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ZELLCHEMING-Expo 2025: A successful anniversary event all around!

Rödermark, July 10, 2025 – ZELLCHEMING-Expo 2025 brought the international paper and pulp industry to the RheinMain CongressCenter (RMCC) in Wiesbaden. From July 1 to 3, this important industry event offered around 3,000 visitors (nearly 20% more than last year) opportunities to exchange information and network informally. More than 140 sponsors and partner companies presented themselves in nearly 2,000 square meters of expo space. The North Hall of the RMCC was fully booked.

"We are very pleased that we achieved our goal of increasing the number of visits in our anniversary year," said outgoing ZELLCHEMING Chairwoman Prof. Dr. Helga Zollner-Croll. "As chairwoman of the association, I also set a goal to further interlink the technical work of our association with the expo and the congress program. We achieved this with the 'ZELLCHEMING Insights' session, in which eight technical committees addressed sustainability from their respective perspectives. I see this step as a great gain!"

Petra Hanke, the managing director of ZELLCHEMING Service GmbH, the organizer of the expo, said: "We welcomed 28 new exhibitors to the trade fair, including major players from the energy sector. Additionally, nearly a third of the primary exhibitors hailed from abroad. This confirms the appeal of our event, both thematically and geographically!"

Helga Zollner-Croll summarized the milestones of her two-year ZELLCHEMING presidency as follows: "I am proud that we have clearly developed the association in three respects over the past two years: increasing the proportion of women, anchoring the topic of sustainability in the mission statement, and integrating future topics."

Day 1: AI as an Opportunity and Key Growth Driver

The panel discussion at the start of ZELLCHEMING Expo 2025 was also relevant and met with great interest! Helga Zollner-Croll moderated the discussion with Dr.-Ing. Frank Meltzer, her successor as ZELLCHEMING Chairman. Her guests included:

- Maximilian Heindl, CEO of Progroup AG
- Tobias Hundhausen, Director of Group IT & Digital, Wepa Digital
- Dr. Jörg Padberg, Manager of Digital Transformation, Koehler Innovative Solutions
- Dr. Jörg Padberg, Manager of Digital Transformation at Koehler Innovative Solutions
- Dr. Stefan Lock, head of the regional representation for North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse, and Saarland at the European Commission
- Tim Roder, Head of Business Development at IPAI Management.

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There was agreement on the breathtaking speed at which potential applications of artificial intelligence (AI) are developing. At the same time, it became clear that cooperation in developing common foundations is crucial to taking advantage of AI opportunities in Germany and Europe. Stefan Lock described the political framework conditions and recommended participating in specific funding projects.

Maximilian Heindl confirmed that the paper industry is well positioned for the future, viewing AI as a key growth driver. For example, AI could be used to make maintenance more intelligent and predictive, or to efficiently manage knowledge with the help of "learning nuggets." Tobias Hundhausen said that, for this topic, it is necessary to take off the "technology hat" and put on the "leadership hat," as it is a management task to take colleagues along for the ride. Jörg Padberg described the digital transformation as a gradual process, emphasizing that good data is a key resource. Another important aspect is adapting the corporate culture to integrate digital ways of thinking.

Tim Roder praised the community approach pursued by IPAI, an ambitious AI innovation platform based in Heilbronn, and explained, "We have an incredible opportunity to take the wheel if we approach AI correctly." However, he added, "The important thing is that we have to move away from the ego system and toward the eco system!"

Day 2: New perspectives & Celebration Gala

The day began with the 119th ZELLCHEMING Annual General Meeting. In addition to reports on the 2024 association year, elections were also on the agenda. Dr.-Ing. Frank P. Meltzer and his deputy, Dr.-Ing. Tiemo Arndt, assumed the association's chairmanship. Dr. Martin Zahel will lead the main committee. New appointments to various positions have rejuvenated the association and provided new perspectives. For instance, the proportion of women on the advisory board increased to 20%.

The Women4Paper Event 2025 and Vera Strauch's keynote speech attracted over 100 participants to the forum. The Advisory Board of the ZELLCHEMING Women4Paper network invited the digital entrepreneur, podcaster, book author, and founder of the Female Leadership Academy to speak at this year's Expo on the topic of "Setting Boundaries."

Vera Strauch addresses topics such as the future of work, female empowerment, and women in the workplace. Her mission: "Empowering women!" She described common behavioral patterns in an entertaining way and encouraged people to reflect on themselves and set personal goals as part of the "psychology of success" she promotes. She incorporated practical exercises into her presentation, so the 45 minutes passed quickly, leaving just enough time for questions from the audience.

The 195th anniversary celebrations culminated in the ZELLCHEMING Celebration Gala on the second evening of the Expo. The motto was "Shaping the Future Together!" The Terrace Hall of the RheinMain CongressCenter (RMCC) in Wiesbaden was the perfect venue for this special event, which honored the vitality, creativity, and global mindset of the association, its members, and this unique industry. Dr. Hartmut Wurster provided an entertaining overview of the association's 120-year history, with support from former association chairmen who shared highlights from their time in office. Finally, the new chairman, Dr.-Ing. Frank P. Meltzer, and the new advisory board members, Rosario Othen and Victoria Scherzinger, who represent the next generation, presented ideas for the association's future.

Like Alexander von Reibnitz, the managing director of DPI (The Paper Industry), Dr.-Ing. Frank Meltzer wanted to work more closely with the paper manufacturers' association. The message: "In the fields of

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innovation and technology, especially, we have many common goals that we would like to pursue more closely together in the future!"

Day 3: Focus on Young Talent

The ZELLCHEMING Career Day program began with the presentation of the ZELLCHEMING Young Talent Award 2025 to Felix Hiller and Tim Carstens. The award winners then gave short keynote speeches about their careers and professional focuses. The Science Flash then offered insights into research on the production of pulp and paper-based products. Congratulations to Anna Lexa from the Munich University of Applied Sciences for the best presentation! A central component of the ZELLCHEMING Career Day involved young visitors participating in a World Café. The discussions revolved around how to attract and retain young talent. The keywords presented in the subsequent summary included: appreciation, honest communication, and a modern corporate culture with suitable incentives.

Frank Meltzer believes that the association has fulfilled its role as an active bridge builder. "We can only develop together as a society and as a paper- and pulp-based industry. This is what we stand for as an association. This is what we promote at the Expo, and we will continue to encourage networking and cooperation!"

Please note:

The ZELLCHEMING-Expo will take place again at the RMCC in Wiesbaden from June 16 to 18 next year.

Frequent newsletter

A monthly newsletter is sent out on current topics concerning the ZELLCHEMING-Expo:
<https://www.zellcheming.de/en/events/newsletter>

*The press release includes several event photos with captions. The following photo credits should be noted:
Malte Kirchner/ZELLCHEMING.*

**For more information, please contact Mrs. Petra Hanke, phone +49 6074 – 72 80 85-45,
p.hanke@zellcheming.de**

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Images and captions



Opening of the ZELLCHEMING-Expo by Prof. Dr. Helga Zollner-Croll and Dr.-Ing. Frank Meltzer (Source: Malte Kirchner/ZELLCHEMING)



Participants in the panel discussion "Artificial intelligence in the paper and fiber-based industry" (Source: Malte Kirchner/ZELLCHEMING)

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Vera Strauch, Managing Director Female Leadership Academy (Source: Malte Kirchner/ZELLCHEMING)



Participants of the ZELLCHEMING Annual General Meeting (Source: Malte Kirchner/ZELLCHEMING)

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