



## MEETINGS:review

ANALYSIS Social policy – and birds of prey – help Leipzig Messe gain sustainable certificate  
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by Ian Whitelung, Joint Editor in Chief



The first major German trade fair company to have committed itself to sustainability as its principle for responsible business management has recently received the Green Globe Certificate, recognised globally in the events sector.

The business concerned, Leipziger Messe, is also launching a process called Growth in Balance, with the aim of setting the pace for sustainability in the German trade fairs and exhibitions industry.

"We are the first major German trade fair company to have successfully undergone the Green Globe sustainability audit," confirms Leipziger Messe managing director Martin Buhl-Wagner. "This means we are transparent and measurable in our sustainability management."

### Competitive advantage

The Congress Center Leipzig (CCL) reports that it has been encountering the sustainability issue more frequently in its business dealings, with the conference sector increasingly strong on demanding "green meetings".

"Sustainability was becoming an important strategic competitive advantage. Leipzig wanted to lead the way for this process in Germany," says Buhl-Wagner.

Worldwide, there is a growing demand for green meetings, incentives, conferences and events, according to Dr Peter Zimmer, a sustainability expert and accredited Green Globe auditor. He's delighted that a major German trade fair company had taken up this issue and was pressing forward with it.

"Leipziger Messe passed around 125 audit categories," Zimmer reveals. "This made it obvious that it had a great deal to show in terms of ecological, economic and social sustainability."

This ranges from measures such as ice storage to optimise air-conditioning in the exhibition halls and traffic lights regulated to a change frequency in line with trade fair traffic flow, to the free use of public transport for exhibitors and visitors to fairs, and the company's subsidiary company fairgourmet using gas-powered vehicle for deliveries. The natural solution of introducing kestrels to deal with the problem of pigeon droppings on the exhibition halls won particular praise.

### Social conscience

"It has been shown that the Messe also has a great deal to offer in social terms," says Buhl-Wagner. This includes post-entry career training, regular information and qualification opportunities for employees, sport options and part-time employment models, such as flexitime, making it easier to better combine career and family. All this had impressed the auditors, Buhl-Wagner reports.

Leipziger Messe is now increasing its efforts to achieve what Buhl-Wagner describes as "a new equilibrium between economic growth and responsibility for the environment and society". The starting-point was the opening of the 2-Degree Office at the end of last year – a model office featuring information on how Messe employees can save resources and energy in their everyday working lives. This year will focus on workshops demonstrating how further sustainability goals can be achieved. There are also plans to draw up a sustainability statute, followed by a sustainability report.

“The certification was a status report, which also showed us where we still have work to do,” says Buhl-Wagner. “Our company wants and ought to go on growing, but long-term growth is only possible if the interests of the environment, our fellow men and our partners in the economic cycle are respected, and it is made possible for them to grow in cooperation with the Messe. By acting with a sustainable approach, we are investing in the future foundations of our existence.”

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