

## Press Release

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## **Vonovia and the Ministry of Economic Affairs of North Rhine-Westphalia are jointly committed to carbon-neutral neighborhoods through innovation and research**

- **Andreas Pinkwart, North Rhine-Westphalian Minister of Economics: "An important contribution to a new sustainable energy policy and climate protection."**
- **Rolf Buch, CEO: "It would be careless to lose sight of climate protection. It just can't wait."**
- **Sector coupling and AI – intelligent distribution of energy.**

*Bochum, Germany, April 23, 2021.* Germany's leading housing company Vonovia and the Ministry of Economic Affairs of North Rhine-Westphalia are jointly committed to carbon-neutral neighborhoods through innovation and research. Vonovia has now opened the Energy Center of the Future (EZZ) in its housing estate in the Bochum suburb of Weitmar, where it will be researching innovative energy systems. The project is financed entirely from Vonovia's own funds. Prof. Dr. Andreas Pinkwart, the Economics Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, welcomed Vonovia's commitment and the newly built EZZ as an "important contribution to a new sustainable energy policy and climate protection".

Rolf Buch, CEO of Vonovia, emphasized at the opening of the EZZ: "It would be careless to lose sight of climate protection. It just can't wait. This is why we're carrying out research in Weitmar so we can find out how to make all our buildings climate-neutral by 2050. However, climate protection needs to be affordable for our tenants." The two-storey building with its distribution and power generation facilities will benefit 81 flats that have already been made energy-efficient and equipped with photovoltaic panels, adding a range of innovative technical energy features.

These features will include an electrolyzer for the production of hydrogen from electric power as well as fuel cells and heat pumps, all ensuring that adjacent buildings and households can be supplied with at least 60% carbon-free heating on a self-sufficient basis, i.e. using decentralized resources. 25% of the required power is generated by Vonovia locally, using its own photovoltaic panels on the roofs of its buildings.

At the same time, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia is funding a Vonovia research project in Weitmar where scientists from various Fraunhofer Institutes and also Ampeers Energy GmbH are developing a neighborhood based on innovative climate protection principles. During the opening of the EZZ, Economics Minister Andreas Pinkwart explained why North Rhine-Westphalia was supporting the project with 5.3 million euros: "With so many mid-20th century buildings, Weitmar in Bochum is an ideal pilot district, combining a wide range of technologies in innovative and intelligent ways with a view to reducing energy consumption and promoting sector coupling. It means that the energy supply of

an urban neighborhood can be made ecologically and economically efficient. The project will also provide important stimuli for other neighborhoods, helping us to create a climate-friendly Ruhr Area." Entitled *Innovative Neighborhood for Climate Protection*, the project was launched in 2020 and has received North Rhine-Westphalian state funding for three years.

The fact that Vonovia has launched as many as two research projects in Weitmar is not just due to its proximity to the corporate headquarters. The reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in buildings to almost zero cannot be realized or made economically viable through energy-efficient modernization and current technology alone. Vonovia has therefore decided to close the gap through extensive research and technical innovation.

These projects will be totally free for tenants. Furthermore, if they go well, Vonovia will try to apply the results to all its residential properties throughout Germany.

Vonovia's commitment to a binding climate path goes back to last year. The aim is to ensure climate neutrality for all its current buildings by 2050, while also achieving energy efficiency for around 3% of its property portfolio each year. On average, this will cost between €1.24 and €2.00 per square meter.

## About Vonovia

Vonovia offers a home to around one million people in Germany. The residential real estate company plays a central role in society, which is why Vonovia's activities are never focused exclusively on financial aspects, but also take social factors into account. Vonovia is helping to provide answers to the current challenges on the housing market. The company is committed to more climate protection, more senior-friendly apartments and a positive community spirit in its neighborhoods. In cooperation with social institutions and the municipal districts, Vonovia supports social and cultural projects that enrich community life. Vonovia is also helping to address a social issue that is particularly important at the moment: the construction of new apartments.

Our activities focus on our customers and their needs. On site, caretakers and our own craftsmen take care of our tenants' concerns. Being close to our customers ensures fast and reliable service. In addition, Vonovia invests generously in the maintenance of the buildings and develops housing-related services for a better quality of living. For answers to any questions in connection with lease agreements and ancillary expense bills, the central customer service center can be contacted via a regional service hotline as well as by email, fax, app or by post.

Vonovia has a workforce of more than 10,000 employees and its CEO is Rolf Buch.

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## **Additional Information:**

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