



Press release

VNG AG / Smart Infrastructure Hub Leipzig / Coronavirus aid initiative / RE-START

To strengthen economic diversity: VNG AG and Smart Infrastructure Hub Leipzig found coronavirus aid initiative RE-START

Small businesses, self-employed people and start-ups from central Germany that have been affected by the coronavirus crisis can apply for emergency aid of up to EUR 4,000.

Leipzig, 10 June 2020. Against the backdrop of the coronavirus crisis, small businesses, the self-employed and start-ups from all over central Germany have another opportunity to receive emergency financial assistance. To help them, the Leipzig energy company VNG AG and the Smart Infrastructure Hub Leipzig have launched the joint aid initiative 'RE-START'. It is aimed at representatives from the media, education, retail, gastronomy, event, leisure, mobility and health sectors who have suffered economically as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Affected sole traders as well as companies with up to ten employees and company headquarters in Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt or Thuringia can apply online until 30 June 2020 at <http://re-start.jetzt/>. The selected beneficiaries will receive emergency aid of between EUR 2,000 and 4,000.

"With the aid initiative, we want to contribute to the preservation of economic diversity in our region. It is precisely the small enterprises that enrich our society with an immense amount of passion and creativity that are often hit particularly hard by the crisis. They must not fall behind as a result of coronavirus," says Bodo Rodestock, Member of the Executive Board of VNG AG. His company, which has more than 60 years of experience in the gas business, is participating in the initiative with start-up capital of EUR 40,000. "Broad-based social commitment has always been part of VNG's DNA, but solidarity is particularly in demand in times of crisis. Any kind of help is extremely valuable for those affected. In this respect, we would very much appreciate it if other supporters could join us," says Rodestock.

Co-founder Eric Weber from the Smart Infrastructure Hub Leipzig knows very well the current worries and hardships of start-ups and aspiring young entrepreneurs, and is therefore all the more convinced of the goal of the aid initiative. "Just like countless small shops, restaurants, cafés, media professionals or service providers from the event industry, founders have also been faced with problems that threatened their existence, in some cases through no fault of their own. This is where we want to start and make at least a small contribution," says the Managing Director of the Hub, which also includes the Leipzig start-up incubator SpinLab – The HHL Accelerator. Over 50 business ideas have been successfully advanced there in recent years.

RE-START receives additional support from Leipzig's Mayor Burkhard Jung: "The initiative is another example of the great solidarity and willingness to help in the region. We need local entrepreneurship, fresh ideas and diversity in cities, which is why I very much welcome the initiative."



Smart Infrastructure
Hub Leipzig



VNG and SpinLab have had a close partnership for several years. Together they support emerging companies and start-ups from the energy sector. With the aid initiative, they are taking a further step together to help in these current difficult times.

More information about the 'RE-START' initiative can be found online at: <http://restart.jetzt/>.

Media representatives are welcome to contact André Hoffmann at any time by e-mail at andre.hoffmann@vng.de or by telephone on + 49 341-443 2106.

About VNG AG

VNG is a group of over 20 companies active in the European energy industry with a broad, future-oriented portfolio of products and services in gas and infrastructure, and more than 60 years of experience in the energy market. Headquartered in Leipzig, the Group has a workforce of some 1,200 and generated billed revenue of approximately EUR 10.5 billion in the 2019 financial year. VNG concentrates on four links in the gas value chain: Trading & Sales, Transport, Storage and Biogas. Building on its core expertise in the gas business, the Group's 'VNG 2030+' strategy places a growing focus on new business fields. These include green gases, digital infrastructure and local solutions. More at www.vng.de.

About the Smart Infrastructure Hub Leipzig

The Smart Infrastructure Hub in Leipzig is a network that brings together innovators in the fields of e-health, smart cities, energy and cross-sector technologies from start-ups, SMEs, corporations and research. In addition to the support programme SpinLab – The HHL Accelerator, the Hub includes the first private venture capital fund in the former East German states, 'Smart Infrastructure Ventures', the RCI Research Center for Sustainable and Smart Infrastructure and a planned business incubator. In addition to the Free State of Saxony, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and universities, the hub is supported by numerous partner companies such as VNG AG, AOK PLUS and the Leipziger Group.

About SpinLab – The HHL Accelerator

SpinLab – The HHL Accelerator supports innovative start-up projects in implementing and growing their ventures. In addition to intensive coaching, business start-up teams benefit from a high-calibre mentoring programme as well as numerous contacts with investors, established companies and other business founders. They can use modern co-working space in the creative area of the Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei (old Leipzig cotton mill) and have access to various technologies from partners. Even after the end of the programme, selected start-ups are supported in staff recruiting, can plan their expansion via an international exchange programme and are given the opportunity to rent office space right next to SpinLab. Upon acceptance into the 6-month programme, the founders can use the full range free of charge and without investing. More information can be found at: <https://spinlab.co/>