

Making the Campus Ready for the Future



Dr. Alfons Enhsen is Managing Director for the Scientific-Technical Infrastructure. In the interview he offers an outlook on the intended development of the campus and explains his ideas and wishes for the future expansion of the Center.

1. Dr. Enhsen, your primary objective in your new position is to make the campus fit for the future. What project is at the top of your agenda?

Enhsen: My objective is to develop and implement a long-term perspective for the Neuherberg campus. This includes the long-term development of the master plan and parallel to this, the short-term creation and provision of work space, in particular laboratory space.

2. What is your highest priority for the development of the master plan?

Enhsen: We need to develop the campus so that it is flexible and optimally used – now and for future generations of researchers. This means: identification of contaminated sites, renovation, new construction. A number of the buildings and part of the infrastructure date from the late sixties and seventies. Some buildings are no longer worth

renovating. These must be decommissioned and deconstructed in order to create new areas for construction. We will retain the core of buildings that can be renovated and expand them for sustainable use. New construction will take place according to modern concepts. Based on the existing buildings, the contamination situation, energy-technical considerations and the usability of the building structure, we must develop the campus so that we can react flexibly to future demands for use.

3. Our center is extensively expanding its diabetes research. Two new diabetes institutes and a new research unit are being established – where will the employees/staff members and laboratories be accommodated?

Enhsen: The new Helmholtz Diabetes Campus is in the planning stage. It will encompass two laboratory-office complexes for more than 200 employees respectively and another building on the Helmholtz Pioneer Campus for more than 150 employees. Over the short term we need to lease office and lab space outside of the campus. We have already set up two new diabetes institutes in Garching and the Comprehensive Pneumology Center in Grosshadern.

4. The Helmholtz Pioneer Campus shall provide exceptional young scientists with maximum opportunities for creative research. How will this be reflected in the architecture?

Enhsen: In the Helmholtz Pioneer Campus, abbreviated HPC, several scientific disciplines shall work together under one roof. The horizontal and vertical circulation of the building fosters the interaction between the different disciplines and scientists. The HPC will be directly connected to the two new diabetes buildings. Thus, the already existing institutes will have direct contact to the young scientists in the HPC. The architecture will be open and communicative. The young HPC scientists will conduct their research in flexible, large laboratories equipped with state-of-the-art technology.

5. Research thrives on the direct exchange between scientists. What opportunities does our campus, which is close to the Munich city limits, offer for the creation of communicative meeting places?

Enhsen: An attractive campus needs facilities for an open exchange at all levels in order to ensure that its central mandate – the transfer of knowledge – is carried out. There is a great need for appropriate space in the Center. In all major remodeling projects and new construction projects, we of course take into consideration the aspects of communication and interaction. The aim is to promote the exchange of ideas and cooperation between the teams. Traffic connections to the Center also play an important role. Good accessibility by public transportation increases the attractiveness of the Center enormously, especially for young scientists and students. In a pilot project with the Munich Public Transport Company, we were able to improve the connections. In the future, however, we want to optimize this further.

6. The Center wants to expand the field of stem cell research. What stands in the way of rapid implementation?

Enhsen: Stem cell research at Helmholtz Zentrum München will be located in the future in what is now the Hämatologikum in Grosshadern. The building needs major renovation in various ways, and it will be completely modernized in the coming years during ongoing scientific operations. Unfortunately, we don't have any alternative space, neither for laboratories nor for infrastructure facilities, so we can't vacate the building completely during renovation. We therefore have to convert and modernize the building floor by floor.

7. The Center competes for the best talent worldwide. How important are state-of-the-art infrastructure and high-end technology in this competitive situation?

Enhsen: To be internationally competitive and to achieve top results, both the scientific environment and the working environment with the buildings, the infrastructure and how well the facilities are equipped with modern technology are essential. The campus is optimally positioned in the science region of Munich. Our task is to modernize the campus and design the working environment in an optimal way to ensure efficiency.

8. From whom can we learn here?

Enhsten: As a rule from the best in the class. We belong to the best in science, but not in infrastructure. Science is developing so fast that the infrastructure can't keep pace. This problem can be met to some extent by abandoning the use of small-scale lab and office units and instead creating large, flexibly usable work space. But it would be particularly important that we work on the overall project duration and reduce this considerably. At the moment we are trapped in a situation in which we need eight to nine years for a new construction project. The private sector manages to complete a project of the same size and complexity in just two to two and a half years. Of course, projects in the private sector and the public sector cannot be compared one to one. The federal and state governments must be allowed to carry out the test and control mechanisms with the corresponding approval times, since they are working with tax money. But an ambitious goal would at least be to reduce the current project duration times by half and thus to strive for a considerable reduction of the financial risk. That would definitely be a success.

9. What role do occupational safety and fire protection play for you?

Enhsten: Occupational safety affects the health of each individual employee as well as his or her colleagues. Nothing should be given higher value. That is why occupational safety measures, including fire protection, are non-negotiable. This is a special task at the Center, since we have a lot of staff turnover among young scientists, PhD students and postdocs. Every year there are 500 to 600 new employees at the Center, who all must be trained in occupational safety and introduced to the work environment. The responsibility for this lies with the institute directors. Our task is to support the institute directors and staff members who have a supervisory role in this endeavor with our expertise. We need to ensure that all employees are familiar with all safety regulations, taking into account that people with many different nationalities and native languages work here. Through annual training modules and regular information, we keep the staff aware of the topic. Fortunately, in addition to the Department of Infrastructure and Safety (ISA) which covers all safety aspects, we have many volunteer safety officers in the institutes. We also have many volunteers in the fire department and hope that in the future staff members will support this important task.

Cordula Klemm and Sonja Opitz (from left), Corporate Communications, spoke with Dr. Alfons Enhsten.



**BRIEF PROFILE
DR. DRAZENKA SELESI**

As coordinator, Dr. Drazenka Selesi supports the establishment and development of the scientific and technical infrastructure. She works in a team with the Department of Scientific Infrastructure, Technical Safety and Occupational Protection headed by Dr. Alfons Enhsten and the Central Technical Facilities.



10. You have been managing director for the scientific-technical infrastructure in the Center since May 2013. What has impressed you the most?

Enhsten: What impresses me is the science. The progress made here at the Center in recent years seeks its comparison in Germany. Science at the Center plays in the top league. That's why I very much wish to contribute to the development of the infrastructure, in order to meet the expectations placed in us and to achieve our ambitious goals for the future.