

Press Release

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Building efficiency is key to a sustainable energy future

Passive House Conference demonstrates potential of new builds and retrofits

Leipzig, Germany. Energy efficient construction has never been so easy – and this is due to the increasing availability of suitable components. The key focus at the International Passive House Conference 2015 in Leipzig was on the latest developments in this area. Experts from around the world presented the enormous savings potential of certified windows, insulation systems and ventilation systems among other things, and at the same time demonstrated their practical implementation. The lectures on 17 and 18 April demonstrated the importance of well-conceived and consistent action in the building sector for a successful transition to a sustainable energy future.

"Today the investment costs for improved efficiency of building components are exceptionally low; the cost difference is more than compensated through the saved energy costs," said Dr. Wolfgang Feist, Director of the Passive House Institute. The use of Passive House components is therefore profitable for the user also from an economic perspective. Thanks to an ever-growing range of products on the market, there are hardly any limitations to planning and architectural implementation. "The products that are required for the construction of highly energy efficient buildings provide a variety of solutions with reference to the type of building, range of functions, area of application and design," said Feist.

The German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Sigmar Gabriel was the patron of the conference. "The *Energiewende* is one of Germany's main projects for the future. However, it will only succeed if, in addition to the development of renewable energy, we also attach importance to the subject of energy efficiency," explained the Minister in the foreword to the Conference Proceedings. Energy efficiency, in particular for heating and cooling or for the supply of hot water and lighting in the building sector, constitutes the second pillar of the energy transition, following renewables.

For advancing this combination of efficiency and renewable energy, the Passive House Institute has developed new classes for certification: in addition to Passive House Classic, the classes Passive House Plus and Passive House Premium are now also available. Through these new classes, energy gains on or near the building, for example through photovoltaic

systems on the roof, can be taken into account according to clearly defined criteria. A system that evaluates the consumption and generation of “Primary Energy Renewable” (PER) forms the basis of this evaluation. The new classes will be introduced with the coming version of the planning tool PHPP (Passive House Planning Package), which was also presented in Leipzig.

Another focal point of the conference programme were completed projects that exemplify the implementation possibilities. Many Passive Houses in Leipzig and the surrounding region were also visited within the framework of excursions. Representatives of the administration of the City of Leipzig reported on their positive experiences with the construction of schools and kindergartens to the Passive House Standard.

Workshops relating to the two EU projects EuroPHit (step-by-step energy-efficient retrofitting) and PassREg (Passive House Regions with renewable energies) dealt with the various approaches adopted at the European level. Philippe Moseley of the European Commission’s agency EASME emphasised the significance of the established Passive House Standard as a basis for Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) as stipulated in the EU's Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, which will be coming into effect as of 2020. Also within the framework of the EuroPHit project, the “Component Award 2015” for high quality windows for building retrofits was presented in Leipzig. The winning products as well as many other Passive House components were displayed in the accompanying specialists' exhibition.

At the conclusion of the International Passive House Conference, yet another prize was awarded; Canadian Harold Orr received the Pioneer Award for his trailblazing work relating to energy efficient construction. In the late 1970s, in collaboration with a broad team of experts, the mechanical engineer experimented with many methods, which are now an established feature of tens of thousands of buildings. The Saskatchewan Conservation House in the town of Regina already had an excellent standard of thermal insulation, an airtight building envelope and, as one of the first in the world, a ventilation system with heat recovery.

Since 1997, the International Passive House Conference has been held annually by the Passive House Institute in different locations. The City of Leipzig, the Saxony Chamber of Architects and the University of Innsbruck were co-organisers of the 2015 Conference. Next year’s conference will take place in Darmstadt, Germany.

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