

# CIRCLE

The employee magazine  
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**New horizons**  
Growing towards  
the future together

**interzero**<sup>®</sup>  
zero waste solutions



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By and for the team at **Interzero**

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# New horizons

The sustainable future is cyan

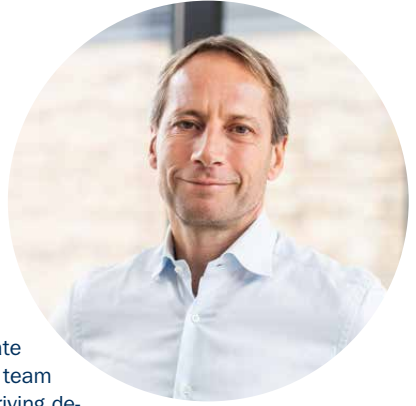
Dear Colleagues,

There are moments in a company's life that not only set a course for its future but also shine a spotlight on what makes it so special. It fills me with immense pride and joy that our Group won the coveted German Sustainability Award! This is not just an acknowledgment of the hard work that we and our customers have put in, but also a promise to ourselves and the world that we will continue our commitment to this journey. The German Sustainability Award is presented for genuine sustainability, lived social responsibility and environmental innovation. It recognises the companies driving forward a transformation to a better future. We are proud to be counted among the pioneers in this movement.

Yet this award is more than just a trophy. It is a commitment to society, our customers and future generations. This award confers on us the status of role models.

If we are to fulfil this commitment, we need to keep improving and act as a single unit.

That is why almost all of our companies in Europe will operate under the Interzero brand from early 2024 onwards.



This change will not be an easy one for many of our colleagues, but it is vital if we are to collaborate effectively as a team and continue driving development within the company. Together we are strong, and together we can change the world – as the many examples of successful work in this issue of CIRCLE once again demonstrate.

**“Our success shows that the dedication shown by all colleagues in all parts of the company is worthy of recognition.”**

Many thanks, and we hope you enjoy reading this issue.

**Dr Axel Schweitzer**  
Chairman

# New horizons. Growing towards the future together

At Interzero, we work every day with courage and commitment on realising our vision of a world without waste. This ambitious goal is our daily motivation to help our customers advance their business with the help of our “zero waste solutions”

## All ALBA sites to become Interzero

To underline our shared mission, our subsidiaries ALBA Recycling and Abfallverwertung Leipzig will also bear the Interzero name from next year onwards, and therefore officially become part of the Interzero family. Our logo can already be seen on some premises and some of the plant managers are already wearing Interzero uniforms. This renaming process will be completed by the end of January 2024. At this point, almost 600 employees within our Group will then have an employer with a new name. This is the majority of our colleagues who work in plastics.



**Florian Bätz**  
Project Engineer  
ALBA Recycling



**Björn Schwich**  
Plant Manager,  
Berlin Plant  
ALBA Recycling

Here, with our five sorting plants for packaging from the yellow bag and bin, we handle more than 1 million tonnes of waste – the industry’s largest sorting capacity in Europe. Together with our recycling plants, plastics recycling plays a central role within our Group’s business.

## New name – same structures

Only the names are changing and there will be no organisational or structural changes. For employees, absolutely nothing is changing except the name.

**“The name ALBA is part of our history and the hard work we’ve put in. I hope that the new name Interzero can become as meaningful and enterprising as the old name. We have always worked together as a team, and I am confident that our dedication and engagement will also enable us to achieve great things under the Interzero name.”**



In preparation for the renaming process, all of our equipment, media and communications materials will be renamed step-by-step with the 'Interzero – zero waste solutions' logo.

## Our shared goal

At Interzero, we want to grow together as a team, and present our comprehensive expertise in high-tech sorting – from climate-friendly recycle production to our extensive service portfolio – as a single, unified brand, both externally and internally. Together, we are Interzero and will therefore present ourselves under this name going forward.

## Will things feel different?

Many colleagues still feel a close association with the old name, as a result of many years at the company as well as personal relationships. However, it is now time for us to focus fully on closing loops and moving into the next decade with Interzero.

## When will it happen?

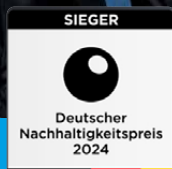
Some parts of the changeover, especially regarding building signage and maps, etc., are already underway. From 1 January 2024, ALBA Recycling and Abfallverwertung Leipzig will then be officially renamed.

**“While we’ll miss the old name a bit, whether we’re called ALBA or Interzero, ultimately, we all want the same thing: a clean world. And I have to say that the Interzero name sounds even more like the goal we’re all pursuing. In fact, I think that the new name is set to give us some unexpected momentum.”**



**Steffen Bredow**  
Shift Manager,  
Berlin Plant  
ALBA Recycling

We look forward to taking this next step with you and we thank all of our colleagues for their support as we do so.



# The sustainable future is cyan

## Interzero wins 2024 German Sustainability Award

**Our Group is a winner of the 16th German Sustainability Award**, placing it among 100 pioneers transforming Germany's economy. Interzero received an award in the 'Waste Management and Recycling Industry' category as the first dedicated provider of circular economy services in this sector. This accolade confirms our unique role in championing the circular economy, providing answers to the questions that matter, and safeguarding our future in challenging times.

Interzero prevailed in the final despite strong competition from two competitors in the recycling sector – Remondis and Berliner Stadtreinigung. On the evening of the award ceremony, Interzero received another honour: in addition to the DNP, we were awarded the special prize in the transformation category "Resources".

The German Sustainability Award is a prestigious prize in Germany presented to companies, cities, communities and

other dedicated groups each year for their outstanding contribution to sustainability. The award is based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which focus on key areas such as climate action, biodiversity, resources, supply chains and social responsibility.

The German Sustainability Award is presented by Stiftung Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitspreis e.V., having been established by the federal government as part of Germany's Sustainable Development Strategy.

### What does this success mean?

Winning the German Sustainability Award is not only an acknowledgment of what we have achieved so far but also an obligation for us to continue working hard in the future. It strengthens us and, most importantly, our customers on our journey to 'zero waste', while at the same time motivating us to continue stepping up our efforts together.

**Global reputation and example:** The award's renown both in Germany and internationally helps to enhance our reputation and credibility across the business world and, above all, raises the profile of our still-fledgling brand. We are proof that it is possible to combine commercial success and sustainability at the heart of a business, something we hope will inspire other companies to take similar steps and join us on our journey.

**Innovation and growth:** This award encourages us to keep developing innovative solutions and invest in the future.

**Identity:** This external validation and increased visibility bolsters team spirit within the company. The award is the most prestigious of its kind in Germany, a country renowned across the globe for its pioneering role in developing environmental technology and sustainability systems. You may even have seen Interzero being presented with its award on television. This is something we can all point to with pride – in our personal lives, with business partners and, of course, on social media.

We look forward to celebrating our success with you and sharing it with the outside world over the next few weeks and months.



# Interzero acquires BRAMIN

Interzero adds BRAMIN to its portfolio and welcomes 16 new employees

**The Interzero family has gained another member.** The acquisition of BRAMIN, specialists in sales of balers and handling pressed secondary raw materials, takes us another step closer to creating an efficient circular economy.

In addition to selling balers, the 16-strong BRAMIN team based in Holm, near Hamburg, also offers the following services:

- Baler servicing
- Sales of servicing/maintenance parts
- Purchasing and selling on material flows from baling presses

Since BRAMIN GmbH was founded in 1993, it has sold a total of 4,500 balers in Germany and sold on 15,000-20,000 tonnes of film and PPC each year.

**“We always recommend vertical balers to our customers to optimise their storage capacity and transport logistics. It's great that we can now offer products manufactured in-house.”**



**Christine Imkamp**  
Sales Recycling Solutions  
Interzero (RSI)  
Interzero Circular Solutions  
Germany



## Leadership duo provide recipe for success

Ines Völker and Susanne Topf head up the BRAMIN team as a duo

### How do you organise yourselves?

Susanne: In an industry that is primarily male-dominated, we definitely stand out as a female management team. Our main focus is always on achieving the best possible result for BRAMIN. We place major emphasis on teamwork, which means our performance as individuals fades into the background. With that in mind, it's good that we know each other's strengths so well. We often have meetings with our most important customers together, which not only shows our customers how much we appreciate them but also allows us to play off one another.

### How is the team made up?

Ines: The management team is supported by an assistant and an accounting team. We also have two other teams that look after the operating business. Our logistics department consists of three colleagues who take care of everything from sourcing to transport and marketing. Another three colleagues in our service department look after all the technical aspects of the balers and organise things like the annual UVV inspection (similar to TÜV), repairs and dispatching individual parts. And, of course, we also have a sales team consisting of two permanent employees and ten self-employed distribution partners who help us

to attract new customers. We are a small team that sees itself a bit like a family. Our size also allows us to look beyond our own areas of responsibility and gain an overview of our colleagues' activities.

### What opportunities do you see in becoming part of the Interzero family?

Susanne: On the one hand, we operate in the same market and have the same interest in bringing sustainability to the fore. Our product complements Interzero perfectly, and we can refer customers to each other. On the other hand, around 90% of our sales are digital, which makes us extremely efficient as a small team. We can share our experience in this area with Interzero, while simultaneously benefiting from Interzero's social media expertise.

### Tell us a bit about Napoleon the office hamster and your colony of bees.

Ines: We came up with the idea of buying an office hamster during the coronavirus pandemic. Napoleon makes such a positive contribution to the team dynamic because everyone loves him and looks after him. We also have something in common with Interzero's Cologne site, as we have a colony of bees and produce our own honey.

The balers are used to press paper, film and EPS





Breaking ground for the new plant in Walldürn.

## Code word AR01 Advanced Recycling 01

Since October 2020, a project with the cryptic code word 'AR01' has been running at Interzero Plastics Recycling

**The project itself addresses the major topic of chemical recycling: from providing the necessary starting material through to the construction of a new sorting plant in Walldürn designed specifically for chemical recycling.**

### What's the background?

Currently, only up to 50% of waste from the yellow bag can be recycled mechanically (depending on plant capacity and the composition of the materials delivered). The rest of this consists of 25% mixed plastics (MP) and 25% sorting

residues (SR). These are then used to produce energy – i.e. incinerated. Chemical recycling offers the chance of returning part of the mixed plastic waste fraction (MP/350) back to the loop. However, this is conditional on the fraction being supplied as a special feedstock with specific properties that are suitable for chemical recycling. This feedstock needs to keep within tight tolerances relating to moisture and composition, for example, while also exhibiting a consistent purity well in excess of 90%. Lots of different materials are thrown into the yellow bag every day, however. Accordingly, several sophisticated process steps are needed to ensure the achievement of the required purity.

### So, how do we get the right feedstock?

'Simple', really: we conducted 14 industrial-scale trials to determine the parameters that could form the basis for a computerised simulation of the complete plant system. With the help of this computer simulation, we then worked out the necessary process steps for sorting mixed plastic waste in detail, which enabled us to finalise the plant design. The results of the sim-

**“The recycling industry is changing and becoming more integrated with the chemicals industry – we have tracked this trend for a while now. Our joint project with OMV marks a milestone for both industries.”**

ulation were then verified using three large-scale trials in our sorting plants. All of these trials were conducted without stopping normal business operations, which was a major challenge for the whole sorting plant team. Just one trial needs between 24 and 120 hours of work (not including setup and tear down) from numerous people in the technical and chemical recycling teams and, naturally, the entire plant itself.

As can be seen, searching for the best method to create high-quality feedstock is a complex process, requiring not only technical know-how but also the commitment and hard work of our teams in the sorting plants. Nonetheless, it is a decisive step towards a more sustainable waste industry and a better future for our environment. Even AR01 alone is capable of increasing the recycling



**Lena Bayer**  
Project Manager  
Strategy & Business  
Intelligence,  
Interzero Plastics  
Recycling

**“This combination of trials and computer simulations is unique and highly complex. But without them, projects like this would not be feasible. For this reason, I always really appreciate the level of commitment and enthusiasm shown by our employees as they set about ensuring the successful completion of these truly wide-ranging and complex trials.”**



**Thomas Herkert**  
Chief Technology  
Officer, Interzero  
Plastics Recy-  
cling and Man-  
aging Director,  
ALBA Recycling

**“I am always amazed by the level of sorting precision we can achieve with our sorting units. During the trials, we deployed EM sensors to ensure we could meet the challenging requirements for purity relating to the absence of metal. These sensors successfully filtered individual staples out of the material stream!”**



**Grzegorz Bonk**  
Assembly Management and Planning, ALBA Recycling

rate of lightweight packaging in Germany by more than 3%.

**What is the state of play?**

Regarding the feedstock, we are happy to say: we've done it! Our material mix can achieve a purity much higher than 90%. This means we can supply an optimum starting material for chemical recycling. It's a real milestone.

**The new plant: all made to measure**

The ground-breaking ceremony for the new chemical recycling feedstock plant was held in November. A huge capital investment has been required for this project. This would have been too much for us to handle alone, so we brought OMV on board as our partner. The new sorting plant will be integrated into our existing family of plants as a 4th generation facility. We'll be applying the knowledge we have gained as sorting plant operators and deploying each individual machine (unit) according to our individual needs.

**Who is involved in the project?**

The project has a commercial and a technical side. For commercial matters, the partnership will be organised with OMV and the legal framework clarified. Dr Richard von Goetze and Lena Bayer are key stakeholders here. On the technical side, the project is the responsibility of ALBA Recycling, which runs our sorting plants. Key partners here include CEO Thomas Herkert, CTO Stefan Leubner and Grzegorz Bonk, Assembly Management and Planning.

**“Together with partner OMV, we can cover the entire value chain, from waste to virgin-quality plastic. We are looking forward to a long-term partnership here!”**



**Dr Richard von Goetze**  
Head of Chemical Recycling, Interzero Plastics Recycling



At OMV's recycling plant our feedstock is processed into pyrolysis oil.



With the help of OMV and chemical recycling, mixed plastic waste can be saved from incineration and instead processed into a valuable pyrolysis oil. This can then be used to create 100% recycled plastics.

**How does chemical recycling work?**

During chemical recycling, the plastics are broken down into their chemical constituents and can then be used as the primary material for the production of new plastics. This process enables the efficient reuse of plastic waste (instead of simply incinerating it, as before) while also reducing the demand for new raw materials.

**What are the strategic targets?**

We want to establish chemical recycling as a second business segment, alongside mechanical recycling. This is not only good for profitability, but is also a huge step forward towards a world without waste.

**“It's incredible what we can achieve together. As a team, we were able to deliver a mature and well-researched technical process. This will result in the creation of this innovative plant and the basis for a new, industry-wide recycling pathway while also letting us take a major step forward to realising our overall vision.”**



**Stefan Leubner**  
Head of Technology, ALBA Recycling



European Interzero colleagues visit the counting centre.

# Joining forces for sustainability

## European knowledge sharing about deposit returns

**Over the last few decades**, Germany has established itself as a pioneer in bottle return and deposit systems. This tried-and-tested deposit system for beverage containers like bottles and cans actively reduces waste by encouraging consumers to return their empty packaging to retailers in return for the deposit fee.

### Deposit systems in Europe

Legislation implementing bottle return systems has become more common within the EU. Thirteen European countries, including Croatia, have now passed laws establishing such a system. Other countries, such as Austria, Poland and Slovenia, are planning

similar steps with the aim of meeting the ambitious EU collection targets by 2029.

### Interzero Poland

In preparation for this, the responsible actors are strongly reliant on the expertise of experienced partners. Interzero has successfully positioned itself in the Polish market as an expert for deposit return systems (DRS).

“We are ready to meet the upcoming challenges relating to DRS. Legislation is only part of the problem. There is also a need to adjust the format and processes to market requirements. Although the legislation affects us all

equally, we decide how we approach the situation – wait-and-see or take action. But assuming that the problems will simply solve themselves may cost us more than the DRS itself. This is why we are proactive at Interzero – we share knowledge, discuss things with industry representatives and develop realistic plans so that we don’t need to worry about the future,” emphasises Lukasz Czarnowski, Project Lead at Interzero Poland.

This knowledge sharing with Germany was managed by Interzero team member Sabine Kitz, who coordinates business development for Interzero Circular Solutions Europe from Vienna: “Together with a delegation from Eurocash (a major Polish retailer) and our Interzero colleagues from Austria, Poland and Slovenia, we visited an Interzero counting centre in Germany and organised a meeting with Edeka, with the aim of learning about the returns system and how it works – with or without reverse

vending machines. Valuable support was provided by trainee Marcel Greve, who acted as an intermediary between Germany and Europe. The successful transfer of German expertise to the Polish use case highlights the significance of this collaboration. We have also gained significant know-how that will help us in our role as an expert partner for questions about deposit systems throughout the EU.”

Marcel Greve: “During the deposit project, I was responsible for explaining the German deposit system to our international colleagues, and providing them with the advice and assistance they needed.”

Alongside know-how from Germany, the Italian COREPLA project was also instrumental to the successes in Poland.

### Interzero Italy

Italy has also yet to pass legislation for a national deposit return system. In 2022, Interzero joined forces with COREPLA to launch the ambitious ‘RecoPet’ pilot project, which involved the installation of 100 bottle return machines in retail businesses and at locations with high footfall, such as sports venues. COREPLA, consisting of 2,500 companies involved in the plastic packaging supply chain, plays an important role in Italy for the collection and recycling of plastic packaging.

A complementary app encourages consumers to return their bottles and lets them collect points that they can then redeem for shopping vouchers at participating partners.



**Sabine Kitz**  
CCF Business Development  
Interzero Circular Solutions Europe



**Marcel Greve**  
Trainee Interzero  
Plastics Recycling



**Sergio Patacchini**  
Project Manager  
Interzero Circular Solutions Europe



**Lukasz Czarnowski**  
Digital Sales  
Cross Country Function Head  
Interzero Circular Solutions Europe





Lukasz Czarnowski speaks for Interzero as an expert on the subject of deposit returns.

This joint project has been a remarkable success. Italy is currently achieving an impressive collection rate of 78% for PET bottles on the market, which not only exceeds the EU target of 77% for 2025 but has done so ahead of schedule.

With the RecoPet project, COREPLA sought to demonstrate that the introduction of a selective, incentive-based system was able to close the gap to the EU targets. Thanks to its success to date, COREPLA is now receiving EU funding for expanding its existing capacities. Over the next three years, there are plans to install another 1,000 reverse vending machines in retail businesses. COREPLA Project Lead Sergio Patacchini explains: “The COREPLA project is a perfect match for the development of Interzero Italy’s portfolio of integrated environmental services. Here we have created a win-win partnership that strengthens our strategic position while demonstrating our proven expertise in innovative business solutions.”

Thanks to its experience in the joint RecoPet project, Interzero Italy is now ready to tackle further challenges – relating to the ongoing implementation of the COREPLA project and also to supporting the potential rollout of a returns system at national level. Both approaches promote sustainability and show that products have the chance of a second life when they are properly processed at the end of their lifecycle. This corresponds to our vision of a world without waste.

#### Situation in Austria and Slovenia

Austria will also introduce a mandatory deposit return system from 2025 onwards. Since this will be run centrally in a way similar to the Croatian model – and not operated by a consortium of independent companies, like in Germany – Interzero will not be able to participate to the degree possible in Poland. In Slovenia, the situation is a little different. Here, thanks to its comprehensive expertise, Interzero is providing the government with consulting services. How the Slovenian system will be operated is not yet clear.

## ‘TRENN-BÄR’ shows kids how to separate waste

### New learning resources for kindergartens

With its exciting new learning resources, the ‘Waste Separation Works’ initiative that forms part of the Interseroh+ dual system has developed a fun way of explaining to kindergarten children how to separate waste correctly and why it is so important.

As an endangered polar bear himself, the TRENN-BÄR (‘separation bear’) knows just how important it is to protect our planet and all the creatures that call it home. The TRENN-BÄR talks to preschoolers on their level about the importance of separating waste correctly

and the impact our actions have on the environment.

Education is and will remain a key issue, and with good reason, as around 30 % of the waste collected in the yellow boxes and yellow bags does not belong there. Age-appropriate TRENN-BÄR resources will soon be available for primary school children too.

**“Kindergartens can order the TRENN-BÄR Box containing a hand puppet and all educational material free of charge. They can also rent out the TRENN-BÄR costume for events at no cost. Simply fill out the online form by visiting: [www.muelltrennung-wirkt.de/trennbaer](http://www.muelltrennung-wirkt.de/trennbaer).”**



**Stephanie Gundlach**  
Product Manager  
Interseroh+

# Fashion brand Marc Cain is committed to environmentally friendly packaging

Sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the fashion industry, not only in the recycling of old textiles, but also in the sales packaging of new clothing

**That's why fashion house** Marc Cain turned to our Made for Recycling team for support. The team analysed every type of packaging used by Marc Cain and optimised its recyclability at our in-house Centre of Competence in Slovenia. The

result? Almost all of the company's packaging, from polybags to shoeboxes, offers at least 'good recyclability' and is allowed to show our Made for Recycling seal.

**“Our collaboration with Marc Cain provides a perfect example of how our company cross-sells its services. Marc Cain has been a customer of our transport packaging division and the Interseroh+ dual system for many years and also makes use of the products and services offered by the Lizenzero.eu business. Our Made for Recycling assessment also enabled us to evaluate the recyclability of Marc Cain's entire portfolio of shipping and sales packaging. Our customer is proof that more sustainable approaches are becoming an important factor in the clothing industry.”**

**interseroh+**  
Die Recycling-Allianz

These initiatives enable Marc Cain to actively help protect the climate and resources and position itself as a sustainability pioneer.

Interseroh+ now offers the Made for Recycling packaging assessment in more than 20 countries. This assessment includes a scientific appraisal of the materials used and considers their ability to be sorted and recycled easily – both aspects that depend heavily on local infrastructure.



**Jonathan Scheck**  
Packaging Engineer  
Made for Recycling  
Interseroh+



## A milestone for sustainable packaging

Future Resources in Cologne

**This year's Future Resources** symposium held by Interseroh+ in Cologne on 9 November was attended by more than 180 leading experts and decision-makers in the packaging industry, including customers and partners like ALDI and MissionToMarsh. One of the main points of focus this year was paper packaging, whose apparent sustainability was also scrutinised in some detail. From manufacturers to members of the 'Waste separation works' initiative and paper recyclers, a wide range of perspectives were represented with the aim of taking a comprehensive look at the future of paper packaging.

One of the highlights here was the presentation of revolutionary packaging solutions that are environmentally friendly while also boosting efficiency

in the supply chain. These innovations promise to prepare the ground for a resource-friendly and ecologically more sustainable packaging industry.

**“The Future Resources event has shown that the industry is ready to work together on environmentally friendly solutions. Delegates leave the symposium with new insights, valuable contacts and a stronger personal commitment to a sustainable future.”**



**Antonia Schüttler**  
Marketing  
Manager Made  
for Recycling  
Interseroh+

# IPR lays a foundation for the future



## Jan Kroker confirmed as CEO of Interzero Plastics Recycling

**Born in 1977, Jan Kroker was an officer in the German Army** before moving into commerce. He has held management roles in the oil industry in Russia and in the in-house consulting team at BASF in Ludwigshafen. He most recently served as Director of Site Management and Deputy Managing Director at BASF Polyurethanes GmbH in Lemförde. Jan has headed up the Interzero Plastics Recycling (IPR) division since April 2023 and was appointed to the Interzero Holding Executive Management in August. He is also responsible for HR development within the Interzero Group.

**How were your first few months with us?** In my first few months with Interzero, I've met so many colleagues whose different backgrounds, experiences and personalities combine to create a highly diverse and fascinating team. I've been

particularly impressed by their energy and dedication when it comes to shaping the future of the company – and by their loyalty.

At the same time, I've also been surprised by how complex Interzero is. Coming from a major corporation, while it also reminds me of my old employer in many ways, Interzero's corporate culture has a few unique characteristics. Nevertheless, it hasn't taken me long to settle in because everyone has genuinely given me so much support. All in all, I'm excited to be here and look forward to being part of the team.

**Which issue will have the biggest impact over the next few years?**

Many of the legal and regulatory issues currently being discussed and decided upon will impact our business. Will there be quotas for the use of recyclates at

EU level? How will chemical recycling complement mechanical recycling? There is a great deal of upheaval in the sector right now. We want policymakers to set a course that benefits us and are actively helping to shape these policies by working with associations and our partners.

**What aspects of your experience in the German Army are most helpful in your current role?**

You learn to work in a structured way and to always have a Plan B; it's always worth considering alternative scenarios. Of course, you also learn a thing or two about dealing with uncertainty and stress. On top of that, you learn that you can only move forward by working as a team and putting individual interests aside. That's something I can never emphasise enough. By working together, you can complement each other's strengths, offset each other's weaknesses, and always come up with good ideas or alternative courses of action. Being able to work as a team is the key to success.

**As a speaker, you give talks about leading teams. What is the most important thing managers should take away from them?**

I can answer this question with a motto from my previous life in the military: "the mission, the men and me". The first priority is always the task at hand, followed by the team, and only once every team member has "eaten, drank and slept" can leaders start thinking about themselves. As a manager, it's important not to take yourself too seriously and put your own needs last. It is not for nothing that "me" comes at the end of that motto. Humility is an essential quality for any leader.

**What aspects of HR development do you plan to focus on?**

Our vision of 'one world, zero waste' could be compared to the labours of Hercules. Anyone who is familiar with Greek mythology will know that this phrase refers to tasks that are virtually impossible but need to be done anyway. What do I mean by that? To fulfil our mission, we also need people who are able and willing to go the extra mile. I've already met so many people who fit that description over the last few months, and we'll focus on hiring and retaining more of them in future.

With this in mind, our HR development will concentrate on three key areas: internationalisation, workplace culture and teamwork. In a world that is more interconnected than ever before, we need to look beyond national borders, as the growth markets of the future are scattered across the globe. Our aim is to understand and exploit the opportunities within these markets and develop an international presence. The collaboration between our different business units and the ALBA Group Asia is another vital ingredient in our success.

**You recently moved to the Rhineland. What are your first impressions of the region? Will you be celebrating Karneval?**

We live just outside Cologne and are enjoying life in the country while at the same time reaping the benefits of having a major city within easy reach. The region has so much to offer, both in cultural and sporting terms. As someone born in northern Germany, specifically Schleswig-Holstein, I must admit that I struggle with the idea of dressing up, but I'm definitely curious and I'm looking forward to seeing Karneval celebrations up close one day.

# Fresh breeze in the team: Our new apprentices

Your review on kununu helps us to attract young talents

In August, we were able to welcome five young people to Interzero's wholesale and foreign trade departments. Over the next three years, they'll learn about many interesting areas of our business while getting a thorough grounding in the circular economy.  
**We are very happy to have you on board!**



Ramon van Nes Ziegler

**“At Interzero, the focus during training is on open and effective communication – because this is the best way to ensure that we can learn and grow together.”**

**“The best thing about my vocational training at Interzero+ is that everyone is so friendly. So far, I've been able to get to know the ‘Made for Recycling’ team as part of my training. I'm learning a lot about sustainability here while getting insights into the circular economy.”**



Jackie Hermann

**“During my training, I got a detailed look at the interesting work of the ecoservice24 department. I was especially pleased to be able to learn a lot about the various waste types and how these are then managed. I also really enjoyed the work with the accounting team.”**

**“During my training, I was able to get a look behind the scenes at purchasing with the ecoservice24 team and the associated container service. I was especially impressed with the variety of work involved and the interaction with waste management companies.”**



Majar Challouf



Maximilian Schroeder



**“Every rating we receive on kununu helps us to discover new potential. If you've not yet left a rating for us, you can do this any time by visiting [www.kununu.de](http://www.kununu.de). By doing so, you help interested candidates to get a picture of our company while contributing to our corporate image – which helps us attract suitable new colleagues.”**



Tanja Barber  
Employer Branding Specialist  
Human Resources  
Interzero





# Top on the telephone

Interview with salesperson Marion Paeschke

**Marion Paeschke** has worked at Interzero since 1991 in a variety of positions that have included sales assistant and sales support roles. Since 2009, she has been a member of the core sales team. As Regional Manager South, she is responsible for direct sales relating to transport packaging for the Waste Management Solutions from Interzero Circular Solutions.

For Marion Paeschke, sales is an exciting part of the company as work here involves dealing with multiple points of contact and various job roles (company executive, purchasing, product managers,

etc.) that create new sets of circumstances on a daily basis – and Marion is happy to tackle new challenges and engage in dialogue with other people. Her future dream job would be... the Comfortable Financially Independent.

**Marion, what does a member of the sales team need to be like to be successful in the job?**

Well, your work starts before you pick up the phone. You need a detailed analysis of your customer and extensive knowledge of the sales business segment. You can then identify other customer needs as part of cross-selling and offer suitable

products or services from our portfolio. You need empathy, good listening skills and to stay respectful on the phone – the customer can't see a product but only hears your voice! Asking questions proactively is also important.

**So, can you remember your first sales call?**

It was 2009, and the German Packaging Ordinance had just been amended to clarify the need for mandatory packaging licensing in a dual system. This amendment triggered an absolute avalanche of calls to our sales team, so that I actually can't remember my very first call in much detail at all. But it was bound to have been someone asking about the right way to handle these new requirements.

We had to analyse each customer call individually and promptly, log this in the sales database, have contract quotes created promptly and then, ultimately, secure the signing of the contract.

**Can you tell us about a difficult situation that you managed to handle particularly well?**

In sales, difficult situations tend to involve contract terminations, price adjustments or complaints. And every case is of course unique here. It's important to

get an accurate picture of your customer, so that you can work towards a win-win situation.

**What motivates you to focus on a particular customer?**

You need to stay focused to build a positive customer relationship that ultimately gives you the sale you want.

**And do you have a good tip for us to improve our skills on the phone?**

Successful phone-based selling is all about your own preparation. Research, customer analysis, identifying needs, etc. Last but not least, stubbornness in a positive sense – not giving up too easily. And it's of course important to be

able to present the Interzero Group in a concise way, know your way around the legal requirements and be able to talk to the customer in a language they understand. Finding the right balance between information and establishing rapport is critical for success.

**Who do you most like to have on the phone – and why?**

I'm happiest when talking to decision-makers, so members of the executive team or purchasing, because these make decisions for their company directly.





### Teambuilding in Italy

In June 2023, our colleagues from Interzero's Italian team met up in Milan and spent time working on their shared values as a team at an

event entitled 'Uniti si vince' / 'Together We Win'. Our thanks to everyone who attended this important event.

## 'Something for everyone'

A look back at the Sustainability Week 2023

The various online presentations here focused on topics like waste separation, zero-waste cooking and textile recycling. A clothes swap event also gave us a literally hands-on introduction to the sustainable handling of textiles. Igor Ryabinin, Head of Sustainability and Community at ALBA BERLIN, explained how the basketball team is aiming to become more sustainable, while



Sebastian Krol, CEO of ICS, made himself available to students at a high school in Braunschweig in a fireside chat that covered all sorts of questions on sustainability and waste management. Attracting no fewer than 87 attendees, these were well-attended events – our special thanks to everybody who helped out with Sustainability Week!

## Internal training at the sorting plant in Marl

Sustainability is our mission. Each and every day, we work together in our team to close material loops

To do so, we need skilled employees who know their way around the recycling industry and have a shared goal for the future.

We also believe that you are never too old to learn and that we can all learn from one another. This is why, over the last few weeks, employees from all of our departments at Interseroh+ have joined small teams to visit the Interzero sorting plant in Marl. It's important to have seen this once with our own eyes, to learn about the processes and problems, and understand what it is we dedicate ourselves to each and every day, and also to ensure that we are

well-qualified points of contact for our customers and suppliers. This internal training is not only a memorable experience for everyone attending the course but also changes up the daily routine while giving employees the chance to see the bigger picture beyond their own workplace.



**Christian Vollstedt**  
Head of Sourcing and Trade Interseroh+

**“A big thank you to the Marl team. That was a great outing to one of the most modern sorting plants in Europe. It’s amazing what you achieve there!”**

The Interseroh+ team at the sorting plant in Marl





Reverse vending machines with eye-catching branding

an interesting project focusing on deposit returns. They recently won a tender from Hong Kong's Legislative Council.

**How is the project structured?**

Led by CEO Jakob Lambsdorff, the SCCES team will install 120 reverse vending machines at strategic locations throughout Hong Kong. To encourage public participation, users of the machines will be credited HKD 0.10 for each plastic bottle they return. The final amount can then be donated to selected charitable organisations.

The project also includes a public information campaign that will provide citizens with information about how to use the reverse vending machines. A hotline and a website have also been set up, which citizens can use to search for the nearest machine location, and also to identify types of bottles and get updates on project progress.

The first batch of reverse vending machines will be introduced in December 2023 and set up over a period of two months.

This project highlights the international cooperation achieved by Interzero and ALBA Group Asia – not least because the project was preceded by intense discussion about best practices for deposit return systems, which included insights from the Italian COREPLA project (see article 'Joining forces for sustainability'). That the project in Asia was acknowledged by the government demonstrates that we can benefit from tried-and-tested practices of other regions – and not only across borders but even across continents.



**Jakob Lambsdorff**  
CEO Smart City Circular Economy Solutions  
ALBA Group Asia

**“Our Hong Kong deposit return project offers an impressive example of how cross-border knowledge transfer and good teamwork can help to design our world to be more sustainable. We'd like to thank the entire project team, and those of our colleagues who have contributed their knowledge and experience.”**

# Knowledge transfer Asia and Europe

ALBA Group Asia bets on bottle deposits and wins government tender in Hong Kong

**In Germany, everyone is familiar with the deposit system** for beverage packaging that has run successfully since 2003. We pay a deposit for disposable bottles and cans, which is refunded when these are returned via reverse vending machines. This system has promoted the return and recycling of beverage packaging, and

significantly reduced the environmental impact from single-use packaging. Hong Kong has yet to pass any legislation for a deposit take-back system. However, Smart City Circular Economy Solutions, a subsidiary of ALBA Group Asia, sees major potential here for the Special Administrative Region and has developed

# Interzero Voice

## A new platform for internal communication

**Interzero Voice** is based around the idea of 'communities', which are formed by groups of employees who have got together to discuss a specific topic. Alongside existing communities, such as 'Cologne team' or 'Notice board', staff can also apply to create new communities. Julian Thielen, Head of 'Made for Recycling', has set up one of these communities.

### Why did you start your community? And what do you expect from it?

Our 'Made for Recycling' service is all about a completely normal, everyday product: packaging. And there's a wealth of details and gimmicks which make

these pieces of packaging an everyday phenomenon. So we are using the community to try to provide our colleagues with background information and tips about sustainable shopping. This is because we keep discovering interesting cases we want to share in a quick and easy way.

### What kinds of content do you post in the community and what do you look for when selecting or creating posts?

We want to make packaging and its design more approachable for colleagues, and show them what we do in our day-to-day work. When we attend conferences or there are new kinds of packaging or other interesting developments. Just recently, we had packaging from a man-

ufacturer who'd advertised it aggressively as 'plastic-free'. But our analysis showed beyond a doubt that plastic had been used here. While this is a special case, these sorts of things do turn up and are perfect for sharing on Voice.

### What advantages does the platform offer? And how do you see it changing the way that we communicate?

The low barrier to sharing is very positive. Thanks to its integration with Teams, it can be used as a phone app, which makes it easy to share photos, videos and other kinds of media. And the familiar kinds of social features – likes and comments – means it is a familiar environment for many users, which also really helps usability.



**Julian Thielen**  
Head of "Made for Recycling"  
Interzero+

This meant that we got the first posts made to the community really quickly.

### Do you have any suggested improvements or tips for other colleagues?

The best way is to get the Teams app on your phone and set up Voice there. This gives you quick access to community content even when you're not at your desk. And: don't be shy!





# #InBrief: So, how does a **shredder** actually work?

Explained by Benjamin Zacharias

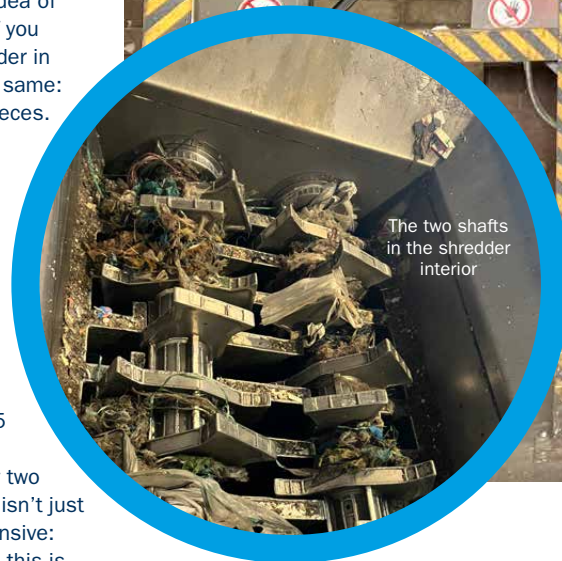
**Everyone probably has** a rough idea of what a shredder is – especially if you have a conventional paper shredder in your office. The basic idea is the same: turning big pieces into smaller pieces. In comparison to an office paper shredder, however, the shredder in our sorting plant is a real heavyweight – huge, heavy and extremely powerful.

With its impressive dimensions – 5.5 m tall and weighing in at 21 tonnes – it's a remarkable piece of equipment. The machine's two shafts are 2.5 m long and rotate at a speed of between 0 and 66 rpm, driven by two 82 kW motors. And the machine isn't just super-strong but also super-expensive: with a price tag of EUR 485,000, this is certainly not your ordinary office paper shredder!

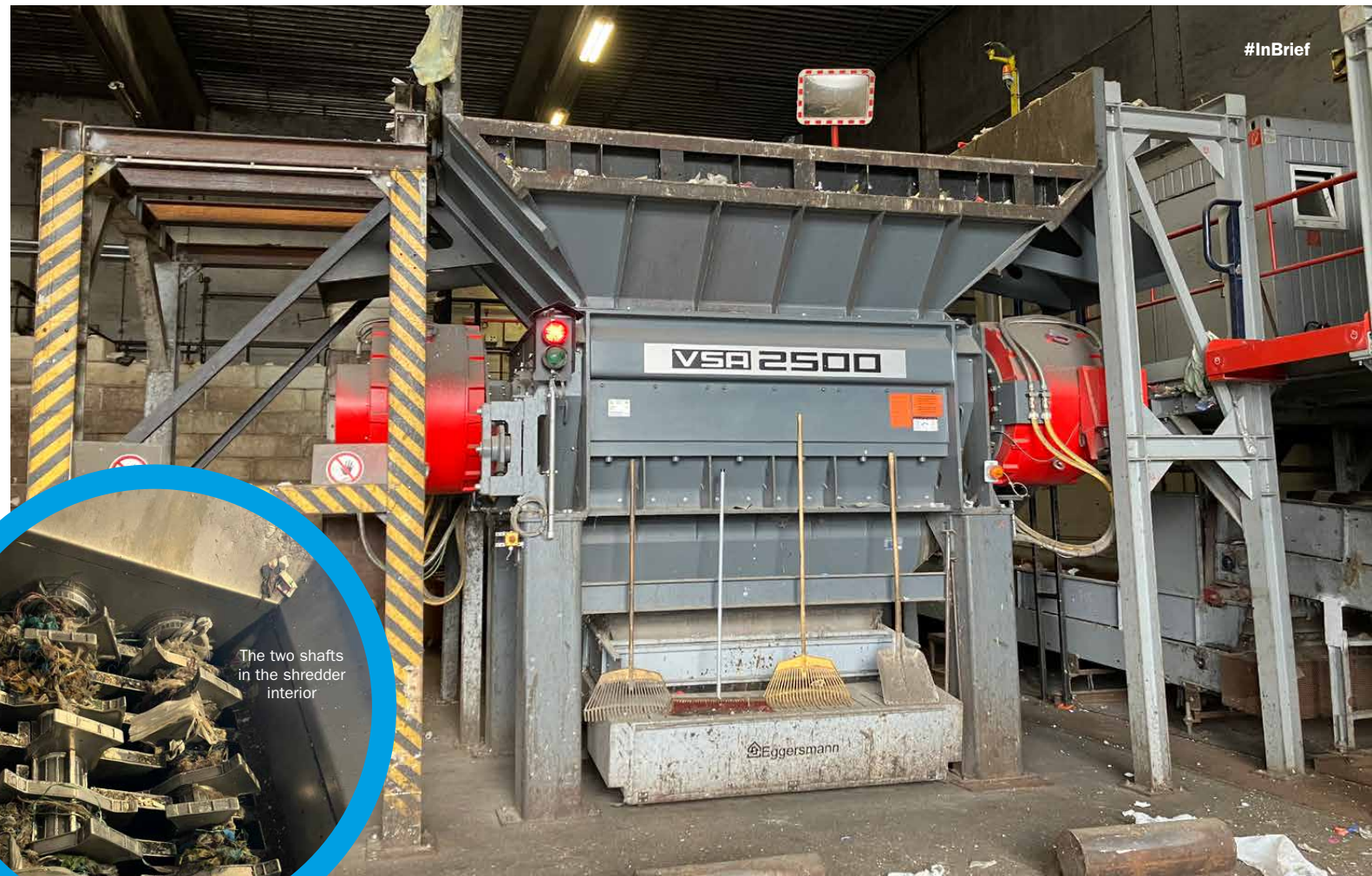
At our plants, a shredder handles two important tasks: regulating the throughput of the plant, based on its speed, and defining the optimum 'grain size' (size or piece size) of the material. This is achieved by various settings affecting the speed and rotational cycles of both shafts within the shredder. The right grain size is a decisive factor for efficiency in

relation to throughput, output rates and material quality in the sorting process.

In addition, shredders can also rip open the yellow bags and other containers that 'feed' the shredder. At the front, we feed in the lightweight packaging as collected by German households in the recycling bin or yellow bags and this packaging comes out shredded at the back. The shredder is a fully automatic machine – only the selection of the right presets for



The two shafts in the shredder interior



the two shafts requires technical expertise and sorting facility experience. Our plant in Braunschweig is equipped with two of these shredders. Our sorting plants in Berlin and Walldürn also operate specially adapted shredding machines, where we have worked with the manufacturer to modify these to our specific requirements. Our shredders are equipped with high-torque/direct drive motors, which means that they consume about 30 percent less energy than shredders from other manufacturers that offer the same performance.

**Benjamin Zacharias joined our company in May 2007.** As the plant manager at our sorting plant in Braunschweig, he is the plant's unofficial 'problem solver'. He handles all the tasks involving employees, colleagues, other departments or external companies to ensure that the entire plant keeps running as efficiently as possible. Benjamin is an industrial mechanic by trade, and a circular economy and waste management expert.

External view of shredder



**Benjamin Zacharias**  
Plant Manager  
Braunschweig  
ALBA  
Recycling



# Youth work and sustainability

Igor Ryabinin, Head of Sustainability and Community at ALBA BERLIN, discusses the Albatrosses' unique approach to sport and deep-rooted understanding of sustainability

## What does sustainability mean to ALBA BERLIN?

Social sustainability is at the heart of everything we do at ALBA BERLIN. We want to offer sports activities to as many children and young people as possible, particularly in economically underdeveloped regions. Of course, we also take economic and environmental sustainability into account, as we believe it is also part of our responsibility to operate on a long-term and sustainable basis and to measurably reduce our carbon footprint.

## Many sports clubs focus on youth work. What makes ALBA BERLIN different and perhaps even better?

It has become part of ALBA BERLIN's identity for the club to draw players from its own ranks, as demonstrated by the fact that three of our former youth players have gone on to become world champions. As a club, we take this approach into nursery schools, kindergartens and primary schools and offer

young people in socially disadvantaged areas the chance to get active through sport. We actively go to them instead of waiting for them to come to us. Our ALBA JUGEND youth programme is coming of age itself as it turns 18 this year. I am therefore delighted about the joint campaign with Interzero, collecting mobile phones and donating all proceeds from the sale and recycling as a birthday present to the ALBA Youth as a birthday present.

## How does ALBA BERLIN's nationwide SPORT VERNETZT [SPORT CONNECTS] initiative work?

We will soon be active in more than 50 locations across Germany. The initiative enables us to work with nursery schools, kindergartens and primary schools and share ALBA BERLIN's approach to play while at the same time creating new ways to get kids moving. Here again, we focus on areas that face particular social challenges and where there are only

## Competition

How many sorting plants for lightweight packaging does Interzero currently have?

All correct answers will go into a prize draw to win **1 x EUR 300 to fund a team event** (e.g. in the form of a restaurant voucher) as well as **one of three copies of the 2023 German Sustainability Award's NACHHALTIGKEITSBUCH 2023 (2023 BOOK OF SUSTAINABILITY)**.

Send your answers to [communications@interzero.de](mailto:communications@interzero.de).  
Closing date: 31.01.2024

Win  
funding  
for a  
team event

few leisure opportunities for children and young people. Our aim is to make it as easy as possible for young people to get into sport and discover their joy and passion for it at an early age. ALBA BERLIN's role in the initiative is to support all kinds of sports clubs across different regions with our concept so that as many kids as possible get the chance to become athletes.

**“As youth partner to ALBA BERLIN, we are proud to help foster their unique philosophy and enable as many young people as possible to get involved in sport.”**

**Dr. Axel Schweitzer**  
Club President of ALBA BERLIN

Partnership and competition

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