

Press Release

“Smart Factory” for Technical Foam Solutions

Advanced FoamPartner Converting Center delivers first parts from highly digitalized, flexible and automated operations

The new FoamPartner Converting Center GmbH complements the existing expertise of the FoamPartner Group to provide a vertically integrated value chain from foam production to customized precision components.

Only 12 months after groundbreaking in April 2019, FoamPartner has commissioned its state-of-the-art foam Converting Center at the company’s Duderstadt site in Germany. By end of June 2020, the new plant had already manufactured more than 1,000 different parts and components. The number will likely exceed 5,000 when the new facility is fully functional this October. The 8,500 square meter Center represents an investment of 10 million euros, has created 50 new jobs, and is expected to receive ISO 9001 certification before the end of the year.

“Since the kick-off in September 2018, our project team has worked hard to complete the Center within the shortest possible time frame and started production in April 2020 – despite the difficult circumstances caused by COVID-19” says Tobias Gruener, Executive Vice President Business Region Europe. “The Center was purpose-designed as a ‘Smart Factory’ in adherence to Industry 4.0 principles, featuring a highly digitalized and automated workflow.”

Flexible Manufacturing with More Than 50 Different Machines

Highlights in the new FoamPartner Converting Center include a thermal press for the compression of foam sheets in controlled millimeter steps, which is particularly essential for filtration foams. The modular design of the Center with more than 50 machines, in part specially tailored to the requirements of FoamPartner, enables a highly efficient, flexible combination of widely different processing and manufacturing technologies. The range of capacities comprises horizontal splitting and vertical cutting of foam sheets, die cutting and various stamping processes, horizontal and multi-spindle drilling, milling, thermal compression, welding, bonding, lamination and impregnation. There is also a small-scale machining center available for specialty products in lower volumes.

SAP S/4 Hana ERP software ensures the efficient planning, transparent coordination and traceability of all work processes from procurement to manufacturing and shipping. A real-time logistics system (RTLS) with scanners and industrial PCs at all production work stations provides for a paperless flow of goods. The semi-autonomous material transport is handled by automated guided vehicles (AGV) as well as floor-bound conveyors in the stocking area, using a plant-wide WLAN. Finished products are removed by fully autonomous robots. Robot systems were also installed for cleaning work.

Enhanced Competitiveness, Safety and Sustainability

“The new Converting Center sets new standards in the manufacturing of foam product solutions. Its streamlined material management, industrial scale and consistent digitalization increase our capabilities for precision products in larger volumes, without compromising our flexibility for smaller jobs,” underscores Dr. Michael Riedel, CEO of FoamPartner. “And by pooling our expertise – R&D, foam production, processing, application engineering, prototyping, etc. – we now provide the entire value chain for our customers at one and the same site, for fastest possible order-to-delivery and time-to-market at the highest quality and competitiveness.”

The new greenfield Center also meets the requirements of energy and material efficiency, resource-saving job order planning, which minimizes waste and improves the sustainability of manufacturing. Moreover, the work environment was designed with state-of-the-art ergonomic standards to ensure maximum occupational safety and health protection.

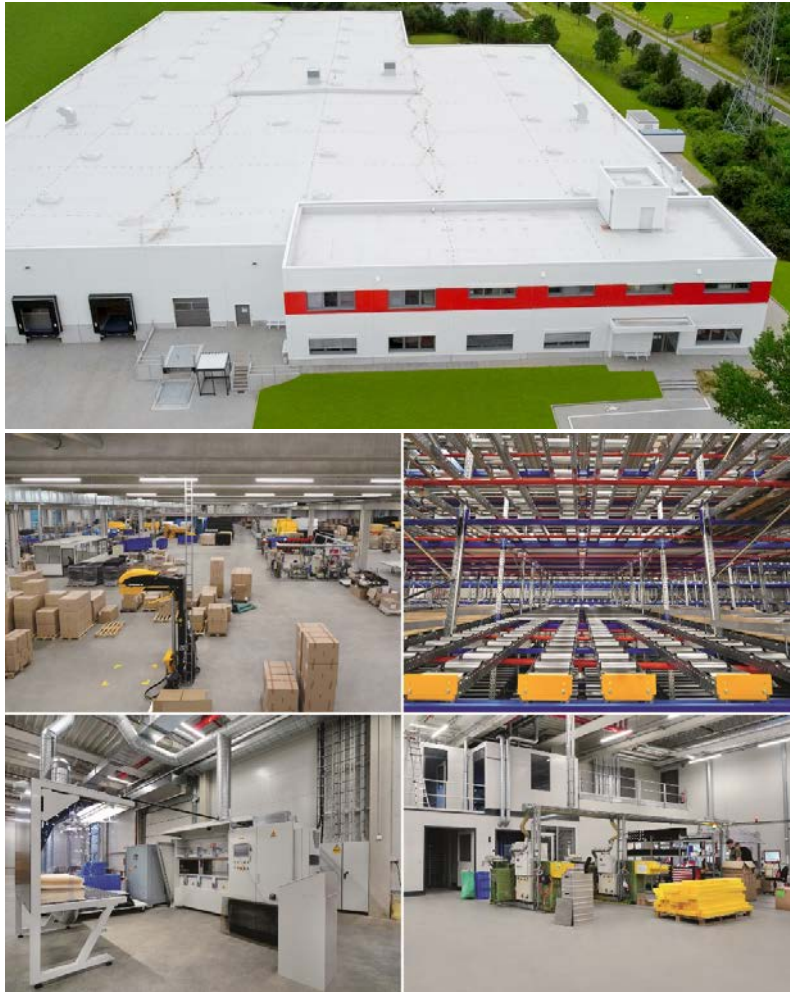
Leader in Technical PUR Foams

The FoamPartner Converting Center in Duderstadt sources most technical foams from three group owned foam production facilities in Europe, such as the neighboring operations of FoamPartner Germany GmbH, which reduces transportation needs and optimizes the carbon footprint. As a global player in polyurethane ester and ether foam market, FoamPartner specializes in a diversified range of demanding application markets, that include:

- Acoustic foams for sound proofing of white goods, such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines, for sound insulation of industrial equipment, such as aggregates and generators, as well as for sound insulation in building & construction and room acoustics.
- Sealing foams for reliable sealing against liquids, gases and air, dust and dirt, sound, vibration and heat. These foams are needed in building & construction, e.g. for ventilation systems or combination boilers, as well as in appliance engineering, e.g. for vending machines.
- Filtration foams for use in air and activated carbon filters of air-conditioning systems, in water filters of aquariums and in storage filters of stamp pads.
- Microphone windshields and headphone cushions in broadcasting, TV and studio engineering.
- Packaging solutions made of foam for the protection, display and transportation of sensitive and valuable goods.

About FoamPartner Switzerland AG

FoamPartner, founded in 1937 and headquartered in Wolfhausen (Switzerland) and with 13 Centers of Competence across Europe, America and Asia-Pacific, is a global leader in foam technology. The company offers its customers a broad portfolio of best-in-class foam and other material solutions engineered to the highest standards of form, function and quality. More than 1,100 employees worldwide develop, manufacture, process and distribute custom-tailored polyurethane foam products focused on three market segments: Mobility, Specialties, and Living & Care. Visit www.foampartner.com for further information.



At the company's Duderstadt site in Germany, FoamPartner brought on line an 8,500 square meter Converting Center, which was designed as a highly digitalized and automated 'Smart Factory' to set new standards in the manufacturing of foam components.

Photos: Building view, robotized foil packaging area, storage zone for foam blocks (ready for further processing), high-precision thermal press, tailored microphone windshield manufacturing cell. (Photos: FoamPartner)

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