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The most important changes to Version 2018 of the DGNB System

Following a comprehensive round of feedback in the second half of 2017, the German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB) has now released the final Version 2018 of the DGNB certification system for new buildings. This new version applies equally to nine different types of building uses. The following overview lists the most important modifications in comparison to the previous version of the DGNB System.

Introduction of a bonus system

- The DGNB is for the first time introducing bonuses for a total of 16 criteria and in the case of 'overfulfilment', these will have a positive impact on certification outcomes. The aim is to reward novel solutions that support the principles of the circular economy or make a particularly significant contribution to climate protection and other United Nations Agenda 2030 sustainability goals.

New instrument – Innovation Capacities:

- To promote new thinking and encourage people to step outside the comfort zone, and to support planning freedom and an openness to technology, the DGNB has introduced an instrument called Room to Innovate for around half of the updated criteria. The aim is to actively motivate people to pursue the best possible solutions for projects because they simply make the best sense. This can result in a new idea receiving equal consideration in the assessment, even though it may not yet be covered by the criteria.

Contribution of a building to overarching sustainability goals:

- For all criteria, consideration has now been given to different ways to link assessment to the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations or the official German sustainability strategy. The aim of this was to make relationships transparent. This is to show building owners how a building can contribute to the achievement of goals so this can be used in sustainability reporting. Similarly, the aim is to also motivate subsequent users and operators to focus more closely on sustainability goals and how they use a building.

Newly adopted criteria:

- The DGNB has introduced a new criterion called **Biodiversity** to address the contribution a building makes to variety in nature. For example, this could be a reflection of the quality of 'green spaces' and how a site helps preserve animal and plant life or encourages settlement.
- Two criteria, **User Communication** and **FM-Centric Planning**, reflect preparations made for a building to be operated sustainably. This can be achieved through the early and continual involvement of people who will use or manage a building. With the 'FM Check', early consideration can be given to the most important sustainability factors relating to facility management.

Fundamentally revised criteria:

- The two previous **Life Cycle Assessment** criteria have been merged into one. Greater emphasis is now placed on encouraging early and continual consideration of life cycle factors, even as early as the planning stage.

- To achieve maximum points for the criterion addressing **Local Environmental Impact**, it has to be proven that materials are monitored properly on the building site.
- The criterion relating to **Sustainable Resource Extraction** has been completely reworked. This addresses the ecological and social impact of a product on the entire value chain, from the sourcing of raw materials to processing. Specific recognition is also given to the use of secondary raw materials and the extent to which this alleviates resource extraction, thus promoting responsible sourcing.
- With the criterion **Life Cycle Cost**, the benchmarks have been comprehensively overhauled. A number of new indicators have also been introduced to encourage the early and ongoing consideration of the results of life cycle impact assessments, especially during planning.
- According to the DGNB's understanding of quality, the **Indoor Air Quality** criterion remains an all-or-nothing factor, acting as a reminder that measurements should be taken. Following the revision, the requirements have been tightened and target values for formaldehyde have been further reduced. This makes the DGNB System the most stringent system worldwide. Bonus points are also awarded for special measures aimed at protecting non-smokers and reducing fine particulate matter generated by photocopiers and printers.
- The previous criterion Adaptability of Technical Systems has been completely reworked and is now called **Use and Integration of Building Technology**. The aim is to promote building concepts that make the best possible use of low-tech solutions and integrate regenerative energy into required technical systems. It should also be possible to adapt buildings to changing usage requirements and technical innovations with the least possible cost and effort.
- With the **Immissions Control** criterion, which will be considered for all types of building use in the future, the issue of light pollution has now been included.
- The **Mobility Infrastructure** criterion will now reward car sharing and joint transportation, as well as the preparatory equipping of electric vehicles for bidirectional charging.
- Adopting an official DGNB recommendation or receiving certification with a DGNB Diamond will be recognised by the criterion **Process for Planning Building Design and Urban Quality**.
- With the criterion for **Quality Assurance on the Construction Site**, the emphasis has shifted towards proving that quality checks have been carried out on building materials during the actual construction process. To fulfil this criterion, site management must have received specific instruction and a person with the appropriate qualifications must continually examine materials as they are used. Points are also awarded for measures aimed at preventing mould or fungus.
- All four criteria affecting **Site Quality** have been adapted. These criteria no longer focus solely on capturing the current situation. Instead, they encourage people to actively consider the positive contributions buildings can make to the district and neighbourhood around them. Recognition will be given to novel options offered to the people who use buildings, or third parties (e.g. urban farming), as well as robust building methods that consider different environmental hazards.

Changes in the weighting of criteria:

- Previously, reference was made to the criteria relating to **Site Quality** when issuing DGNB certificates, but they did not count towards the overall score. With immediate effect these criteria now account for five per cent of the overall rating. The reason for this is that consciously considering the surrounding area and the situation within a district or neighbourhood can create a variety of positive synergies. Similarly, a building has an important contribution to make in adding value to a neighbourhood.

- **Process Quality** will now receive a stronger weighting of 12.5 per cent (previously 10 per cent). The DGNB has made this move to underscore the importance of involving planners and architects during all phases of the building process to safeguard the actual sustainability of a building.
- The criteria relating to **Technical Quality** will now have a 15 per cent weighting towards the overall score (previously 22.5 per cent). The reason for this is that the DGNB System is effectively open to all kinds of technology; it assesses the impact on a building resulting from the use of a certain technology or solution. As a result, many technical aspects relating to the certification of a building (such as energy efficiency or recyclable materials) are captured in detail by factors that transcend other criteria and are reflected in indicators or bonuses.
- There have also been changes in the weighting given to certain criteria. For example, more emphasis is now given to the criterion covering Local Environmental Impact, which revolves around the avoidance of harmful and hazardous materials, or the Indoor Air Quality criterion.

Optimised structure and design:

- Version 2018 can be applied to nine different types of buildings. This was an important step in making the different schemes more uniform and easier to understand.
- As well as adapting the criteria in terms of content, the DGNB has also optimised the underlying structure of the criteria and the design. For example, for each criterion the aim is described at the beginning, as is the benefit of using certain criteria. An indication is also given of any plans the DGNB has to redevelop criteria in the next version of the system.
- All technical appendices have been marked up in documentation to make it easier for users of the system to find their way around and read materials.