



WORLD WIDE WEAVE

## **Prestigious award for passionate businessman**

Federal Cross of Merit for Dr. Stephan Kufferath

**"When a successful businessman chooses not simply to rest on his laurels, but instead is willing to assume responsibility at numerous professional associations and engage in regional community work, he becomes a role model for our society." It was with these words that Wolfgang Spelthahn, district administrator of the Düren district, presented the Federal Cross of Merit to Dr. Stephan Kufferath, Director at GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG (GKD), on behalf of German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. This prestigious award honors Dr. Kufferath's decades of voluntary commitment to the regional economy and society. The doctor of economics and his brother, Ingo, are the third generation of the Kufferath family to manage the GKD business, which they have been running since 1989. The world's leading technical weavers specialize in sophisticated system solutions for a wide range of applications in the areas of water, nutrition, health, mobility, as well as environmental protection, and resource conservation.**

In parallel to assuming management responsibility at GKD, Stephan Kufferath was elected as a member of the Plenary Assembly at the Chamber of Industry & Commerce in Aachen. Just one year later, he then took up the Chair of the Committee on External Economic Relations, a position he held until 1998. He has been Vice President of the Chamber of Industry & Commerce since 1998 and, at the same time, Chairman of the Düren Regional Committee. In 1992, the Employers' Association of the Regional Metal Industry for Düren, Jülich, and Euskirchen then elected him as



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Chairman, a position he also continues to hold to this day. In 1998, Stephan Kufferath also took over the Chair of the United Industry Associations (VIV) for the Düren, Jülich, and Euskirchen region. He has initiated many projects over a period of 20 years in this role. His focus here was always on educational work to secure the competitiveness of companies and ensure that junior staff could get the training they need. After no longer standing for the position of Chairman in the 2018 election, the member companies appointed him Honorary Chairman in recognition of his dedication and many years of service. Stephan Kufferath has also worked on the Executive Board at Metall NRW since 1995, holding the position of Vice President since 2006. Having started in 1999, he remains active to this day as a commercial judge in the 1st Chamber for Commercial Affairs at Aachen District Court. Thanks to his global contacts – the GKD Director spends 200 days a year traveling the world on business – the district of Düren also appointed him Commercial Ambassador in 2013. In this role, he promotes the region and the companies based there.

In parallel to the large number of honorary offices he has held, he continued to expand the global presence and leading market position of the family business successfully with his brother. This is yet another way in which he has contributed to the city's global reputation as a hotbed of cutting-edge technology. However, his tireless commitment has never been focused solely on trade and industry. Indeed, the man who will turn 60 in just a few days maintains many varied commitments in the community. Whether on a personal, voluntary or business level, he provides guidance and resources to support local associations and charitable institutions.

"With this award, the Federal President is expressly honoring a passionate businessman," was Wolfgang Spelthahn's summary. Technical councilor for



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the town of Düren, Paul Zündorf, added: "Stephan Kufferath was and is a spokesman and lawyer for Düren-based industry." As Chair of the United Industry Associations (VIV) and successor to Stephan Kufferath in this role, Hans-Helmuth Schmidt also confirmed this assessment: "You have made huge efforts for this town – as a businessman, as a human being, as a role model." Ingo Kufferath, who manages the company together with the person being honored here today, summed up his thoughts when he said: "I am truly proud of my brother!" In his acceptance speech, Stephan Kufferath stressed that he has always sought to help those close to his own professional environment when selecting his honorary offices. Even after spending 29 years as a member of the Plenary Assembly at the Aachen Chamber of Industry & Commerce, some 20 years of which were spent as Vice President, he: "(...) remains convinced by the concept of the plenary assembly as the parliament of the business community" and is proud of the contributions that the chamber has made and continues to make to the economy in the region. His commitments at employers' associations, which he maintains to this day, have been particularly important to him as a socio-political arm of corporate interests. "If you are going to do all of this for such a long time, you need to be completely convinced by the idea of a fair balance of interests in the complex social structures encountered at an industrial enterprise." At the German and European wire weaving industry associations, both he and his brother worked together to establish standards, rules, and norms in the sectors and secure the interests of customers. Overall, however, his duties as a commercial judge were what he enjoyed the most and brought him the greatest learning success. "I was able to make a big contribution here but, above all, also learn a lot." Addressing his ability to combine the numerous honorary offices he has held with his duties as a business leader, Stephan Kufferath said that this is obviously much easier at a family business, "(...) when you can share the ultimate responsibility in a



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trusting relationship with your family, in my case with my brother.“ Honorary work creates a kind of healthy distance – also due to the permanent exchange with other companies that are generally addressing the same topics and facing the same issues as you yourself. However, one key in his ability to combine this honorary work with his other duties was the fact that he received such excellent support from strong and professional full-time representatives. Yet despite this, his wife and daughters were still forced to "spend a lot of time without him“. He would therefore like to take this opportunity to express his sincere thanks to them for their understanding throughout his career.

The Federal Cross of Merit is awarded by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany for exceptional services for the common good. As the only general state decoration presented in Germany, it is also the highest accolade awarded in the Federal Republic.

*6.689 characters incl. spaces*

## **GKD – WORLD WIDE WEAVE**

As a privately owned technical weaver, GKD - Gebr. Kufferath AG is the world market leader in metal, synthetic and spiral mesh solutions. Four independent business divisions bundle their expertise under one roof: Industrial Mesh (woven metal mesh and filter solutions), Process Belts (belts made of mesh and spirals), Architectural meshes (façades, safety and interior design made of metal fabrics) and Mediamesh® (Transparent media façades). With its headquarter in Germany and five other facilities in the US,



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South Africa, China, India and Chile – as well as its branches in France, Spain, Dubai and worldwide representatives, GKD is close to markets anywhere in the world.

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