

# PRESS RELEASE

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## New director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Silicate Research ISC appointed

**October 1 marks the beginning of a new era at the Fraunhofer Institute for Silicate Research ISC in Würzburg. Prof. Dr. Miriam Unterlass takes over the management of the renowned Würzburg Fraunhofer Institute. The chemist and materials scientist, who previously taught at the University of Constance and the Vienna University of Technology, brings her focus on the synthesis of new functional materials to Würzburg and enriches the portfolio of the Fraunhofer ISC and the University of Würzburg with her expertise, where she will take over the Chair of Chemical Technology of Materials Synthesis in personal union.**

Prof. Dr. Unterlass takes over the management of the institute at an exciting time when the importance of sustainable materials for a wide range of applications - from energy efficiency to biomedical technologies - is constantly growing. Prof. Dr. Gerhard Sextl, the long-standing director of the Fraunhofer ISC and Chair at the University of Würzburg, retired on March 31, 2024, while the Julius-Maximilians-Universität and the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft were conducting the appointment process for a new director at the same time. Prof. Sextl had successfully led the institute through a phase of significant technological innovation. The bar was set high for the applicants - they are expected to demonstrate scientific excellence as well as entrepreneurship and an understanding of industry in order to be able to perform both tasks competently. "With her extensive expertise in the field of materials science and materials chemistry, Prof. Dr. Unterlass will play a key role in shaping future research and development at the ISC and provide innovative impetus," said Prof. Dr. Holger Hanselka, President of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, on the appointment of the new Institute Director. "Her focus on environmentally friendly and resource-saving processes is in line with the Fraunhofer ISC's strategy of developing pioneering solutions for industry."

After numerous study and research visits as well as teaching commitments in the USA, France, Great Britain and Austria, the award-winning materials scientist is looking forward to her new field of activity in Lower Franconia. "I am honored to have the opportunity to take on this important and exciting task and I am seizing this opportunity with great enthusiasm!" Prof. Unterlass sees the dual role as head of a Fraunhofer Institute with around 380 employees and a university chair as both a challenge and an incentive. Her research work to date has covered the fields of solid and soft materials, in particular the synthesis of new functional materials using sustainable chemical processes. Prof. Unterlass has made a name for herself internationally through her interdisciplinary approaches, in which chemistry, physics and materials science are combined in a unique

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way. Despite her passion for sustainable material development, she is familiar with market knowledge and application proximity in research – after all, the core of the Fraunhofer brand – as demonstrated by her involvement in the spin-off for the commercialization of the hydrothermal synthesis of high-performance plastics. The spin-off was awarded the Austrian PHÖNIX start-up prize, among others.

"I am very much looking forward to my new role and working with the highly qualified teams at Fraunhofer ISC," says Prof. Dr. Miriam Unterlass. "Together, we will explore new research paths to meet the challenges of the future and develop sustainable solutions for industry."

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**From October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 the  
new institute director of the  
Fraunhofer ISC:  
Prof. Dr. Miriam Unterlass**

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The **Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft**, based in Germany, is the world's leading organization for applied research. By prioritizing key technologies for the future and exploiting their results in business and industry, it plays an important role in the innovation process. As a pioneer and trendsetter for innovative developments and cutting-edge research, it helps to shape our society and our future. Founded in 1949, the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft currently operates 76 institutes and research facilities throughout Germany. Around 32,000 employees, mainly scientists and engineers, work with an annual research budget of around 3.4 billion euros, of which 3.0 billion euros is for contract research.

The **Fraunhofer Institute for Silicate Research ISC** is one of the leading R&D centers for materials-based research and development in the fields of resource efficiency, energy, environment and health. With around 380 scientists and technicians, the institute works to develop innovative functional materials and technologies for more sustainable and resource-efficient products and to make significant contributions to solving the major global issues and challenges of the future. The Fraunhofer ISC combines first-class materials science expertise with many years of experience in materials processing, industrial application and the upscaling of production and process technologies to pilot scale as well as materials analysis and characterization.