

PRESS RELEASE

Historic lettering restored – an acknowledgement of the destruction of diversity in the 1930s

Berlin, 9 April, 2014. The Deutsche Wohnen Group is complementing the refurbishment work on the Carl Legien Residential Estate in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, which was carried out in accordance with the estate's listed building status, by mounting an historic lettering at this UNESCO world cultural heritage site. The occasion for the restoration of this distinctive lettering is the 90th anniversary of the founding of GEHAG, which has belonged to the Deutsche Wohnen Group since 2007. The wording, which commemorated Carl Legien, a trade union leader at the time of the Weimar Republic, had presumably been removed as early as summer 1933.

As Michael Zahn, the CEO of Deutsche Wohnen AG, said, "It fills us with particular pride to be celebrating the 90th anniversary of GEHAG today here in the UNESCO residential estate, Carl Legien. Since 2012 the Carl Legien Estate has once again been the property of Deutsche Wohnen and, therefore, of GEHAG. When we make visible once again these historical connections and the quality of the original architectural designs, this is a clear indication of our strong attachment to Berlin and of the sense of responsibility we have for our holdings. With this structural addition we are also emphasising our commitment to quality and are, at the same time, acting as custodians of the legacy of GEHAG's architect, Bruno Taut." Mr Zahn also expressed his thanks to the Federal State of Berlin for assuming half of the costs and for its unbureaucratic support concerning the restoration of the lettering.

Berlin's chief curator and head of the Berlin Authority for the Protection of Monuments, Professor Jörg Haspel, expressed his praise for the architectural achievements of GEHAG. As he explained, "GEHAG was the housing association with the greatest architectural impact in early 20th century Berlin. In the 1920s the Classical Modernist movement in housing was practically invented within GEHAG. The fact that, as is the case here, a private housing company is taking monument protection so seriously is, of course, an advantage for Berlin as a tourist destination. However, it is more than this. The restoration of the lettering around 80 years after it was removed is a very



visible and symbolic act which counters the efforts of the National Socialists to agitate against the buildings and representatives of the Modernist movement in architecture.”

In April 1924 the large trade unions of that time, with the vigorous support of Berlin’s Director of Municipal Planning, Martin Wagner, founded “GEHAG – Gemeinnützige Heimstätten-, Spar- und Bau-Aktiengesellschaft” (a not-for-profit building society and housing corporation). As a housing company characterised by a desire to initiate social reform, GEHAG played an active and decisive role in dealing with the extreme housing shortage in Berlin following the First World War. From the very start GEHAG, together with its architect Bruno Taut, set exceptional architectural standards. The GEHAG housing estates, some of which are listed as UNESCO world cultural heritage sites, are a testimony today to the eventful history of this housing corporation.

Deutsche Wohnen

Deutsche Wohnen is one of the largest publicly listed residential property companies in Germany and Europe with a business focus on managing and developing its residential property portfolio. As at 31 December 2013 the portfolio comprises a total of 152,300 units, of which 150,200 are residential units and 2,100 are commercial properties. The company is listed in the Deutsche Börse’s MDAX and is also included in the leading indices EPRA/NAREIT and GPR 250.

Picture credits:

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Arthur Köster (historic photo)