

Press Release

Bechtle and Planet AI expand AI footprint in Rostock

- **Bechtle aiming for further growth through AI applications**
- **State of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania reaffirms support**

Neckarsulm, 29 April 2024 – Bechtle AG is setting its sights on transforming the Rostock location into a hub for Planet AI’s innovative AI applications—marketed throughout Europe by the Bechtle Group—largely due to the proximity to the University of Rostock, with which Planet AI has been collaborating closely for a number of years. A cooperation agreement signed in January 2020 forms the foundation of joint, application-oriented AI research, which will now be expanded. Both partners have already successfully completed several joint projects in the field of AI deep learning funded by the EU and the state of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania and Jochen Schulte, State Secretary at the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Infrastructure and Tourism in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania has also emphasised his support for expanding the location and sees the potential for further funding. “The growth of Planet AI underscores our commitment to bolstering the existing AI ecosystem in Rostock, where we already have an outstanding network of university researchers and industrial applications backed by the Centre for Artificial Intelligence in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania among others. Together, our aim is to continue to broaden digitalisation expertise in SMEs to promote economic success and innovations,” says State Secretary Jochen Schulte.

Planet AI’s focus is on developing AI-based solutions for intelligent document analyses and process automation and Bechtle has held a majority stake of 51 per cent in the company since October 2023. With it, Bechtle aims to pair use-case-oriented AI research with the extensive marketing capabilities of Germany’s largest IT system house, while mounting a joint effort to bolster

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Germany and Europe's AI ecosystem and take a leading role in future innovation.

"Together with Planet AI, we are taking the next step and expanding the Rostock site to become our central AI innovations hub. The proximity to the university and the state's commitment to our growth have given us the impetus we need to continue to pursue our goals. Without AI, there can be no digital transformation and we have set our sights firmly on a future-first ecosystem," says Michael Guschlbauer, COO, IT System House and Managed Services, Bechtle AG.

Close collaboration with university secures the next generation

Jesper Kleinjohann, CEO of Planet AI, came to Rostock as a student. The mathematician wrote his diploma thesis on neural networks at Planet AI and is now a role model for attracting students with long-term career opportunities in applied research. "Our close partnership with the University of Rostock's CITlab has proven itself over the years, not only with the many successful projects we've collaborated on, but also in terms of recruiting the best talents for our diverse and ever-growing team," says Jesper Kleinjohann. Planet AI currently employs just under 50 staff predominately in research and development, over half of which are graduates of the University of Rostock.

AI ecosystem with hubs in Rostock and Heilbronn

Bechtle combines its activities in Rostock with its membership of the Innovation Park Artificial Intelligence (Ipai) in Heilbronn—a stone's throw away from its Neckarsulm headquarters. Both Bechtle and Planet AI are involved in the European flagship project for artificial intelligence and Ipai will become a centre for AI thanks to funding of up to €50m from the state of Baden-Württemberg. The aim is to establish an ecosystem that promotes innovation and in which a whole host of partners can come together to develop future-oriented AI solutions. As part of the cooperation, Planet AI's

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AI-based application IDA (Intelligent Document Analysis) will be made available as a demonstrator at Ipai.

About Bechtle:

With more than 100 system houses and IT e-commerce in 14 countries, Bechtle is one of Europe's leading IT providers and never more than a stone's throw away. Bechtle also has a worldwide partner network to fulfil the needs of its customers on every continent. Founded in 1983, the Bechtle Group is headquartered in the southern German town of Neckarsulm and currently employs over 15,000 people. Over 70,000 customers from the industrial, trade, financial and public sectors rely on Bechtle to drive their digital transformation with a cross-vendor portfolio that spans the whole world of IT infrastructure and operations. Bechtle is listed on the MDAX and TecDAX indexes. In 2023, the company generated a revenue of €6.42 bn. Read more at [bechtle.com](https://www.bechtle.com)

About Planet AI:

Planet AI GmbH was founded in 2015. A spin-off of Planet intelligent systems GmbH, which first began its journey in 1992, Planet AI is an internationally renowned specialist in deep learning—a subset of machine learning that relies heavily on the use of artificial neural networks. Its core product is a multi-modal AI software platform with leading accuracy over competitive solutions, enabling companies to automate the processing of hand and machine-written documents, receipts and other text, as well as classify document types and harvest information. Other use cases include image and voice recognition. Read more at: planet-ai.com