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Launching a unique pilot project in Germany, Koelnmesse is set to implement CO2-free heating at one of the world's largest trade fair grounds

Koelnmesse is launching an ambitious sustainability strategy to become climate-neutral five years earlier than planned. Alongside E.ON, Koelnmesse is consolidating its pioneering role as it plans to save 5,800 tonnes of CO2 per year from 2028 onwards at one of the world's largest city-centre trade fair sites. A partnership between E.ON and RheinEnergie will enable an innovative and effective combination of decentralised generation and centralised district heating.

Within the framework of a new energy partnership with E.ON and RheinEnergie, by 2028, Koelnmesse will have completely switched the heating supply for its trade fair grounds in Cologne - the eighth largest trade fair site in the world - to climate-friendly technology. The systems used will be powered by sustainable sources such as air, groundwater and the sun. In innovative combination with the RheinEnergie district heating system, this new heating concept will secure significant energy and CO2 savings amounting to 5,800 tonnes per year. These plans form part of the sustainability strategy that Koelnmesse is launching today, which involves the company and Koelnmesse's own events reaching the requirements for climate-neutrality as early as 2030. This is five years earlier than initially planned.

“We are pursuing our sustainability goals by implementing a concrete strategy that optimises all essential levers that trade fair companies can harness in order to drive ecological change. Energy supply is the most crucial of these levers. And this is why we are happy to have E.ON and RheinEnergie as strong partners by our side. Together, we will be creating a future in which sustainability and entrepreneurial success can go hand in hand,” explained Gerald Böse, President and Chief Executive Officer at Koelnmesse GmbH, upon signing the agreement.

“North Rhine-Westphalia is a central marketplace for international business and is driving forward technological and social developments. With its decision to move to climate-friendly technologies significantly earlier than planned, and alongside the implementation of an ambitious sustainability strategy, Koelnmesse is consolidating its position as a pioneer on the path towards climate neutrality. Its approach is an example of how municipal heat planning can be incorporated within practice, revealing how the heating transition can be fulfilled at the local level,” commented Mona Neubaur, Deputy Minister President for North Rhine-Westphalia, whilst

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underlining the relevance of this initiative.

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Reducing greenhouse gases is also a high priority for the city of Cologne, says Mayor of the City of Cologne, Henriette Reker. "Cologne has set itself the goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2035. We will only achieve this very ambitious goal if many people act consistently and courageously. Koelnmesse's sustainability strategy is an important building block on our joint path to climate neutrality."

"Our energy partnership is more than just a form of cooperation, it represents a commitment to sustainable change. Together, we are showing what the heating supply of the future will look like and how it can be implemented successfully for existing infrastructure too. The heating transition is an indispensable first step towards a successful energy transition and sustainable future. Innovative energy concepts like this one are critically important as they reconcile economic advantages with sustainability," says Patrick Lammers, Member of the Board for Customer Solutions at E.ON.

"Koelnmesse's initiative and the incorporation of two experienced energy partners will allow Koelnmesse to reach its ambitious decarbonisation goals. It will also aid climate protection within the city of Cologne more generally and is part of the strategy agreed upon between ourselves and the city. This means that the regional Rhineland Cooperation Agreement (Rheinlandkooperation) between E.ON and RheinEnergie will also prove its potential here in Cologne too," commented Andreas Feicht, Chair of the Board at RheinEnergie AG.

From the exhibition centre's current fossil-fuelled centralised energy supply, the new energy concept aims to create an intelligently integrated, climate-neutral overall system. The combination of various heat sources will help secure significant CO₂ savings and reduce dependence on individual energy sources. Moreover, Koelnmesse will also benefit from stable prices in the long term by using locally available sources of energy. The reorganisation of supply will have no impact on ongoing trade fair operations.

In the future, approximately three quarters of the required heat will stem from high-temperature heat pumps. They will supply the trade fair premises with both heating and cooling, depending on what is required. For this, the facilities will use renewable energy from groundwater and ambient air. Three electric boilers with a total output of 12 megawatts will meet temporary peaks in demand whilst also providing redundancy to ensure a reliable supply. Solar power will also be used to additionally support supply at Koelnmesse with sustainable energy.

When there is a particularly high need for heating - for example in winter - heat from the RheinEnergie Cologne district heating network will be used. However, in summer, green heat and waste heat from the cooling system will flow back into the district heating network - rather than remaining unused. This opening up of the district heating network for feedback from Koelnmesse is a pilot project within the framework of the Rhineland Cooperation Agreement. The project will contribute to the further decarbonisation of district heating by optimally balancing heat demand, local supply and surplus heat. CO₂ savings amounting to 5,800 tonnes will be

achieved by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources and optimising the supply system.

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Environmentally and socially responsible trade fairs and events

“At the trade fair venue in Cologne, we have been implementing various methods for working sustainably for close to a decade now. We are now able to harness further technical innovations that will enable us to make operations at our trade fair premises even more sustainable. As such, sustainable trade fair operations become a driver for a sustainable economy - on top of optimising its own processes, Koelnmesse also supports exhibitors in reaching their own climate goals too,” explained Prof. Dr. Christian Glasmacher, Member of the Executive Board and Senior Vice President Corporate Development and Sustainability, at the end of the extensive strategy development process. “We are pooling our sustainability activities into three central areas for action: Nature, Events and Community. Our goal is to take practical steps that go beyond climate neutrality, and which help us to shape a future in which responsibility and innovation lead to concrete improvements - both in terms of social development and in terms of conserving valuable resources.”

Nature: Climate and environmental protection

In addition to the new energy supply concept, within the “Nature” area of action, we are currently carrying out a gradual switch to LED lighting, which, in comparison to older technology, enables energy savings of approximately 50 %. Replacing ventilation systems can also cut energy usage by at least half. These and other measures will contribute to a considerable reduction in energy consumption in the long term. In terms of figures, this means that Koelnmesse is committing to reducing energy consumption by 35 % by 2030.

Koelnmesse is already saving 15,540 tonnes of CO₂ in normal operations by using 100 % green electricity in its buildings. The total CO₂ savings to be generated through the use of green electricity, the commissioning of the first large-scale photovoltaic system - scheduled for Spring 2024 - and the new heating concept will amount to 22,000 tonnes per year.

Events: Sustainable events

By 2030, 80 % of the materials used for stand system construction will consist of reusable materials. This applies to the construction elements and materials used for building trade fair and exhibition stands. In addition, the design of all floor coverings will be 100 % recyclable.

Community: Working together to make the events business more sustainable

To jointly advance the sustainable development of the event industry, Koelnmesse will continue to be involved in initiatives, projects and networks, and will further intensify these collaborations in the future. For example, as a member of the collaborative project Net Zero Carbon Events, Koelnmesse is part of a global

initiative which has the aim of reducing carbon emissions in the event sector to zero. To achieve this goal, it will identify suitable measures for its events around the world.

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Koelnmesse is guided in its actions by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to activities related to climate protection and the sustainable development of business, industry and infrastructure, Koelnmesse also supports measures related to health and well-being, as well as high-quality education.

Press images:

Under [this link](#), from 12 pm you will find photos of the contract signing and press conference which took place on 19 February 2024 as well as images of measures already implemented by Koelnmesse GmbH in the aim of fulfilling its sustainability goals.

About Koelnmesse:

Koelnmesse employs around 1,000 people. The city-centre trade fair at the heart of Europe occupies the third largest trade fair grounds in Germany and, spanning almost 400,000 square metres of hall and outdoor space, it numbers among the top ten worldwide. Each year, Koelnmesse organises and manages around 80 trade fairs, guest events and corporate events in Cologne and in the most important markets around the world. Its portfolio attracts over 54,000 exhibiting companies from 122 countries and approximately three million visitors from more than 200 nations.

Photo material for media representatives:

[Image database | Koelnmesse](#)

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