



Managing Director Sascha Piffko and Deputy Managing Director Dr. Jan Schneider present the newly arrived ClfA certificate of registration in front of the company building of SPAU GmbH. Credit: Vanessa Oppermann, SPAU GmbH

The first archaeological company in Germany to be registered by ClfA

Sascha Piffko MClfA (9626), Managing Director of SPAU

SPAU GmbH is the first German company to be accredited by ClfA. The management and staff are thrilled and proud to have achieved this status.

In 2017, DGUF (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ur- und Frühgeschichte e.V.*) held its annual conference, with the theme being the creation of a professional body for archaeologists (in Germany). One of the topics discussed was the working conditions within archaeology. This conference was attended and intensely discussed by many, including multiple employees of SPAU itself. Sascha Piffko, the founder and manager of SPAU, gave a lecture on good working practice. ClfA offered to establish a ClfA Group in

Germany, which was met with enthusiastic support. A German committee was created, to which Sascha Piffko and Dr Jan Schneider of SPAU were elected (as Committee member and Treasurer respectively). Many SPAU employees registered as ClfA members, with many later becoming accredited members.

German archaeology is, to this day, affected by questionable working conditions. Only so many archaeologists within Germany have the chance of a stable career.



The certificate. Credit: Vanessa Oppermann, SPAU GmbH

Permanent contracts are unfortunately the minority, especially within academic and state institutions. A lack of stability exists, both in terms of job security and private stability, often resulting in multiple entries and location changes visible on CVs.

As the 16 German states are partly federally independent, there are therefore 16 differing sets of regulations for excavation, documentation and post-excavation, which can lack cohesion. ClfA offers a general standard and codex,



Excavation Technician Alexander Schupp and ClfA Inspector Gerry Wait during the inspection of an archaeological excavation. Credit: Vanessa Oppermann, SPAU GmbH

ClfA offers a general standard and codex, which has the potential to not only be applied at a company level, but nationally and internationally.



Employees of SPAU GmbH in conversation with ClfA Inspector Gerry Wait and the online committee back in the UK. Credit: Vanessa Oppermann, SPAU GmbH

which has the potential to not only be applied at a company level, but nationally and internationally. SPAU, with the goal of working to high standards while upholding good working conditions, had already created a high and comprehensive internal standard and codex. SPAU therefore found that the high standards promoted by ClfA made it easy and logical to support ClfA from the very start.

Founded in 2015, SPAU has paved the way in commercial archaeology. SPAU offers primarily permanent contracts, with fixed salaries, with the option for paid overtime or additional time off. Contributions to pensions and social security are made; 28 days' holiday is offered per year, with

an additional five days for further education. Additional internal training is held annually for all staff. Staff are also supported in their academic development and their involvement in archaeological discourse, such as the writing of scientific papers. Such support is rare within German archaeology. Too many are employed as freelancers or on temporary contracts and/or do not receive pension contributions or social security. At the founding of SPAU many voiced scepticism for how SPAU would be able to develop when applying this vision. In a few years this has changed, with many following SPAU's lead, having observed the benefits of supporting staff and having permanent teams.

In 2019 a workers' association (*Betriebsrat*) was founded at SPAU, the first in an archaeological company. Additionally, in March 2022, SPAU was also the first archaeological company to receive a seal of certified safety standards from BG Bau (the building industry's accident prevention and insurance association). Internal Health and Safety training is held annually by BG Bau and SPAU. Many employees have also completed additional external training with BG Bau.

SPAU's philosophy is to work to the best standards and quality through supervision, allowing individual and collective improvement. Staff receive constructive criticism and feedback from supervisors, management and the workers' committee; the management of SPAU is supervised by the workers' committee; excavation reports are reviewed by senior state archaeologists; safety standards are assessed by BG Bau; and quality and work standards are assessed by ClfA. This means SPAU can say with certainty that it offers high-quality archaeological work for its customers, the employees and the

The inspection on an excavation in Hammersbach, Main-Kinzig-Kreis. Front: Excavation Technician Alexander Schupp and ClfA inspector Gerry Wait. Back: Excavation Manager Thomas Hahn and district archaeologist Claus Bergmann. Credit: Vanessa Oppermann, SPAU GmbH



Distribution map of organisations registered by ClfA. Credit: Google maps

regional authorities for protection of historic buildings, archaeology and monuments.

SPAU also works gladly with ClfA to facilitate its improvement and development. In 2018, Sascha attended a Registration Committee (Organisations) meeting in Birmingham. He was inspired by the process, seeing it as something applicable to SPAU. Instead of simply being tested and criticised, ClfA works with applicant organisations, offering constructive criticism, with an emphasis on improvement and productivity for everyone.

The cooperation between archaeologists from England, Scotland and Wales demonstrated that this was possible on a national level, i.e. for Germany, and therefore an international level. The re-emergence of nationalism and divisions within society should not be allowed to interfere with scientific research, which knows no boundaries. Archaeology is a worldwide and international subject, and an international organisation would allow archaeologists worldwide to work to high and cohesive standards.

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The certification process is comprehensive but is worth it for the resulting feedback and development that evolves during the process. The number of internal assessments, documentation and process changes gave the impression of a potentially long and involved process. But with support from ClfA and other Registered Organisations, it became clear that many of the standards and requirements were already implemented within SPAU, and were simply lacking written form or needed to be adjusted slightly. This registration process has also brought to light areas for potential improvement, including a structured quality assessment process and the development of related concepts. These concepts are now being implemented in every aspect of SPAU's work process.



Sascha Piffko

Sascha is Managing Director of SPAU. Born in Hessen, Germany, he did twelve months' military service in the German Armed Forces before going to study archaeology and history at the University of Gießen in Hessen. Sascha has been a freelancer in archaeology since 2007, directing excavations in Hessen, and was Director of several excavations for the Hessian State Office for Archaeology in Wiesbaden. He founded SPAU in 2015 in Münzenberg.