

„Congress of Healthy Indoorair– Indoorpollution – Prevention and Decontamination”

Accomplished by the Austrian Institute for Healthy and Ecological Building (IBO)

Introduction

The first international congress on healthy indoor-air in Austria took place on the 12th and 13th February 2004 in the new fair grounds Messezentrum Wien Neu. New possibilities in public house-building to make prevention's for minimising pollutants were presented. The spectrum of presentations covered different subjects like a calculation model for the estimation of consequential costs caused through polluted air, questions about the designing of standards dealing with indoor referring complaints and environmental and health compatible performance assignments.

Topics

Quality Assurance In The Area Of Objects

The presentations and workshops displayed how research and designing go hand in hand with practical experience and lead to new projects like “SIBAT- a new approach in the assessment of building materials to establish the quality of indoor-air” or like “passes for buildings” which help to reduce pollution already during the construction period. Manufacturers of industrial products and supplier of services get a free profit out of these researches.

Air condition, Ventilation And Hygiene

The essence of these presentations were somehow disillusioning: Even in high professional areas like in a large kitchen or in an intensive-unit of an hospital, where the need of a very high hygiene standard is obvious, clean solutions for air-conditioning are missing.

Workshop “Flooring”

Intense discussions between users, manufacturers, advisers and buyers made obvious where the main problems can be found, when the air quality becomes low. The “unhealthy” pressure on costs favour the cheap solutions. The placing and purchasing praxis are lacking of criteria for quality. In the performance assignment from providers for example it can be asked for a consignment of ecologically compatible products, systems or concepts. It was also strongly criticised that manufacturers are not obliged to declare all ingredients of their products.

Workshop “SIBAT”

The project SIBAT aims to develop a evaluation scheme, which displays the relevant human toxicological impact potential for the interior. A possible model for an evaluation scheme, the integration in the “TQ- building validation tool” and the already existing “Xbau-datenbank” for which such a scheme should be applied for, were shortly presented. After that, experts from different areas discussed the

expectations on such a scheme from the users point of use. It was also outlined which information manufacturers can and will finally offer.

Plenar Presentation: Evaluation of the economical effects of indoor environment by Prof. Dr. Olli Seppänen

The point is that “short-sighted money can be saved, but in the long term earnest-money has to be paid”. On the basis of calculation models it was showed that the drop in efficiency caused by polluted indoor air leads to immense costs. In Finland calculated costs of healthy complaints, like allergy, will count up to 3 milliard Euro a year. It has to be emphasised that costs for action, which will lead to an improved indoor-air quality have to be seen in a context with an improved health and productivity of employees and so are efficient investments.

Mould – Causes, Diagnosis And Sanitation

Compared to our ancestors we do have to call ourselves “stay-at-home”. Nowadays, we spend 90 % of our lifetime in the interior. Unfortunately, the behaving of users can't keep up with the pace of technical improvements in buildings. For example the shortcoming in airing after installing new tight windows can lead to an infestation with mould. So after a renovation information becomes very important.

Radon – Occurrence And Provision

Especially in Upper Austria a lot of work has been undertaken to evaluate the load of radon and to find specific solutions. Some of the presented knowledge could be of some value for the construction of public buildings.

Plenar Presentation: “ Are we measuring the right things?” By Peder Wolkoff

The title of the presentation of Peder Wolkoff from the National Institute of Occupational Health in Kopenhagen is provoking but logical. It is amazing how much effort and accuracy is needed to find the causal connections of unhealthy indoor air.

Complaints Caused By Polluted Indoor-Air

The focus of all presentations aims at prevention and avoidance. Dr. Hans-Peter Hutter from the “doctors for a healthy environment” criticises that in the medical area investments for the prevention are too little. Only few family doctors know how to prevent afflicted inhabitants from indoor caused complaints.

Another problem is that sources of stress can change quite rapidly. At present for example it is common to refresh the interior with odorous substances. A generation of products from Canada and the USA provided with flame retardant, threatens to flood over the market in Europe.

Further criticism focuses on the using of chemicals and substances by the industry although it is uncertain how they may affect our health.

Other Indoor-Relevant Themes: Smoking In The Interior

Univ. Ass. Dr. med. Hans Moshhammer from the Institute of Environmental Hygiene in Vienna gave a lecture on smoking in the interior. The conclusion is, that we already have enough knowledge, but we fail in realisation the obvious.

Air quality In Schools

The presentation on the situation of the indoor-air quality in schools was very interesting. There exist no law-binding threshold values for reference points. The quality of the indoor-air has aggravated because of the massive use of chemicals in building materials, the big number of students per class and the new tight windows. The main problem is: There is not enough air for learning. Diminishing performance, reduced retentiveness and reduced ability to concentrate as well as headaches ruin the pleasure of learning. As a distinct warning signal serve increased CO₂-concentrations. In the future "controlled room ventilation" could be a solution. A continuous CO₂-indication in classrooms seems not utopian any longer.

A Right For Healthy Indoor-Air

A healthy indoor-air is closely connected to an environmental friendly purchase. The project "Ecopurchase" from the Vienna government is working very successfully for some years. The aim is to position criteria which help to reduce pollutants in the performance description at the building contracts.

Indoor-air and its quality has become one of the main international topics. With about 200 participants from diverse disciplines knowledge for the praxis could be successfully discussed and valuable contacts could be established. The organisation of the congress succeeded in raising the public interest in Austria.