

At the Heart of Standard Part Manufacturing: A Look inside the Otto Ganter GmbH & Co. KG

Elesa+Ganter is a leading international joint venture that unites two specialists in standard machine elements: Elesa from Italy, known for its expertise in high-quality plastic components, and Ganter from Germany, a family-run company with a long-standing tradition in precision metal parts. Together, they offer one of the world's most comprehensive portfolios, true to their slogan Two Companies. One World of Standard Parts.

With more than 50 years of leadership, over 1.100 employees worldwide and more than 100.000 standard parts available from stock, Elesa+Ganter supports customers through a global network of subsidiaries and distribution partners. The close collaboration with headquarters in Italy and Germany ensures that local teams can offer expert technical advice and fast delivery. Today, Elesa+Ganter has subsidiaries in Austria, Spain, India, Poland, China, Türkiye, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic.

In the middle of Germany's Black Forest – a region known for high-quality craftsmanship and mechanical precision – lies the town of Furtwangen. Surrounded by forests and hills, this peaceful area has a long tradition of engineering and manufacturing. It was here, in the late 19th century, that one of the pioneers in his field named Otto Ganter started a small workshop for machine parts – laying the foundation for a company whose products are now used all over the world.

Throughout its history, the company Ganter has become especially well known for its precision-engineered indexing plungers – small mechanical components used to lock or secure moving parts. In addition, the company produces a wide range of manually operated standard parts, including industrial handles, clamping screws, levers, control knobs, and crank handles. These elements form the core of Ganter's product offering and are marketed under the name "Ganter Norm", which stands for standardized machine elements of highest quality.

Elesa+Ganter components are essential for engineers and designers alike and are used across a broad range of industries – from mechanical engineering, automation, electronics to medical devices, packaging, food and pharmaceutical production, and many others.



Otto Ganter GmbH & Co. KG headquarters in Furtwangen, Germany.

At Elesa+Ganter, traditional mechanical expertise goes hand in hand with modern technologies and production methods. The company continuously expands its product range while rarely discontinuing existing items – giving customers the confidence that even long-standing components will remain available for years to come. One impressive example: the very first Ganter catalog from 1912 already featured the GN 10, a Tri-Ball Handle (German: Kugelkurbel). A part that is still sold today under the same designation, with only minimal visual changes.



GN 10 Tri-Ball Handle.

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From a Broad Portfolio to High-Performing Solutions

Over time, and in cooperation with the Italian company Elesa, Ganter has developed into one of the world's leading suppliers of standardized machine elements – offering around 100.000 catalog items for a wide variety of industrial applications. These components are available in multiple material versions to suit different technical needs: from traditional steel and aluminum to corrosion-resistant stainless steel and high-performance plastics. Elesa+Ganter's portfolio is structured into 23 product groups and 14 High Performing Lines – including specialized solutions such as INOX (stainless steel), Hygienic Design, Super-Technopolymer, ESD-compatible parts, and explosion-proof components with ignition protection.

Elesa+Ganter components are used across virtually every industry – from mechanical engineering and automation to food processing, medical technology, and more. With over 130 patents and more than 128 international design awards, Elesa+Ganter is a proven innovation leader in its field. Its standardized parts are especially valued by manufacturers of capital equipment, machinery, and production systems. Thanks to international standards, most components are modular and easy to integrate into existing designs.

A key innovation is the Indexing Plunger: a mechanical element developed by Ganter that allows movable parts to be locked into position with precision and ease. The Indexing Plunger combines a spring and a retractable pin that engages into a hole or groove – securing components in place and enabling reliable, repeatable operation.

The current printed catalog spans over 2.000 pages and continues to be updated. In parallel, Elesa+Ganter places strong focus on digital services: the online platform offers high-quality 2D and 3D CAD data free of charge, as well as modern online shops with intuitive product selection, convenient payment options, and country-specific services.

Furtwangen: The Core of Innovation and Production

Ganter's headquarters in Furtwangen, Germany, has always been the beating heart of the company – and remains its central hub for development, production, and logistics. Today, the main site extends across 25.000 square meters and plays a key role in ensuring the global availability of its standard machine elements worldwide.

The plant brings together two essential pillars: a highly automated logistics center and a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. Each day, more than 1.000 parcels are shipped from Furtwangen to customers around the world. On the production side, Ganter operates a powerful machine fleet – including around 200 systems and machines, 30 industrial robots, and approximately 50 short- and long-turning lathes across its sites. This setup enables efficient and flexible manufacturing of standardized components – ready for fast delivery, no matter where in the world they are needed.

Along with the company's growth, employment in Furtwangen has increased significantly. Today, Ganter employs around 550 people. In addition to the main site, there is a second production facility in Rheinhausen near Freiburg. However, the headquarters in Furtwangen remains the core of development and production. It is the home to company management and the birthplace of all innovations.

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Inside the Production Process

We are going to see extracts from the entire production process – from raw material to finished product,” says Alexander Kellner, Team Leader International Sales, as he begins our tour of the Ganter headquarters. And he's right. We start in the warehouse, where the raw material is stored before processing. These are cut to size and moved through various machining steps – including automated bending systems and robotic feeders – that gradually shape them into standardized components.

From there, we pass through logistics and assembly areas, where smaller series are still handled manually, while large-volume orders are processed with full automation. The final production step is surface treatment: in the company's large powder coating facility, finishes are applied according to customer requirements. While a wide range of colors is technically possible, black remains by far the most popular – giving many components their distinctive appearance before they are packed and shipped around the world.



Modern production and logistics.

Customized Solutions and Manufacturing Flexibility

At Ganter, production combines modern automation with skilled manual work. Small orders – such as a few dozen parts – are usually assembled by hand. Larger quantities are produced automatically, including all processing and assembly steps. Thanks to advanced technology, even small batch sizes can be manufactured economically.

If a standard part doesn't meet the customer's needs, Elesa+Ganter also offers customized solutions. This includes special shapes, dimensions, threads, colors, surfaces, or even branding with the customer's logo. Custom parts based on technical drawings are also possible – and often just as cost-effective. On request, these parts can even be kept in stock and delivered as needed. This gives customers full flexibility and reliable supply.

Future Growth – Sustainable and Regional

Ganter is continuously modernizing its facilities – expanding production and storage capacity, investing in faster and more efficient technologies, and growing both globally and locally. In Furtwangen, the company's buildings have already been extended multiple times to meet increasing demand. And there is still room to grow: the surrounding valley continues to offer opportunities for future expansion.

But Ganter doesn't just invest in buildings and machines – the company also takes responsibility for its people. "Even as we've added more automation over the years, not a single employee has lost their job," says Axel Weber, Marketing Director at the plant. "We always find ways to use our employees' skills in other areas."

Ganter's strong connection to the region also shows in how the company supports its employees and invests in future talent. In Furtwangen, Ganter runs its own training and education center for apprentices and young technicians. One of the company's older production halls was transformed into a modern facility for practical training and internal development. By actively training new specialists, Ganter helps counter the regional shortage of skilled workers – and secures its own future at the same time.

A Business Model for Long-Term Stability

Ganter's business model is built on four strong pillars: continuous product innovation, in-house production, direct sales, and comprehensive customer service. This approach gives the company full control over product quality and availability. It also ensures flexibility – allowing Ganter to respond quickly to changing market conditions. Because its standard parts are used across many industries, Ganter remains stable and resilient, even in times of economic uncertainty.

Standard parts themselves play a crucial role in industrial engineering: their high level of standardization ensures compatibility across applications, while their virtually unlimited product life cycle guarantees long-term availability. With high production volumes, Elesa+Ganter can offer these components at competitive prices – supported by strong stock levels, fast delivery, and consistently high quality across a wide range of industries.

Milestones in the History of Ganter

1894 – Otto Ganter establishes the Otto Ganter Normteilefabrik in Furtwangen, at a time when the town was a center of watchmaking and precision mechanics – the ideal environment for launching a mechanical parts company.

1912 – The first catalog of standardized components is published. Known as the "Ganter Standard," it laid the foundation for standardized machine elements – five years before the introduction of the German DIN standard.

1971 – A strategic partnership is formed with Italian company Elesa (Monza). While Ganter specializes in metal parts, Elesa contributes expertise in plastic components – creating a perfectly complementary product range.

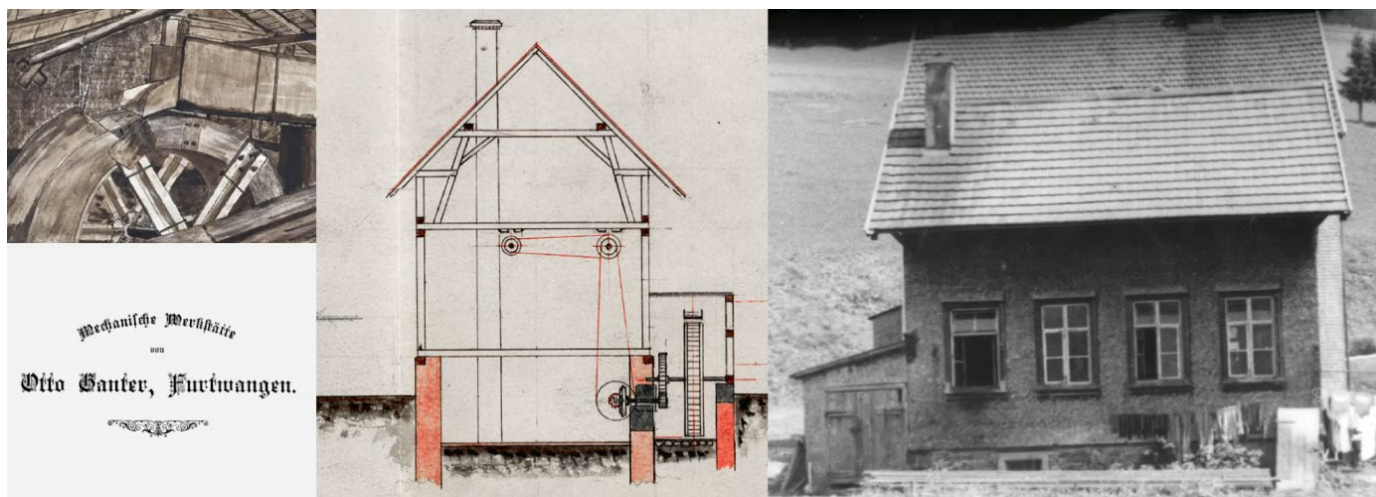
1977 – The product portfolio is expanded to include Elesa plastic parts.

2002 – Foundation of Elesa+Ganter Austria GmbH as the first joint subsidiary.

2015 – A new automated high-bay warehouse is opened at the Furtwangen site to increase logistics capacity and efficiency.

2021 – A modern production hall is added in Furtwangen, further expanding manufacturing capabilities.

Today – Now in its fourth generation of family ownership, Ganter has grown into one of the world's leading suppliers of standardized machine elements – following a tradition that goes back 125 years. The company operates 15 subsidiaries and serves customers in more than 70 countries through a strong global distribution network.



Historical views of the Ganter company.

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