



**In 2008, Berghof Membrane Technology was one of the first occupants of the WaterCampus in Leeuwarden. The German company is a manufacturer and supplier of tubular membrane products for the purification of waste streams such as industrial wastewater. WaterProof spoke to CEO Eric Wildeboer.**

## **‘WE’RE PLAYING IN THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE’**

### **What exactly are we talking about?**

Berghof Membranes (BM) is one of the fastest growing business units of the German family business Berghof. Up to 2003, BM’s strategy focused on the construction and sale of filtration installations for regional end users. In 2003, Eric Wildeboer was recruited to shift the focus back to BM’s core business since 1976: the development and production of innovative tubular membrane products for water treatment manufacturers, who in turn supply to end users.” Five years later, Wildeboer was made CEO in Germany. One of the choices made at the time was to move certain activities to the Water Campus in Leeuwarden. It was an easy choice for Wildeboer. “The Water Campus offers a great combination of knowledge, innovation and commercial spirit. You also have various test facilities within reach, which you need for testing new membrane products and applications. I have no regrets about settling here.”

### **A diversity of cultures**

His focus is on the international roll-out of membrane products, Smart installations and services. A Groningen man born and raised (“from the beautiful city of Haren”), Wildeboer convinced shareholders that moving the sales department to the Water Campus in Leeuwarden would be clearly beneficial to the company. It would allow the German division to fully concentrate on the development and production of innovative membrane products. Wildeboer was given free rein. It was successful, as demonstrated by the company’s growth figures. Today, all international sales, technology, and marketing activities are controlled from the Water Campus. Personnel increased from fifteen people in 2008 to sixty in 2019. On the topic of cultural differences between the German and Dutch business world, he says, “German companies are unbelievably good at making the product. That is the proverbial ‘Gründlichkeit’. The designation ‘Made in Germany’ stands

for durability and quality, and makes international business easier. The Dutch, on the other hand, are experienced and creative networkers. That is incredibly important for establishing an international network. In 2019, our organization consists of a diversity of cultures which all contribute to its success.

### **Bayern München or Barcelona**

The added value of his company is that BM is more than just a supplier of membrane products. “We work with the manufacturer to find smarter solutions to certain things and to find ways to build more efficiently and economically. That distinguishes us from companies that only focus on supply. ‘Thinking outside the box’ is the hallmark of our company’s DNA. Our membrane products are always ‘outside the tank’, making membrane cleaning and maintenance much simpler. We also push the boundaries of what is possible and think outside the box. That results in wonderful innovations in membrane products, filtration technologies and our membrane production process.” “Everything we do is based on long-term thinking”, he continues. “This applies to the customer relationship we pursue, and the products and technologies that we offer. We are only satisfied when there is a successful reference with a satisfied end user in the market. This is possible because we have people on board who want to do their utmost for the client. They don’t do it because I tell them to, they do it because they want to. They do it out of passion for their work. Helping with advice and action, just as you yourself would want to be helped. That keeps us in control. I am quite proud of that, because we mainly encounter multinationals in our market. We are playing in the Champions League. We may not have the size of Bayern München or Barcelona, but we are ambitious, creative, and very committed to our clients.”