Press release

German seal of quality in the starting blocks
Successful launch: First DGNB convention on sustainable construction attracts 600 participants

Tübingen, Stuttgart in June 2008. As of now, there is a German system of certification that assesses the sustainability of buildings. At the DGNB convention "Consense", held on 17/18 June in Stuttgart, this system was presented to more than 600 participants from all sectors of the construction and real-estate industry. Its name: "German Sustainable Building Certificate" [DGNB]. It was developed jointly by the German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB) and the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs (BMVBS).

"The launch of the new certificate is very positive", emphasised Dr. Engelbert Lütke Daldrup, State Secretary. The construction and real-estate industry has now been provided with an instrument that allows the sustainability of individual buildings to be planned in a targeted manner. The aim is for the German certificate of quality to ensure that overall quality can be determined in an objective, measurable way. The certificate's characterisation, methodology and application should also outperform existing systems of certification.

"High-quality German real-estate is held in very high esteem on the international markets", noted DGNB President Professor Werner Sobek in his opening speech. As a result, he continued, he was constantly being asked: Where is the German system? And he was happy to be able to announce: "Here it is now, the
German system of certification. It comprehensively documents the quality of buildings.”

The new certificate of quality incorporates all aspects of sustainability into the assessment - ecological, economic and socio-cultural, as well as taking into consideration technology, processes and quality of location. Individual grades are awarded for the various areas, and the assessment of the building is then expressed in an overall grade. As evidence, the certified buildings receive a gold, silver or bronze plaque, depending on their classification in the grading system. “We have placed a great deal of importance on giving the assessment system a scientific basis”, explained Werner Sobek. “It thoroughly incorporates the life cycle concept,” he added. This is an important point, as the lion’s share of building costs arise during use; the same is true of environmental consequences.

The German certificate of quality differs from all the other systems on the market, thanks to its wide-ranging approach. “One of the Federal Government’s particular wishes was to drive forward this type of system for sustainable construction and to bring together the powers of politics and industry”, said Construction Director Hans-Dieter Hegner from the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs. He reminded the audience that the DGNB has only been in existence for one year. Founded by a few pioneers from the academic community and the world of practical applications, it now has a solid base of around 250 members, including many well-known names from the fields of planning, construction and real-estate.

Statistics indicate that approximately 40 per cent of annual energy consumption goes on running real-estate, revealed Professor Klaus Sedlbauer, board member of DGNB, using statistical data. Simply modernising 50 per cent of old buildings could generate a CO₂ saving of approximately 200 million tonnes a year. In the future, as a result of the explosion in energy costs, the value of real-estate will be judged even more by the resources consumed. This is already leading to increased responsibilities for planners and builders. The days in which responsibility for the project ended with completion are now well and truly a thing of the past.

Professor Thomas Lützkendorf of the University of Karlsruhe stressed the necessity of anticipating future standards and legal regulations in the new certification system. “As we have succeeded in guaranteeing a high degree of flexibility, transparency and good manageability in spite of all the complexity, we can indeed regard it as a high-quality second generation system.” In principle, the
performance of complete buildings is evaluated – that is "as built". It is not a matter of considering products, building elements or building components in isolation. "The system ensures that there remains the scope for structural solutions", stated Lützkendorf, who is a member of the DGNB.

"Other systems, such as the US LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – cannot easily be transferred to the European or German market", explained Dr. Eva Schmincke, board member of DGNB who is responsible for international affairs. This problem in transferring foreign systems is due to demanding building regulations and standards.

It is now necessary to anchor the certificate of quality, with its easily recognisable grades of "bronze", "silver" and "gold" in the market as quickly as possible. Dr. Volker Hauff, former minister and Chairman of the Council for Sustainable Development, also requested that politicians “act as beacons by enshrining the certification of public buildings in law".

A large crowd at Consense, the International Congress and Trade Fair for Sustainable Building. One of the well-known speakers was State Secretary Dr. Engelbert Lütke Daldrup (right)

Plenum at the DGNB’s Consense Convention