make its mark in Germany and around the world. On page 6 you can read about how the FrankfurtRheinMain region is taking advantage of the opportunities of AI, and find out how important it is for all stakeholders to work together.

One unique advantage for the FrankfurtRheinMain metropolitan region comes from our forests. From the Taunus mountains to the forests of the Spessart, Odenwald and the Frankfurt City Forest, you're never far away from green spaces here. You can find out more about the magic of these forests along with their history and unique features on page 32.

Someone with close links to Frankfurt and the whole region is Professor Frank E. P. Dievernich. He was President of Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences for eight years, and since October 2022 has chaired the board of the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main. In an interview he spoke about civic engagement, social cohesion and the tight-knit network across the FrankfurtRheinMain region (page 14).

In a region with a strong economy and industrial sector, achieving sustainability and transitioning to renewable energy are critical tasks for the future. But how can businesses provide robust and high quality reports on the sustainability of their work? To do this, they need universal standards. On page 30 we present the new International Sustainability Standards Board, which is based in Frankfurt. On page 26 you'll find profiles of start-ups and established businesses from Darmstadt to Wiesbaden who are working on the energy supplies of tomorrow.

I hope you enjoy reading about our unique and exciting region.

Best wishes,



Eric Menges
Managing Director of FrankfurtRheinMain GmbH International Marketing of the Region

PARTNERS FOR THIS EDITION OF FRM

GOLD



BRONZE



SILVER



SUPPORTERS



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INNOVATION

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LOCALS

Which faces and stories you have to know



American football in Frankfurt
 Our cover picture shows Jakeb Sullivan, quarterback with Frankfurt Galaxy – see also pages 18-21



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1,440
TONS OF CO2
SAVED

During the latest local project term of the ÖKOPROFIT® program, 40 companies saved 1,440 tons of CO2, reduced their power consumption by 2.8 million kWh and saved 0.86 million Euros in costs. The ÖKOPROFIT® program is a cooperation opportunity offered by the city of Frankfurt am Main for companies, businesses and municipalities located in Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main area. 118 companies participated in the ÖKOPROFIT® program from 2007 to 2023. Frankfurt Economic Development supports this program.

frankfurt-business.net/oekoprofit

NEW NETWORKS FOR THE FUTURE OF AI

Cutting-edge research and entrepreneurial spirit are in demand in order to exploit the opportunities of artificial intelligence. The metropolitan region has excellent credentials when it comes to setting international standards in this future-oriented field. A journey through the region's **AI hotspots**.

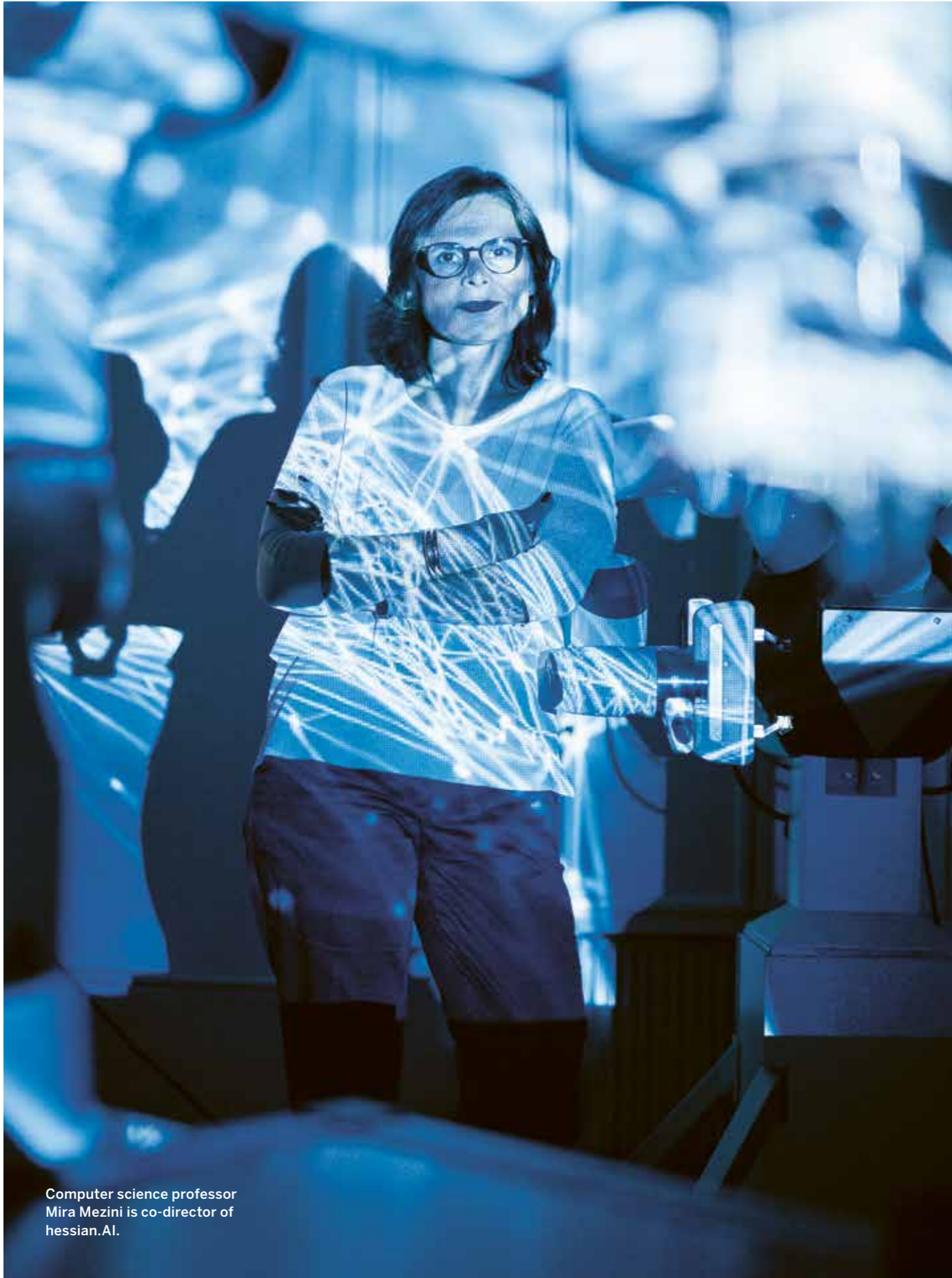
BY CARSTEN HAUPTMEIER (TEXT) AND JONAS RATERMANN (PHOTOS)

Whether Silicon Valley in California or Frankfurt-RhineMain: artificial Intelligence (AI) is on everybody's lips – opportunities and risks, new and endangered jobs, the revolutionary power of the new technologies. “At last!” says Sebastian Heinz, co-initiator of the AI Hub Frankfurt: wearing a T-shirt, he is sitting in a glassed-in office on the edge of a light-flooded floor on Hanauer Landstraße in Frankfurt's eastern district with two knee-high letters standing on the floor directly in front of his corner office: AI.

The ambience is different, but the theme is the same a good 30 kilometres further south: in an office at TU Darmstadt with a large bookshelf and a view of Herrngarten – the largest and oldest park in the southern Hessian city of science – computer science professor Mira Mezini is working on the technology of the future. She is co-director of the Hessian Center for Artificial Intelligence, hessian.AI. Her take on the global AI debate: “I think it's a good thing: after all, it's important to have an objective conversation about opportunities and risks.”



Entrepreneur Sebastian Heinz is looking to advance artificial intelligence through the AI Hub Frankfurt.



Computer science professor Mira Mezini is co-director of hessian.AI.

Excellent fundamental research is the basis for innovation. //

The scientist and the entrepreneur started working on AI long before ChatGPT and other language models put the topic in the global spotlight. They both share a view of the new technologies that is as sober as it is forward-looking. “I think we should take care to view AI products as assistance systems that support us humans,” says Mezini, who heads the Software Engineering Department at TU Darmstadt, having previously worked at Northeastern University in Boston in the US, for example.

Heinz studied economics and statistics in Munich and went on to found statworx in Frankfurt in 2011, a consultancy specialising in data science and AI. He says: “We can’t just let things happen and figure out how to deal with them afterwards.” The goal of the AI Hub according to him: “As we see it, this initiative is about unleashing the potential of data and AI for Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main region.”

But how well is FrankfurtRhineMain positioned in the field of artificial intelligence? How can opportunities be used sensibly and risks minimised? How are science and business working together on this? “The region definitely has enormous potential,” says the managing director of hessian.AI, Annette Miller. Founded in 2020 and funded by the state of Hesse with 38 million euros over a five-year start-up phase, the centre involves 13 Hessian universities which work closely together. The key player is TU Darmstadt, an institution that enjoys an outstanding national and international reputation: according to the German Research Foundation, for example, the university is ranked first in Germany in the field of computer science.

“hessian.AI is founded on cutting-edge AI research,” says co-director Mezini. “Excellent fundamental research is the basis for economic and social progress and innovation” – here she draws a comparison with Silicon Valley with its world-famous tech companies: Stanford University was the nucleus for their development. As managing director Miller adds, people often forget that AI is not a ready-made technology that simply needs to be applied in companies. “In many areas we’re still at the early stages of development, so research is needed to move AI products and technologies into widespread use.”

“hessian.AI is founded on cutting-edge AI research,” says co-director Mezini. “Excellent fundamental research is the basis for economic and social progress and innovation” – here she draws a comparison with Silicon Valley with its world-famous tech companies: Stanford University was the nucleus for their development. As managing director Miller adds, people often forget that AI is not a ready-made technology that simply needs to be applied in companies. “In many areas we’re still at the early stages of development, so research is needed to move AI products and technologies into widespread use.”

Hessian.AI is looking to contribute to this in various ways. Firstly, it is a unique association of 13 universities. While not all of them possess the same AI expertise as TU Darmstadt, they are able to complement each other. Mezini explains this taking the example of medicine: “In the case of a lot of highly relevant problems such as individualised treatment, there’s no such thing as off-the-shelf AI.” Interdisciplinary collaboration is needed to develop new AI methods. “hessian.AI helps build these bridges.”

The centre is also seeking to build bridges with society and business. This is why it supports start-up projects and offers a wide range of programmes for medium-sized companies. Another approach is to offer joint doctoral programmes in collaboration with companies. “The doctoral students do part of their work at the university, on their dissertation, and part at the company,” explains Mezini. A powerful computer infrastructure is a key factor in connection with this type of programme, and also when it comes to collaborative projects with industry partners. The most recent example of this in Darmstadt is fortytwo, a super-computer specially designed for machine learning and training large AI models.

Forging links between business and new technologies – this is what entrepreneur Heinz is working on with his colleagues at the AI Hub Frankfurt, too. The programme of this initiative includes workshops and training courses, as well as providing advice for start-ups. “Our vision is to establish a headquarters for AI in the region,” says Heinz. Among other things, an AI co-working space is to be created at the heart of Frankfurt where events can be held and where start-ups and established companies can get together.

The Frankfurt-based start-up right.based on science (“right” for short) was founded in 2016 – long before today’s AI hype. But it too is now looking to profit from the new possibilities. Right° aims to contribute to achieving the 1.5 degree target set down in the Paris Climate Agreement by providing a science-based model for companies – the so-called X-Degree-Compatibility (XDC) model, which measures the climate impact of companies, buildings and financial portfolios in terms of degrees Celsius. “The figure tells you how many degrees the Earth would warm up by the end of the millennium if the entire world had the same climate performance as the company under assessment,” says co-founder Hannah Helmke. The model also uses an extensive procedure to take sector-specific variables into account so as not to compare IT companies with steel companies. “This means that every company has the opportunity to achieve the 1.5-degree target as appropriate to its sector,” explains Helmke.

In order to tap into the possibilities of artificial intelligence, Helmke is working with mathematician Martin Simon, who holds an AI Innovation Professorship in Climate Risk Management at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. The two have known each other for years. Before taking up his professorship, he used to work in the financial industry where he was already involved with climate risks in connection with risk management, says Simon in a co-working office in downtown Frankfurt. He was impressed with the XDC model from the outset “because it offers a concrete number and it’s also science-based”.

AI could help with this and other models, the scientist explains, by making them more efficient – in other words faster. “After all, thousands of possible future scenarios have to be calculated



As managing director of hessian.AI, Annette Miller wants to bring business and science together.



Collaboration on measuring climate impact in companies: start-up founder Hannah Helmke and mathematician Martin Simon

based on different model parameters to allow for the inherent uncertainties.” This requires enormous computing power, he says, so it’s simply too expensive for practical use at the moment. “We’re working on using neural networks to reduce the computing time to a fraction of current levels,” says Simon.

As far as cooperation between business and science is concerned, the mathematician says it works very well in the region. In the field of AI, he cites hessian.AI as an example. The

latter’s managing director Miller says that the conditions in FrankfurtRhineMain are excellent: “in addition to being an excellent research base, this region is one of the strongest business hubs in Europe”. Sebastian Heinz also sees this as a huge benefit: “There’s massive potential in such an economically powerful region: new ideas can be put into practice directly in large companies as well as in SMEs.” He has no doubt that there’ll be a huge demand for this: “AI will go from nice-to-have to must-have.”

In the year 2024, several big institutions jointly attend to the theme of forests: Deutsches Romantik-Museum, Frankfurt a.M., Senckenberg Naturmuseum, Frankfurt a.M., and Museum Sinclair-Haus Bad Homburg, cooperate in a large multi-part exhibition project »Forests« ranging from the Romantic era to the presence and future.

The Kulturfonds takes this as a cause to invoke the theme of forests also in the region. Just like few other parts of Germany the region around Main and Taunus is characterized by wooded hills that make up the Rhein-Main area’s attractions together with the manifold institutions of art and culture.

The Kulturfonds thus invites its project partners to spin out the theme of forests, trace it in the arts and concurrently include their immediate surroundings’ nature.

WALD

KULTURFONDS
Frankfurt-RheinMain

The non-profit association is supported by the Federal State of Hesse, the city of Frankfurt am Main, the districts of Hochtaunus and Main-Taunus, the cities of Darmstadt, Wiesbaden, Hanau, Bad Vilbel, Offenbach am Main, and Oestrich-Winkel, the districts of Rhingau-Taunus and Offenbach. Further excellent projects of art and culture can be found at www.kulturfonds-fm.de / Facebook / Instagram / Newsletter

SHOULDERING RESPONSIBILITY AND TAKING ACTION

The Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main is a prime example of civic engagement. Professor **Frank E. P. Dievernich** is Chair of the Foundation's board. He tells us why education and skills are so important to our society.

ARND FESTERLING (TEXT) AND JONAS RATERMANN (PHOTOS)

> Professor Dievernich, Frankfurt was once a Free Imperial City, and historically, its citizens always played a major role. How far does that remain the case today?

I believe a nice way to gauge the level of civic engagement is to look at the number of charitable foundations in a city, and Frankfurt has around 700. Essentially we are the charitable foundations capital of Germany. Civic engagement of this kind has its roots in the way that we have historically seen ourselves as a free city and in the desire of Frankfurt's citizens to play their part in shaping the city's life. That desire led to the creation of the Polytechnic Society in 1816, around 200 years ago.

We continue to see this civic spirit wherever help or support is needed. That might be when the Art Museum needs funds for a purchase, or when bursaries or support are required for children's education. The people of Frankfurt step up quickly. Take 2015, for example, when hundreds of thousands of refugees came to Germany and help had to be pulled together quickly. Many foundations joined ranks in Frankfurt, allowing a wide range of activities to be undertaken without major delays. There are countless examples of civic engagement which show that people here take responsibility and do something – they don't point the finger at others or wait for the government.

What role does the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main play in the wider picture of Frankfurt's 700 different foundations?

Without wanting to overstate things, I believe that the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main is one of the city's most important charitable foundations, particularly because its whole purpose is linked to the city of Frankfurt and we are active in a very wide range of ways. The Polytechnic Society set up the charitable foundation in 2005, providing the foundation with a large part of the profits it acquired from the sale of the Frankfurt Sparkasse savings bank. Thanks to our "Polytechnikers" (the 351 individuals who fund our work), we are a thriving organisation which plays a prominent part in the life of the city and works for the good of the people of Frankfurt. We aim to play our part in city society, and to be an important voice speaking within it and beyond it.

Under the statutes of your foundation your work is limited to the city itself, but does it reach out into the wider region as well?

Absolutely. Take our Diesterweg bursaries for children and their parents, for example. Some of these families move out of Frankfurt into the surrounding region, but that doesn't mean they lose their bursary. On the other hand, take our project ideas which we



export into the wider region, such as the Diesterweg bursaries, which are being provided in cities such as Offenbach through the community foundation there. A lot of what drives us to take action here in Frankfurt is also going on in the wider region. That's why a lot of our ideas and projects can be taken up outside the city as well, from "Deutschsommer" summer courses in Fulda for third-grade (8 years old) students to improve their German language skills, to our "Stadtteil-Historiker" projects in the Ruhr area to promote local history. Right now there are 39 transfer locations across the whole of Germany for Polytechnic Foundation projects. We are trying to share our ideas and we hope that others will try to copy us however they can – imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!

Tell us about networks across the wider region.

Our work is in Frankfurt, but we live in the region as a whole. We have a tight network of cooperation partners and our network of alumni who have taken part in our programmes now numbers over 2,200 people, of whom 550 are actively involved. Over three-quarters of our alumni live in the Rhine-Main region. That means we are part of an excellent network and have a great sense of developments and problems in the region. For me, the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main would ideally take on the role of a neutral partner or moderator for the public and policymakers, one which conveys voices and brings together different groups.

The 175th anniversary of Germany's first national parliament in St Paul's Church has shifted attention back onto Frankfurt as the city of German democracy. What role does the issue of democracy play in your work?

The Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main wants to make a significant contribution to ensuring that social cohesion continues and thrives. There are strong centrifugal forces in our society and we are working against them. Through our day-to-day work we teach knowledge and skills for social cohesion. In this, all our projects are aimed at two strategic reference points. The first is strengthening personal development and the second is allowing people to participate in society. Our vision comes from taking both these points together: promoting education and skills for social cohesion.

That sounds quite general,

but it is very specific. We want to launch several more projects in the field of democracy alone. Three years ago we started our "Young St Paul's" programme for high schoolers. They learn how to debate, they learn how to argue, and they learn how to reach a consensus. In future we will be using new formats to reach our



Frank E. P. Dievernich, Born 1970 in Frankfurt. He studied Business Administration and Sociology at LMU Munich. After holding various management roles he was appointed to a professorship in Bern in 2009. In 2014 Dievernich was elected President of Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. His term of office ended in June 2022 and since 1 October 2022 he has been Chair of the Board of the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main. The Foundation was established in 2005 by the Polytechnic Society, which has existed since 24 November 1816. Its honorary members have included Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The Foundation exists to promote urban society in education and training, family education, prevention and civic engagement.

We firmly believe that democracy relies on civic engagement. //

Professor Frank E. P. Dievernich, Chair of the Board of the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main.



target audiences in secondary schools and vocational schools. We will also have a programme to reach out to students of technical subjects. Ultimately, we're focusing on young and first-time voters. We're setting up round tables and exploring questions and young people's expectations which they can then discuss with politicians face-to-face in a second round.

Why is the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main doing all this?

We firmly believe that democracy relies on civic engagement. Without it, nothing can work in the long run. That's why everyone



involved must do all they can to promote engagement. Businesses can release their employees for civic engagement for certain periods, for example. That's why we as a foundation are focusing more strongly on business networking, firing up partnerships and forging links. We want to win over businesses to work with us in new forms of cooperation in civil society. I cannot think how we would otherwise be able to meet the need for civic engagement.

What is the best way for people to play their part?

There's no end to the opportunities. You could help at your former school or volunteer for an initiative which brings together older people with young people, or you could help out with creating and maintaining green spaces. We can tackle anything together. That's the key point: we mustn't think that other people, businesses, foundations or public bodies are already doing something. No, we need to enter into new partnerships and forge new networks to stand up for civil society, to shape it and develop it. We want to pick up on ideas and provide fresh thinking. As the Polytechnic Foundation of Frankfurt am Main, this work of persuading and inspiring others is something we want to and must do.



Longstanding football tradition: Frankfurt Galaxy already had a huge fan following in the region back in the 1990s.

dp/picturealliance

FROM FOOTBALL TO BUSINESS

The relations between **FrankfurtRhineMain** and the **US** have been very close for decades: US soldiers left their mark on the region after the Second World War – today NFL champions play matches in Frankfurt.

BY ARND FESTERLING (TEXT)

> **The boy was small and the football was big.** Little Andrew would once roam the corridors of Frankfurt's Waldstadion with his football. His father Oliver Luck was manager of Frankfurt Galaxy, the team that brought professional football to FrankfurtRhineMain in the early 1990s. When little Andrew returned to the USA, he learned everything about the game – and went on to become a superstar in the National Football League (NFL). Today, the superstars from the US come to Frankfurt to play matches: Patrick Mahomes with Superbowl champions Kansas City Chiefs, for example. And the Indianapolis Colts play at the Frankfurt stadium, too, where their former star quarterback Andrew Luck took his very first steps with a football.



Today part of Goethe University, formerly the US Army headquarters: the Poelzig Building in Frankfurt's Westend.

The two NFL games in Frankfurt in November 2023 were sold out within minutes. Fan interest in this all-American sport is already at a high level in the region, but when the best in the world are here in the flesh, it knows no bounds. A lot of fans still remember the “old” Galaxy, a team that literally rocked the stadium in NFL Europe with great sport and very loud music. There was even a CD: the “Galaxy Powerhits”. The stadium announcer – or rather entertainer – was Werner Reinke, the well-known radio presenter from Hessischer Rundfunk. Waldstadion was all about partying – and international friendship, too: after all, at least half of the fans were Americans.

NFL Europe has long since ceased to exist, but international sport and athletes from abroad continue to have a major impact on the region. Quite a few stars come from the US. In Mainhattan – as the city on the River Main is sometimes called because of the skyline with its numerous skyscrapers – international footballer Paxten Aaronson plays for Eintracht Frankfurt. American basketball players play for the Frankfurt Skyliners and the Giraffes in Langen, while US ice hockey players are in the line-up for the Frankfurt Lions for the Red Devils in Bad Nauheim. They are just a few of the more than 90,000 US citizens who make Frankfurt-RhineMain the most international region in Germany.

“**There are days** when I hear nothing but American English at the railway station,” writes blogger Megan, who is originally from

Virginia: “I’ve met people from all over the world who’ve come to live in Frankfurt.” The inhabitants of FrankfurtRhineMain are from around 180 nations, with US Americans making up the largest proportion of those from overseas. This is at least due to the Frankfurt Airport, one of the major international hubs in Europe. More than 1,800 US companies are based in the region, while 15 of the largest 50 US companies according to revenue have their European headquarters here. The airport makes journeys short – whether trips to international customers or for visits back home in the States. “Back to the world”, as the GIs used to call the flight home. Hundreds of thousands of US soldiers stationed in the region over the decades would set off on the trip from Frankfurt, taking a scheduled flight from the airport or from the airbase – the huge military airfield that now forms part of the international airport.

The GIs who came to liberate Germany from Nazi rule and have remained to this day. For decades, their headquarters was the impressive Poelzig Building: having formerly belonged to IG Farben, it is now a central part of the Westend campus of Johann Wolfgang Goethe University. The office of then Commander-in-Chief and later US President Dwight D. Eisenhower has been preserved and is opened on festive occasions. Tens of thousands of US soldiers were stationed in the region up until the fall of the Iron Curtain. Until the 1980s and 1990s it was possible to pay in US dollars in numerous shops, and cars with US number

plates were to be seen everywhere on the streets. German police and the US military police would even go out on their patrols together.

Elvis Presley did his military service with the 3rd US Armoured Division in Friedberg, at one of many dozens of barracks in the region. There are still a good half-dozen bases today, the most important being without doubt the US Army Headquarters for Europe and Africa in Wiesbaden. Incidentally, it was at a party in Frankfurt’s Goethestraße that Elvis Presley met his wife Priscilla. A few steps away and 19 steps down a narrow staircase, Frankfurt’s Jazzkeller still exists where conscripts like Bill Ramsey, Gary Peacock and Joe Henderson would regularly perform, and greats like Sonny Rollins and Dizzy Gillespie would jam alongside German jazz musicians after their concerts in the big halls. Another cultural highlight in FRM is the English Theatre, founded in 1979 – the third oldest and now the largest English-language theatre in continental Europe.

The “King” was here, and so was “The Greatest”, Muhammad Ali – athlete of the century and the most famous conscientious objector in history. On 10 September 1966 he boxed against Karl Mildener at Frankfurt’s Waldstadion, the same place where the Kansas Chiefs are due to face the Miami Dolphins in November 2023, 57 years and two months later.

Large numbers of fans are expected to fly to Frankfurt from all over the world once again for this occasion. “Another advantage of the airport is that time and again, friends stop over here on their travels,” writes blogger Megan. But the first and most important “stopover” in the history of the friendship between the FRM region and America was made by William Penn as long ago as 1677 in Frankfurt’s Saalhof, now the oldest building in Frankfurt’s historic centre. He was looking to recruit German settlers for Pennsylvania: they eventually emigrated from Krefeld in 1683, but they founded Germantown using capital from Frankfurt.

Today, Frankfurt and Philadelphia – the largest city in Pennsylvania – are closely linked twin cities. They share not just their friendship, but also a certain lifestyle. As Megan comments in her blog: “International cities remind me so much of home because the states are so diverse. I’ve never felt homesick in Frankfurt because diversity and international flair are everywhere here.”



The “King” Elvis Presley was stationed in Friedberg during his military service.

FROM ST. PAUL'S CHURCH TO THE LIBERTY BELL

The twin cities of Frankfurt and Philadelphia symbolise not just German-US friendship but also longstanding democratic traditions, says Consul General **Norman Thatcher Scharpf**. In his personal life he is a great fan of the Rhine-Main region – castles, palaces, churches, cathedrals, cycling along the Nidda, hiking in the Taunus.

BY ARND FESTERLING (INTERVIEW) AND FRANK RÖTH (PHOTO)



Consul General Thatcher Scharpf, how do you see relations between FrankfurtRhineMain and the US?

Germany and the United States have been important allies for 75 years. We've established very close relations based on our shared commitment to democracy, human rights, security and the rule of law. Besides our political and historical ties, we share a rich cultural heritage. About 49 million Americans – one sixth of the total population – have roots in Germany. This makes Germany the largest single country of immigration to the US. More than one million members of the US Armed Forces have served in Germany, a large proportion of them in the Rhine-Main region. They have all taken a piece of Germany with them to the US.

FrankfurtRhineMain is a highly active business hub with numerous links to the US. At the Consulate General, we aim to further strengthen these strong economic ties and support regional businesses and organisations in advancing transatlantic cooper-

My own family history is one of many examples of the longevity and depth of the German-American partnership. //

ation in trade, technology and security. Whether expanding inclusive economic growth, addressing climate change or resolutely opposing Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine, German-American relations are more united and resolute than ever.



Norman Thatcher Scharpf has been head of the US Consulate General in Frankfurt since August 2021.

Are there similarities between FrankfurtRhineMain and places in the US – such as Frankfurt's twin city of Philadelphia, where you yourself went to university? Or what differences are there?

In its historical significance and enduring commitment to the principles of freedom and democratic values, Frankfurt – the cradle of German democracy – has a remarkable parallel with Philadelphia, where the US Declaration of Independence was signed. From the Liberty Bell to St. Paul's Church, the strength of the twinning between Frankfurt and Philadelphia is a testament to the eternal bond we share in our pursuit of freedom.

It is said that working at the consulate in Frankfurt is particularly popular among diplomats. Why is that the case?

Frankfurt is a very international city at the heart of Germany and Europe, with a world-class infrastructure and an excellent airport. That's why we're here: as the largest consulate and fourth largest US diplomatic mission in the world, the Consulate General Frankfurt supports more than 180 other US missions around the globe.

Is it true that you also have German roots, as your name suggests?

Yes, three of my four grandparents were the children or grandchildren of immigrants from south-western Germany in the sec-

ond half of the 19th century. My own family history is one of many examples of the longevity and depth of the German-American partnership. It's an incredible personal honour for me to represent the United States here, especially at a time when the United States and Germany are such close allies, partners and friends.

What do you like best about the city and the region? Is there a spot you're particularly fond of?

My wife and I are always out and about enjoying the wonderful cultural offerings of Frankfurt and its surrounding region. We love the exhibitions at the Städel Museum, the performances at the opera and the English Theatre, as well as the concerts at the Rheingau Music Festival. We're great fans of the countryside, too, and we love to walk our dog through Frankfurt's green parks, cycle along the Main and the Nidda, and hike in the Taunus and the vineyards of the Rheingau.

Do you have any tips on what visitors to the region should definitely not miss out on?

I'm a big fan of castles, palaces, churches and cathedrals. And there are so many of them in Frankfurt and the surrounding area. Visitors should definitely not miss out on experiencing the rich history of this region. //

WELCOME TO FRANKFURT – WHAT NOW?

How the **International Office** of the Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain helps foreigners find their feet in the Rhine-Main region.

BY LUCA REHSE-KNAUF (TEXT) AND JONAS RATERMANN (PHOTO)



A constant view of the skyline: Sarina Heer (left) and Amanda Ife (right) on the rooftop terrace of the Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain

> **“Frankfurt girls got pretty faces”.** These were the words once sung by Elvis Presley: it was at the US barracks in Friedberg in Hesse that the “King” did his military service along with tens of thousands of other Americans. The Rhine-Main area is also home to one of the largest Chinese business communities in Europe and many other international communities, too, with people from almost 200 nations living here. Cultural diversity has shaped the history of the region through to the present day. At its centre lies the commercial and financial metropolis of Frankfurt: boasting one of the largest airports in Europe, the region offers an incomparable mix of large and small towns, along with lots of scenic landscapes and extensive woodlands. People who come from abroad and want to live and work here naturally have lots of questions. The International Office run by the Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain has the answers.

Helping new arrivals find their feet in the region – that’s what the International Office is all about. So its location opposite the north side of the central railway station is symbolic in character. It is from here that the team under communications manager Amanda Ife and social media manager Sarina Heer take care of a wide range of concerns: Where can I find work? How can I find a school and daycare for the kids? How do I find an apartment? What types of insurance do I need? And: language courses. After all, very few newcomers speak German. The working language at the International Office is English – but sometimes Spanish, French or Greek are spoken, if necessary.

The first point of contact for people is the International Office’s informative website. If people don’t find what they’re looking for there, they can e-mail or call. The first contact tends to be virtual because people are still abroad. The topics are limitless: they range from specific information on labour law to questions about the meaning of abbreviations in housing advertisements. The latter are a language in themselves, so the International Office website provides translations: “EBK” for Einbauküche: “fitted kitchen included (oven, fridge, sink, cupboards). “AB” or Altbau: “old building, built before 1949”. And you can definitely avoid some unpleasant surprises if you know beforehand that “rep.-bed.” means “in need of repair”.

Even after people have moved to the region and have found work and housing, there are still lots of questions. These are answered via social media or directly in the office. Often they concern issues such as broadcasting fees or waste separation, says Sarina Heer. “These are the little things you don’t even think about if you were born here.” But the most important thing is to find a connection, she says. “When I ask people what the greatest challenge here is, they say: finding friends.”

Amanda Ife knows what she’s talking about. Originally from Ireland, she has lived in Luxembourg, Switzerland and Greece. “They want to get know people who understand them, who have been in the same situation and who speak the same language.” The website provides information on international communities throughout the region: from business clubs and cultural associations to English-speaking theatre groups and the international ski club.

The feedback is very good, says Amanda Ife. People welcome the support and in particular the personal contact. “A lot of people are really surprised how green it is here, that it is so diverse and international, and that there is so much to do. And that everything is within easy reach. If you have come from a city like London, it takes at least an hour to get to work.” In this way, the International Office not only supports the newcomers themselves but also the German economy. By helping people from all over the world to connect and find work, they are doing their part to reduce the shortage of skilled workers. “It is important to us that people feel welcome when they arrive, that they settle in quickly, and that they stay long-term.”

Find Your Future in FrankfurtRheinMain!

People from almost **200 nations** call Frankfurt-RheinMain their home, and everyone who would like to be part of our **community** is welcome. With its strong economy, great quality of life and cultural diversity, **FrankfurtRheinMain** is one of the best places to live and work in Germany. If you would like to discover the region, we are more than happy to help!



Contact us!

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Find everything you need to know about living and working in FrankfurtRheinMain



The FrankfurtRheinMain International Office gives you advice by email, phone or in person



For news, events and tips, have a look at our social media channels



www.find-it-in-frm.de

PIONEER IN TERMS OF ENERGY

FrankfurtRhineMain is a region where internationally acclaimed ideas for a sustainable economy are developed: three exciting projects from **fusion reactors** and **e-kerosene** for aircraft to **paper production**.

BY ARND FESTERLING (TEXT)



The energy transition is a key issue, especially in economically strong regions. In

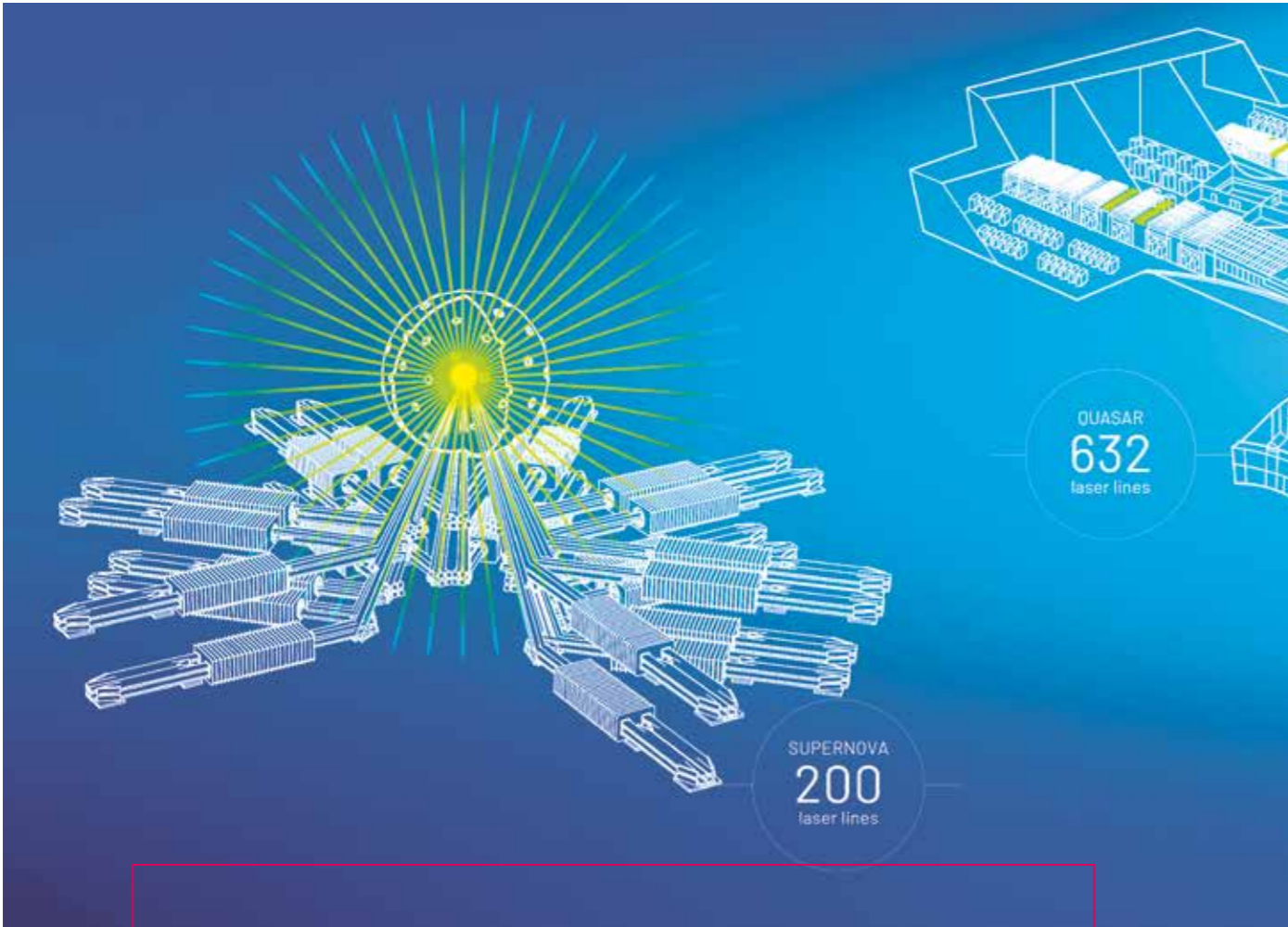
FrankfurtRhineMain, companies and universities are among those working on innovative ideas for more sustainable management and production in the future. Examples include the Darmstadt-based start-up Focused Energy, a TU Darmstadt spin-off that is working on laser-based nuclear fusion for emission-free energy production, the Wiesbaden plant of the Swedish company Essity, which is aiming to produce paper with green hydrogen, and Germany's biggest e-fuel production plant, located in Frankfurt-Höchst industrial park.



Ineratec

Frankfurt-Höchst

Hydrogen and electricity are considered the essential energy sources in terms of the mobility of the future. But the limit is soon reached when it comes to flying: motors and batteries are too heavy. So sustainable flying is dependent on other fuels for the foreseeable future – and this is where Ineratec comes in. The company is building one of the largest production facilities for green fuel in Frankfurt's Industriepark Höchst. From the turn of the year 2023/2024, the plan is to produce mainly so-called e-kerosene for aviation. "With the largest pilot plant for synthetic kerosene in Germany, Hesse will be a pioneer in the area of climate protection for air transport," said Hesse's Minister of Economics Tarek Al-Wazir.



Focused Energy

Darmstadt

A start-up in the region funded by the US Department of Energy? Yes, it actually exists: Focused Energy in Darmstadt receives funding from Washington, too. The company specialises in nuclear fusion – an economically reliable, clean and sustainable form of energy production. Only in theory as yet, however: the idea might sound good, but it is by no means simple. Nonetheless, Focused Energy is well on its way to making a significant contribution to the use of this clean nuclear energy. The approach in Darmstadt is to get nuclear fusion going with the help of laser technology. Focused Energy is first and foremost about fundamental research, but it is also looking to develop its findings into market-ready products and technologies.



Essity

Mainz-Kostheim

A lot of companies produce paper. But so far only one has managed to do so without releasing CO₂. Essity achieved exactly that in a pilot project carried out at its Mainz-Kostheim plant with the help of extensive electrification, electricity from renewable energies and – for the first time – using green hydrogen. “We’re decarbonising our industrial processes with green electricity and hydrogen,” says Thorsten Becherer, Essity plant manager in Kostheim. Sustainability is a central goal of the Swedish group, which aims to become climate-neutral by 2050. This is an ambitious undertaking, especially in the energy-intensive field of paper production. The Kostheim plant is leading the way.

Hesse will be a pioneer in the area of climate protection for air transport, says Minister Al-Wazir.



Presentation of the first ISSB standards at the Frankfurt Stock Exchange in June 2023



Deutsche Börse/Martin Hoppen



ISSB Chief Emmanuel Faber

ISSB

ISSB standards for more than 100,000 companies worldwide //

SETTING GLOBAL STANDARDS

When it comes to globally applicable sustainability standards for companies, Frankfurt plays a central role: the **ISSB** has been based in the city since mid-2022.

BY GÜNTER HEISMANN (TEXT)

< It's an institution that is still virtually unknown to the public at large. Even in the financial metropolis of Frankfurt, very few people are aware of who or what the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) is. Yet with its headquarters next to the Alte Oper since July 2022, this recently established organisation has a key role to play in the ecological transformation of the global economy.

The ISSB is working on uniform global standards for sustainability reports in which companies disclose their environmental and climate risks. This allows investors to see how sustainably a particular joint-stock corporation is doing business. Sustainability reports are in many respects similar to conventional annual reports in which companies are required to provide exhaustive information about their earnings, assets and financial situation.

This explains why the ISSB is a special organisation established by the IFRS Foundation Trustees in London. The latter is responsible for the world's most important accounting standards, the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) – a set of rules that is also applied in Germany by large-scale publicly listed corporations. At the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November 2021, the IFRS Trustees announced that a separate organisation would be set up to establish green accounting rules: the ISSB.

In the face of fierce competition from other financial metropolises, Frankfurt succeeded in qualifying as the seat of this institution. This is an enormous boost in terms of prestige for the city and indeed for the region as a whole. In Frankfurt, the standards are now being created that will guide all listed companies in the world when they report to their shareholders on the extent of the climate risks they face and how far they have progressed in terms of the ecological transformation.

In future, the ISSB expects some 100,000 to 130,000 companies worldwide to apply the guidelines that are being developed at Opernplatz in Frankfurt. The organisation presented the first two standards in June 2023: these concern general rules for sustainability reporting and climate protection.

Numerous large-scale corporations already report on the emission levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases caused by their companies. They also provide information on the amounts of CO₂ emitted in the generation of the electricity they purchase from their energy suppliers. In these two areas or "scopes", it is relatively easy to determine reliable data.

So-called Scope 3 is more difficult, namely the CO₂ emissions at the upstream and downstream stages of the value chain. "This area accounts for around 70 per cent of emissions," estimates ISSB Chair Emmanuel Faber. But the data situation here is extremely poor, complains the manager, who previously spent many years as head of the French food producer Danone.

For example, how is a car manufacturer supposed to find out how high the emissions are that its suppliers produce in far-away countries in Asia and Africa? And it is even more difficult to determine with any degree of accuracy what quantities of greenhouse gases are emitted from the exhausts of all the cars that the company has ever produced and that are still on the road somewhere in the world. Today, such data is either not published at all or only approximately estimated.

The ISSB has set itself the goal of publishing reliable information on the difficult Scope 3 with the IFRS S2 standard. The body does not aspire to comprehensively regulate the identification and publication of such data, however. The aim is merely to establish minimum standards on which regulation in the individual countries can build. "We want to create a baseline," says ISSB head Faber.

In order to achieve the broadest possible acceptance of its standards, the ISSB has involved companies, investors and auditors in the development process, as well as politicians and academics. They were given the opportunity to express criticism and make alternative proposals during a consultation phase lasting several months. From March to July 2022, some 1,400 written comments were received, which the ISSB took into account when fine-tuning its standards. "This process has given rise to very robust results that are widely accepted," says Matthias Schmidt, sustainability expert at the auditing firm Deloitte.

Climate protection is just one of the many aspects of sustainability, however, albeit a particularly important one. The term also includes social issues such as the promotion of women in management and the reduction of occupational accidents. In the second quarter of 2023, the ISSB started deliberations on guidelines to cover further aspects of sustainability. ISSB head Faber already stated back in June that the work was still in its infancy: publication of the first two standards was only a "starting signal", he said. But at some point, the ISSB may no longer be an institution on Frankfurt's Opernplatz that is unknown to the general public. **//**

OUR REGION, OUR FORESTS

The federal state of Hesse has some of the **largest areas of forest in Germany**. So it's high time we pay tribute to everything that the forests of the Taunus, Spessart, Odenwald and Stadtwald contribute to our happiness, culture and quality of life in the Frankfurt-RhineMain region.

BY CONSTANZE KLEIS (TEXT)



THE OBERWALDSEE LAKE BETWEEN LANGEN AND MÖRFELDEN-WALLDORF

The Oberwaldsee lake is one of countless lakes in the forests between Frankfurt and Darmstadt. Many are former gravel pits and are treasured by people from the Frankfurt metropolitan region.

➤ **They are beautiful, romantic and always there** when you need comfort, peace and a break from the business of the big city. At least a third of the region is covered by forest, and over half of some districts are forested. It's a good thing forests are also active in protecting the climate, then. Forests filter dust and gases out of the air, and they cool hot towns and cities. One hectare of forest stores an average of 13 tonnes of CO2 every year and produces 15 tonnes of oxygen. A lot of research has gone into forests, their superpowers and the incredible benefits we gain from them, but they still hold a few secrets. The more closely science scrutinises forests, the more we realise that we still are a long way from knowing everything about them.

It's no surprise, then, that forests are a perfect match for those of us who live in the big cities of the Rhine-Main region. They're "a matter of the heart", as the writer Elias Canetti once described the relationship between Germans and forests. He was saying that what revolution means to the French, what mountains mean to the Swiss, and what the sea means to the English - that's what forests means to us. We want to spend time there and feel wrapped up in their protective embrace. Thankfully, there are plenty of opportunities on our doorstep. Being able to get into a forest without any further ado is one of the unbeatable advantages offered by the Rhine-Main region. After all, 42% of the federal state of Hesse is covered by forest - well above the German average of 30%. That's why Ram Shoham, Director of the Entrepreneurship Center at Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, not only praised the region for its airport and international character, but above all for "how quickly you can get out into nature" and "wander through beautiful forests". There's plenty of choice, and plenty of superlatives, too.

First of all, there's the Frankfurt City Forest, Germany's largest urban forest, covering around 5000 hectares. Just like any other forest, for centuries it supplied wood for building, heating and handicrafts, and provided areas for hunting and pasture. Until the beginning of the 19th Century, between 500 and 600 pigs were rounded up from the forest every October. In years with plenty of acorns and beech nuts, that number could exceed 1,000. The Oberschweinstiege area of southern Frankfurt takes its name

from these very pigs ("schweine"). Today it's a major destination for day trips from Frankfurt and other cities, along with the restaurant located on the Vierwaldstädtersee lake, known locally as "Jacobi-Weiher". The young philosopher Theodor Adorno often came here with his parents.

Then there's the Taunus, once described by the natural historian Alexander von Humboldt as the most beautiful highland region in the world. Let's face it, he had seen plenty of similar mountain ranges on his many travels. However, no-one knows for sure where the region gets its name from. It reportedly dates back to the Roman historian Tacitus (ca 55-115 BC) who wrote about a "castellum in Monte Tauno", by which he probably meant the town of Friedberg. The Roman general Germanicus (15 BC - 19 AD) also mentions a "Mons Taunus". However, it was not until the Frankfurt writer and diplomat Johann Isaak von Gerning (1767-1837) wrote a poem in honour of "The Healing Springs of Taunus" in the early 19th Century that the name entered everyday language. (I mention this just in case you ever find yourself on an episode of Who Wants to be a Millionaire in Germany...). The many attractions of the Taunus mountains include the world's only near-complete reconstruction of a Roman fort, and the Saalburg Archaeological Park. The Grosser Feldberg (881m) is the highest point in the Taunus, forming a high ridge along the highlands with the Kleiner Feldberg (825m) and the Altkönig (798m). With 210 hiking paths, steep valleys, streams and small rivers, the Rhine-Taunus Nature Park and the Hochtaunus Nature Park are a dream location for recreation on our doorstep.

The same is true of the Odenwald forest As with the Taunus, mystery also surrounds the origin of its name. Does it come from "Ode", as in a song or poem? Or does it derive from "Öder Wald", meaning an empty or lonely forest? Wherever the name comes from, the Odenwald is all about unwinding. It's a place to feel at one with nature, finding peace and quiet - and that's not hard, because here there's no one else for miles around. Though you certainly won't be the only living thing, as the forest is home to some 6,700 species of animal. And that's not even counting fungi. According to the latest studies, fungi are a living entity somewhere between animals and plants. The forester and conservationist Peter Wohlleben, known as "the tree whisperer" revealed

Forest covers at least a third of the whole Frankfurt-RhineMain region and half of many areas. //



THE FRANKFURT CITY FOREST

Forester Michael Christ runs regular tours for children to experience nature close to the city.



RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH FROM 1855 ON THE NEROBERG IN WIESBADEN

The Neroberg hill in the state capital of Hesse is one of the southern foothills of the Taunus mountains. A cable car runs up the Neroberg, which is mostly covered in forest. The hilltop and southern slope are a beautiful park.

in his recent bestseller “The Hidden Life of Trees” that the tips of tree roots possess “brain-like structures” where chemical and electrical processes take place which are “very similar ... to those in our heads”.

Yes, it’s a busy place, this “woodland solitude” which people treasure so much, but a little eerie and magical at the same time. The term was first used by Ludwig Tieck in his 1796 tale “Blonde Eckbert” to describe the extreme-romantic state of being. It fired the starting shot in an outpouring of enthusiasm for the forest, going on to worship woodlands in many different forms of artistic expression, but at the same time putting forests to political use as a national symbol. Yes, the fearful and the beautiful live side-by-side in the forest. That’s something you’ll find in art, poetry, prose and fairytales, such as those written by the Brothers Grimm, who grew up in Hanau. (By the way, no less than 40% of Hanau’s urban area is forest.) But let’s get back into the woods in art and music, such as the “Forest Murmurs” from Wagner’s opera “Siegfried”, and Engelbert Humperdinck’s opera “Hansel and Gretel” (which he wrote in Frankfurt, by the way). That said, the benefits we gain from forests have come to the fore again in recent years. Take the current trend of “forest baths” to improve wellness, where forests are finding a new function as spas and a source of miraculous healing. Back in 1982 the Japanese government coined the term “shinrin yoku” to describe “bathing in the silence and unspoiled nature of a forest”, which provides spiritual and medical benefits. Studies have actually shown that a walk through the peace and beauty of a forest slows you down and improves blood pressure, heart rate, lung capacity, and arterial elasticity. Studies have also shown that damp forest air can improve physical performance and the unique atmosphere and light can be incredibly inspiring. That’s yet another reason to idolize forests.

We’re still part of the forest myth”, says Wolfgang Bunzel. He is Head of the Department for Romantic Research at the Freies Deutsches Hochstift, as well as being Professor of Modern German Literature at Goethe University Frankfurt and Curator of the permanent exhibition at the Deutsche Romantik Museum in Frankfurt. In 2024 the Romantik Museum is partnering with the

Senckenberg Museum of natural history and the Museum Sinclair-Haus in Bad Homburg to present a multi-part exhibition entitled “New Stories from the Forest – from the Romantic to the Future”. The exhibition will delve deep into the spirit of the forest and raise awareness around its significance to us in the past, present and future. It will feature poem collages, readings, concerts and performances.

The FrankfurtRhineMain Culture Fund is taking this as an opportunity to promote the topic of forests around the region as well. The “intercommunal and interdisciplinary collaboration” involves many exciting projects, including the Hesse-born and internationally famous composer, radio play author and installation artist Werner Cee presenting his light and sound installation “de-symphonic” in the mountains of the four districts which are part of the Culture Fund. “simple space” by Jean-Filip Tupa brings together musicians, foresters and violinmakers, while Lasse-Marc Riek’s “Treehugger” acoustically explores the ecosystem of trees and their environment. What does it sound like when water moves through the capillaries of a leaf? What does it sound like when caterpillars and beetle larvae attack the bark of a tree from inside or outside and get under its skin? This is the soundtrack of life, but also a soundtrack of the decline to which more and more forests are doomed.

Obviously, despite all the rapturous enthusiasm, we can’t forget that climate change has placed huge pressures on forests. Storms, droughts, bark beetles, forestry which has relied for too long on monoculture and alien tree species: these have made almost 90% of forests sick. In the light of this, the “Forest Status Report” produced by the Hesse Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Agriculture and Consumer Protection could certainly be read as a guide to depression. But another distinctive spirit of the forest stands against this: hope. This hope is being nourished by €155m investments for reforestation and forest restructuring, which the government of Hesse has planned to make the forest at least moderately “climate stable”. The plans aim to provide a mixture of location-appropriate tree species with as many indigenous species as possible. In the end, we can loosely paraphrase the legendary humorist Loriot: life without forests is neither possible nor imaginable. **W**



A STAR IN CHINA

In China people turn and stare if they see table tennis player **Timo Boll** from Odenwald in the street. Now Josephina Neumann is following in the tradition of extraordinary table tennis players from FrankfurtRhineMain.

BY KATJA STURM (TEXT)



Timo Boll: at the top of his game for 30 years

> The man from Odenwald can't go out onto the street in China without bodyguards. In 2007 one magazine rated him as "sexiest European", and he was even a guest on a primetime Chinese family TV show. He gets more autograph requests from abroad than he does from his home country. Why? Timo Boll plays table tennis. He's not just good. He's exceptional. The sporting achievements of the two-time third placed player in the World Championships are the basis of his popularity.

He still loves playing. Even after nearly 30 years on the international stage, Boll still hasn't tired of his great passion. Now aged 42, he may no longer be among the favourites for the WTT Champions tournament in Frankfurt in autumn 2023 and its \$800,000 prize pot, but the model athlete is still certainly one of the stars. The favourites come from China, to the delight of the Chinese community in FrankfurtRhineMain.

Traditionally, Asian athletes have dominated the rapid racket sport. The last non-Asian country to win the World Cup was Sweden in 2000, and the Austrian Werner Schlager managed to snatch the gold medal away from the favourites in the singles in 2003. Over the years, Boll has played his way to a lot of respect in the world's leading table tennis nation. Boll has won more European Championships than any other player and was the first German since 2003 to head the world rankings on more than one occasion. Even today, he enjoys an exceptional position in China. "His popularity there is uninterrupted," confirms his publicist Bernhard Schmittenebecher.

Suddenly, there was someone who could make life difficult for the apparently indomitable Chinese, and who was dishing out unexpected defeats. In China Boll earned himself the reputation of "public enemy number 1". Selected players imitated his way of playing to allow the top tier of players to prepare better for playing him. He played in the Chinese Super League and even though his sporting limits are becoming apparent more often against younger players, his impressively long career and the numerous injuries (which he has often simply pushed to one side) make him seem almost indestructible.

But the six-times Olympian, who is now facing a fourth generation of opponents, enjoys a positive image in China for more than just his sport. Thanks to his reserved demeanour and approachability, along with his fairness and politeness towards others, the man from Odenwald is also an impressive person. For many years he has worked as a market ambassador for several German businesses and continues to take language lessons once or twice a week so he can speak to others more easily in China.

The new elite tournament in Frankfurt brings together the top 30 women and men in the world, and the Chinese players will be meeting their longstanding acquaintance in his homeland and in front of his many fans. Boll was born in Erbach and initially developed his game at a sports club in his hometown of Höchst, where the club even set up a training group with older league players especially for the teenager to allow him to complete his school education. He later moved to the Frankfurt Performance Centre, where he can still often be found today.

The sophisticated and thorough talent-spotting system in Hesse has also produced other well known and internationally successful names. These include the recent European Championship bronze medallist Patrick Franziska from Bensheim, who played his first tournaments for the same club as Boll. For decades the Rhine-Main region has been a table tennis stronghold, with numerous clubs playing in a wide range of leagues and a large cohort of up-and-coming players. Among the most promising young players is Josephina Neumann from Karben. The under-15s European double champion started playing table tennis when she was four and first played in the German national league when she was only 12. Neumann won the German championships with her team from Berlin and still attends Carl-von-Weinberg school in the Goldstein district of Frankfurt. It is an elite sports school where young athletes are given time off to attend morning training sessions, training courses and competition activities.

Qing Yu Meng is one of the coaches there. Born in China, Qing Yu Meng also trains members of the Fulda Maberzell table tennis club, which plays in the German national league. She was attracted to play professionally in Germany while she was still young. She's not the only representative of her country to do so. Jianxin Qiu has followed a similar career path, for example. He is the father of European champion and German national team player Dang Qiu. Another Chinese player who came to Germany is Wang Xi, who first played for Gönnern and Fulda in Hesse and has been a German citizen since 2015. The defence specialist was discovered by legendary coach Helmut Hampel and encouraged to join the table tennis club in the Rhine-Main region as the new number 1 - to replace the international superstar Timo Boll.



Josephina Neumann: breaking all the records

THE SUMMER FAIRY TALE, PART 2

A festival for sport and fans: Frankfurt is celebrating **UEFA EURO 2024** with a spectacular Fan Zone by the Main river.

BY ARND FESTERLING (TEXT)

➤ **...Summer...sun...football...** “A time to make friends” was the motto which welcomed football fans from all around the world to the 2006 World Cup, and Frankfurt-RhineMain set the standard for everyone else to follow. Neither before or since have such exuberant passion for sport and endless mood partying combined to an atmosphere where everyone in Germany could let their hair down. Eighteen years on, it’s going to be just as good all over again – In summer 2024 UEFA EURO 2024 is taking place in Germany, the 17th time the UEFA European Championships have been held.

“**We want to be by the Main!**” Thomas Feda (photo on p. 42) knew exactly where was the most attractive place for the EURO Fan Zone. After all, no-one can forget the big screens floating on the river in Frankfurt during the 2006 World Cup. However, the Managing Director of Tourismus+Congress GmbH Frankfurt am Main (TCF) of course also understood that the best-looking place

isn’t necessarily also the most suitable. So Christian Müller (photo p. 43), head of events organisation at TCF, and his nine-strong team set to work. “Preparations kicked off in 2018 and went straight into a critical phase,” he says. “We picked out all the suitable spaces in the city, came up with pros and cons for each and checked whether they meet the requirements of a fanzone.” And there are lots of requirements: the spaces must be large enough and easy to reach by public transport. They need to be in the city centre or at least very close to the centre, and they must satisfy all safety and security requirements.

The European Football Association UEFA stipulates many requirements, but Müller and his team can also contribute their own experience of running dozens of major events in the city. “We’re used to having big events in Frankfurt, but the biggest so far was certainly the 2006 World Cup. That hasn’t been equalled since. We did have the Old Town Festival to celebrate the opening of the “New Old Town”, and the St Paul’s Festival, both of which attracted crowds of a quarter of a million. Every year we also get



visitfrankfurt.de/old_town_fest

up to 1.5 million visitors to the Museumsufer Festival,” Feda says. However, EURO lasts four weeks, putting it “in a league of its own.” There are also matches in the stadium during that time. Two Group E games are being played on 17 and 26 June 2024, along with one Group C (20 June) and one Group A game (23 June). The stadium is also hosting a quarter-final match on 1 July.

FrankfurtRhineMain is enjoying a fantastic season of sport, even before EURO kicks off. Thanks to newly promoted Darmstadt 98 and Europa League winners Eintracht Frankfurt, the region boasts two clubs playing in the top tier of Germany’s favourite sport, football. The international sporting events start with two NFL weekends when Superbowl champions the Kansas City

Ten big screens will give fans a view of the UEFA EURO 2024 games along the whole 1.4km length of the Fan Zone by the Main. //

Chiefs play the Miami Dolphins on 5 November 2023 and the New England Patriots take on the Indianapolis Colts on 12 November, and stretches up to EURO 2024. Tens of thousands of people will come to the region for the NFL games, and a week-long NFL event is planned to take place on Frankfurt’s central Rossmarkt square. With months still to go, “interest is already through the roof,” says Feda.

The Rossmarkt satisfies some requirements of a good event location, it has a regular shape and is clearly delineated. However, UEFA has approved the river as the location of the EURO Fan

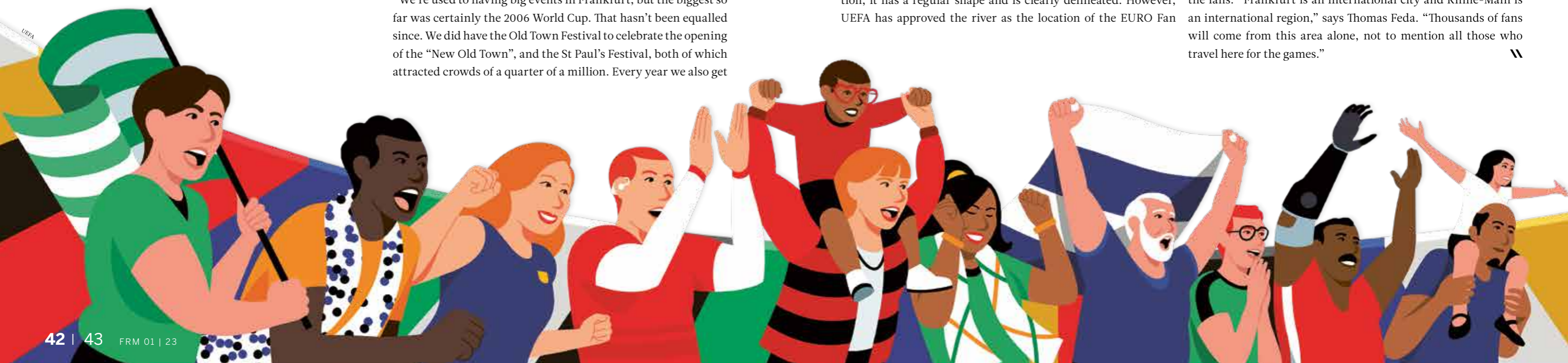
Zone, against the backdrop of the city’s impressive skyline. “The northern bank of the Main between Eisernem Steg and the Friedensbrücke Bridge is the nicest site, but it’s also very challenging,” says Müller. In this location, the Fan Zone is almost exactly a mile long, stretching 1.4km along the river-bank. Games will be shown on 10 big screens and there will be space for up to 30,000 people. The largest screen measures 144m² in size and will float on a pontoon in the Main near the Friedensbrücke Bridge, with space for 10,000 people in front of it. So why are there so many other screens? “We want people to be able to watch games from literally anywhere along the Fan Zone. That’s why we need 10 screens, so visitors can see at least one wherever they are,” Müller explains. This means the Fan Zone can provide different levels of footballing intensity to all guests depending on their tastes, from families with children to die-hard fans and partygoers.

The buzz in the Fan Zone will be boosted by a carefully chosen programme of cultural events and stands hosted by UEFA sponsors. The Fan Zone is being organised by the TCF under the project management of Christian Müller and procurator Dr Nina Malaviya. The stands will include top UEFA sponsors alongside businesses based in Germany, and even some with deep roots in the FrankfurtRhineMain region.

In the form of Alex Meier, acclaimed by Eintracht fans as a “football god”, and Olympic bobsleigh champion Deborah Levi, Frankfurt has won over two exceptionally popular athletes to serve as ambassadors. The host city has a Fan Zone set against the backdrop of spectacular skyscrapers. Now all that’s missing is the fans. “Frankfurt is an international city and Rhine-Main is an international region,” says Thomas Feda. “Thousands of fans will come from this area alone, not to mention all those who travel here for the games.” //



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PEOPLE OF TODAY

Five out of 5.8 million: Anyone familiar with these faces and stories will know what it is that makes the FrankfurtRhineMain metropolitan region so interesting.

BY ARND FESTERLING, CARSTEN HAUPTMEIER AND LUCA REHSE-KNAUF (TEXT)

Christian Setzepfandt

City guide

He has been explaining the soul of the city to visitors for 46 years. One newspaper dubbed him “the seductive tour guide” because his tours combine a love of his birthplace with a deep knowledge of facts, places and dates. His tours certainly include the typical postcard motifs, says Setzepfandt, but the threads that hold Frankfurt together are just as important. He often gets bookings for special topics in English, he says – after all, he lived in the US for two and a half years: architectural tours, tours on the city’s history or on the history of Frankfurt’s Jews, for example. Or a walk through the new “Old Town” with its 35 new buildings – a tourist magnet ever since it was opened in 2018. The art historian is not just a “seductive tour guide”, he is also a writer, an honorary member of the city’s magistrate, and on the board of the charity AIDS-Hilfe, for which he has worked on a voluntary basis for over twenty years – you might almost say that Setzepfandt himself is one of those threads that hold the city together.





Katrin Binner



Alex Becker

Tanja Brühl

University President

She is President of TU Darmstadt, but she also has her eye on the future of science in the region as a whole. Professor Tanja Brühl took on the role of first spokesperson for the Alliance of Rhine-Main Universities (RMU) in Frankfurt, Darmstadt and Mainz in April 2023. It is a close-knit cooperation that creates “new spaces of opportunity”, says Brühl. “We’re rethinking research, teaching and innovation: strengthening the shared study space, expanding networks in research and deepening dialogue with business and society in the FrankfurtRhine-Main science region.” Having originally studied political science, Brühl’s career has centred on the FRM region as a whole: born in Marburg in 1969, she was first a professor in Frankfurt and has been President of the Technical University of Darmstadt since 2019.

Luisa and Christian Benning

Start-up entrepreneurs

The insect breeders from Pfungstadt – that’s how Luisa and Christian Benning introduce themselves and their company PROBENDA. Their “innovative business idea” that received the Hessian Founders Award in 2022 is to produce animal feed from the larva of the black soldier fly. As such, they offer not just a high-quality source of protein, but also a sustainable alternative to conventional fodder production: in Pfungstadt in southern Hesse they have developed their own production system for this purpose. Waste from the region is processed there and fed to the insects; the larvae are turned into protein meal and fat, which is then processed into animal food. “If I feed a chicken with insect protein instead of soy, I can reduce the CO₂ footprint of the chicken by two-thirds,” explains Luisa Benning. Their sustainable concept also counteracts food waste. “When an animal dies or an apple falls from the tree, it becomes food for animals and insects. And that’s the natural principle we’re putting to use in an industrial context,” explains the insect breeder and start-up entrepreneur from southern Hesse.

Niranh Chanthabouasy

Artist

A dancer that takes photographs? Or maybe a photographer that dances? Niranh Chanthabouasy is both. Under the stage name “Lil Rock”, the Frankfurt native is a member of the dance group “Flying Steps”, with whom he toured the world in the 1990s. A few years ago, the break dancer discovered a second passion: capturing motion in images. “Photography and dance have one fascinating thing in common – the capacity to convey emotions and tell stories.” That’s why he prefers not to commit himself in the future; Chanthabouasy wants to continue to pursue both dancing and photography. After 20 years of intense touring, however, he would like to spend more time in Frankfurt. “This decision will not only give me a better work-life balance, it will also enable me to be more connected to the local dance and arts scene,” says the artist. Chanthabouasy’s activities in Frankfurt include running the Tanzklub im Mousonturm and organising dance projects at schools.



Melanie Brost

Shepherdess

“We’re an alternative to tractors and lawnmowers,” says Melanie Brost of her ecological landscape management approach using sheep. Her main job is in the human resources department of Offenbach public utilities department, but her second job is shepherding – which she does with passion and conviction. Her sheep farm, Schäferei Mainbogen, is based in Bürgel/Rumpenheim in Offenbach, but along with two sheep dogs she also takes her sheep to Gailenberg in Mühlheim am Main, for example. The orchards there are protected by law as biotopes and are home to numerous plant and animal species. The sheep go into action in the meadows there rather like a kind of taxi company: “They carry insects and plant seeds from one grazing area to the next in their wool.” It’s an approach to landscape management that is more ecological than mechanical, says Brost. So in the end, the sheep have a wonderful life in the countryside, there is increased biodiversity in the meadows – and Melanie Brost can enjoy her part-time job outdoors: a win-win-win situation.



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St Paul's Church housed Germany's first parliament and stands next to the Unity Memorial of 1903. It recalls the fervent desire of the National Assembly to put an end to the patchwork of regional states which made up Germany at the time.

THE CRADLE OF GERMAN DEMOCRACY

The planned **House of Democracy** next to the historic St Paul's Church in central Frankfurt will be a museum and a memorial.

> The 18th of May 2023 marked 175 years since the first free German parliament assembled in St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt. For FrankfurtRhineMain it was the start of a thrilling four-day festival of democracy which attracted 250,000 visitors.

In 1848 the National Assembly in St. Paul's Church drew up a constitution which was one of the most advanced of its time. The ideas of 1848 later became the model for the constitution of the Weimar Republic, the first German republic. After the end of the Second World War, the fundamental rights of the St. Paul's Church Constitution were included almost word-for-word in the Basic Law of the new Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. President John F. Kennedy of the USA was so impressed by the constitution that he describe Frankfurt as the "cradle of German democracy" when he visited the city.

Following a campaign by the Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, there are now plans to create a "House of Democracy" on Paulsplatz alongside St. Paul's Church as a place for remembrance, commemoration and learning about German democracy with significance for the whole country. The restoration of St. Paul's Church will be planned hand in hand with the construction of the new building. The new building will house a historical exhibition, a laboratory for democratic practice, spaces for workshops and events, and a library. As yet no there is no timetable for what is currently the largest democracy project in Germany.

St Paul's Church was burned down during the War and rebuilt in 1948. In line with proposals from a commission, the church will not be returned to its historical form of 1848, but will be reconstructed in its Post-War condition.



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