

Thomas Hirth Remains Vice-President for Innovation and International Affairs

KIT Senate Confirms Election for Second Term of Office – Main Foci: Further Development of Innovation and Internationalization Strategies, Strengthening Knowledge Transfer, and Dialog with Society



Professor Thomas Hirth. (Photo: Markus Breig, KIT)

Thomas Hirth remains Vice-President for Innovation and International Affairs of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). Today, a large majority of the KIT Senate followed the vote of the KIT Supervisory Board. Hirth has been Vice-President since 2016. During his first term of office, he directed the development of the innovation and internationalization strategies of KIT, among others.

“The Supervisory Board unanimously voted for a second term of office of Professor Thomas Hirth as Vice-President for Innovation and International Affairs. I am very happy that Mr. Hirth will continue to push the development of innovation activities and international partnerships,” says the Chairman of KIT’s Supervisory Board, Professor Michael Kaschke.

“I am very happy about the clear confirmation of this vote by the KIT Senate. Innovation is a statutory mission of KIT, on par with research and academic education. This is and remains a unique selling proposition. Moreover, permanent exchange with our international partners in science and industry is a decisive factor of success. This is also

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reflected by EPICUR's selection as "European University." KIT is one of the partners of this alliance of universities. Thomas Hirth largely directed further development of KIT's strategic profile in these two important areas in the past years. I look forward to continuing our cooperation," says the President of KIT, Professor Holger Hanselka.

"With the development and implementation of the innovation strategy and internationalization strategy we achieved a lot in the past years. The same holds for strategic partnerships with industry that are crucial to the application of research results and their transfer to society. Collaboration with other universities in Europe, such as EPICUR, and worldwide is of high importance to us," says Professor Thomas Hirth, KIT Vice-President for Innovation and International Affairs." This will now be the basis for the further development and implementation of both strategies. Work will additionally focus on the development of knowledge transfer and dialog with society."



President Holger Hanselka (center) with Vice-Presidents Thomas Hirth (left) and Oliver Kraft (right). (Photo: Amadeus Bramsiepe, KIT)

Innovation: Strategic Partnerships, Startups, Transfer to Society

Establishment of strategic partnerships with industry and support of startups were central activities during the first term of office of Thomas Hirth. An example is the ZEISS Innovation Hub@KIT that started operation early this year. The Innovation Hub stands for close collaboration of science and industry and offers space for startups of both partners. By the acquisition of the Innovation Campus "Future Mobility" (ICM) together with the University of Stuttgart, KIT managed to position itself as a stronghold in the strategy dialog for the automotive sector in Baden-Württemberg.

As regards startups, KIT was highly successful in the funding program EXIST V of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. Ideal support of startups by KIT is also reflected by the Gründungsradar startup ranking of the Stifterverband for promoting science and education and the German Startup Monitor. In both rankings, KIT repeatedly reached top positions.

To push knowledge transfer, the TRIANGEL open space for education, communication, startups, and transfer is presently being established in close vicinity to KIT's Campus South. With this center, KIT wishes to integrate all parties from science, industry, and society and to intensify dialog.

International Collaboration

Together with seven other partners from all over Europe, KIT forms the EPICUR University Alliance that has been funded as "European University" by the European Commission since 2019. It is the goal of this Alliance to generate momentum for the development of a European education area. In addition, KIT is active in other European networks, such as CLUSTER and CESAER, as well as in the German-Japanese consortium HeKKSaGOn and in interACT, a university network with nine partners in Europe, the USA, Japan, and Australia. Collaboration efforts are complemented by joint activities with partners in the region of Shanghai and the Province of Jiangsu in China as well as in Argentina and Chile. Constant further strategic development of these and other partnerships will be a major task of Thomas Hirth during his second term of office.

Thomas Hirth – About the Person

Professor Thomas Hirth, born in 1962, has been Vice-President for Innovation and International Affairs at KIT since January 2016. Before, he held various positions with Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, last as Director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Interfacial Engineering and Biotechnology (IGB) in Stuttgart. Since April 2008, he had also been professor at the University of Stuttgart, where he headed the Institute of Interfacial Process Engineering and Plasma Technology. From 2012 to 2015, Hirth was Spokesperson of the Life Sciences Association and Member of the Presidential Committee of Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft as well as Vice-Dean of Faculty 4 Energy, Process, and Bio-Engineering of the University of Stuttgart. Hirth studied chemistry at the then University of Karlsruhe (TH) and obtained his doctorate at the Institute of Physical Chemistry and Electrochemistry.

The second term of office of Thomas Hirth will start on January 01, 2022 and end on December 31, 2027.

Being “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association,” KIT creates and imparts knowledge for the society and the environment. It is the objective to make significant contributions to the global challenges in the fields of energy, mobility and information. For this, about 9,300 employees cooperate in a broad range of disciplines in natural sciences, engineering sciences, economics, and the humanities and social sciences. KIT prepares its 24,400 students for responsible tasks in society, industry, and science by offering research-based study programs. Innovation efforts at KIT build a bridge between important scientific findings and their application for the benefit of society, economic prosperity, and the preservation of our natural basis of life. KIT is one of the German universities of excellence.

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