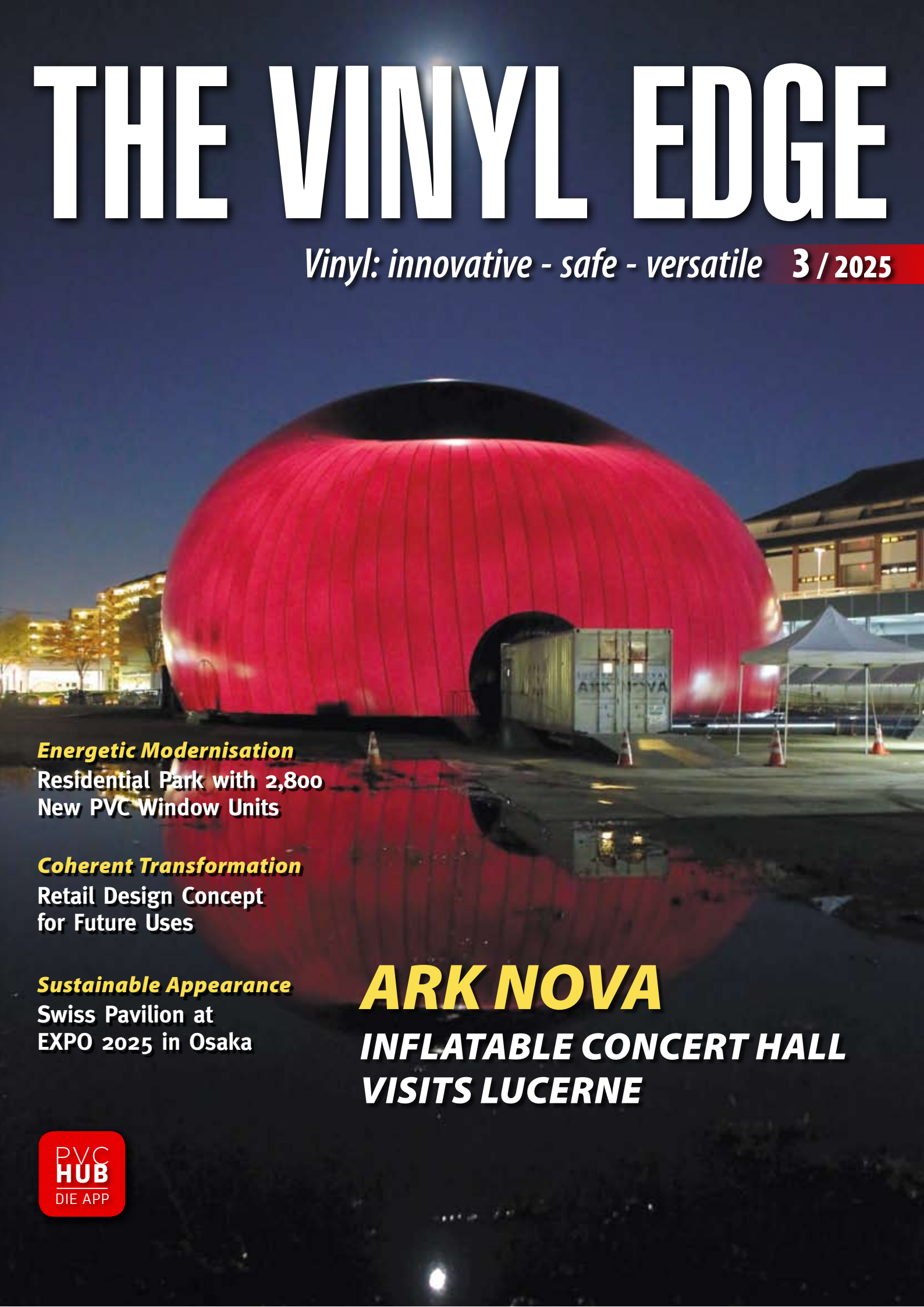
THE VINYL EDGE

Vinyl: innovative - safe - versatile **3 / 2025**



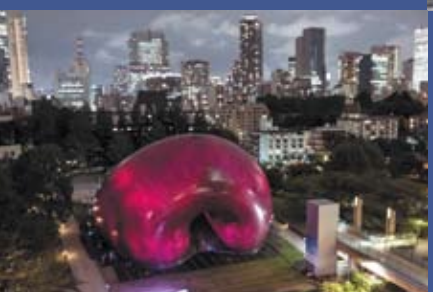
Energetic Modernisation
Residential Park with 2,800 New PVC Window Units

Coherent Transformation
Retail Design Concept for Future Uses

Sustainable Appearance
Swiss Pavilion at EXPO 2025 in Osaka

ARK NOVA
INFLATABLE CONCERT HALL VISITS LUCERNE

PVC HUB DIE APP



CONTENT

The new River Space district in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, with 154 residential and commercial units, has been fitted with black-grey energy-saving windows. Photo: GEALAN

PRODUCTS FOR TRANSITION

Innovative PVC building products promote the transition towards climate neutrality.

The move towards climate neutrality poses enormous challenges for the construction industry, as the building sector is responsible for around 30 percent of CO_2 emissions in Germany. Thanks to durable building products with an attractive price-performance ratio, the PVC industry offers effective solutions for achieving the ambitious climate protection targets.

Whether it's heat-insulating energy-saving windows, easy-care floor coverings or coated fabrics in textile architecture, PVC products offer impressive technical and attractive visual properties at comparatively low investment and maintenance costs. They demonstrate their performance and innovative strength particularly in the face of the greatest challenges of our time: affordable construction and housing, and climate protection.

Successful PVC Windows

PVC windows, which now account for almost 60 percent of the market in Germany, create a pleasant indoor climate and reduce energy consumption. Their smooth profiles are easy to clean and do not need to be painted. New products such as the VEKA Fine Structure decorative film line developed by VEKA open up a wide range of new design options. The surfaces with their fine texture and their matt appearance are reminiscent of powder-coated aluminium in terms of appearance and feel and go well with modern architectural styles such as the trendy industrial look. Innovative profiles based on renewable raw materials or made from recycled PVC now offer the same high quality standards as those made from virgin fossil-based PVC, but enable high CO_2 savings and promote the circular economy. PVC windows have been collected and recycled since the mid-1990s. In 2024, 396,677 tonnes of window profiles were recycled as part of VinylPlus®, the European sustainability commitment of the PVC industry.

Industrial-Style Profiles

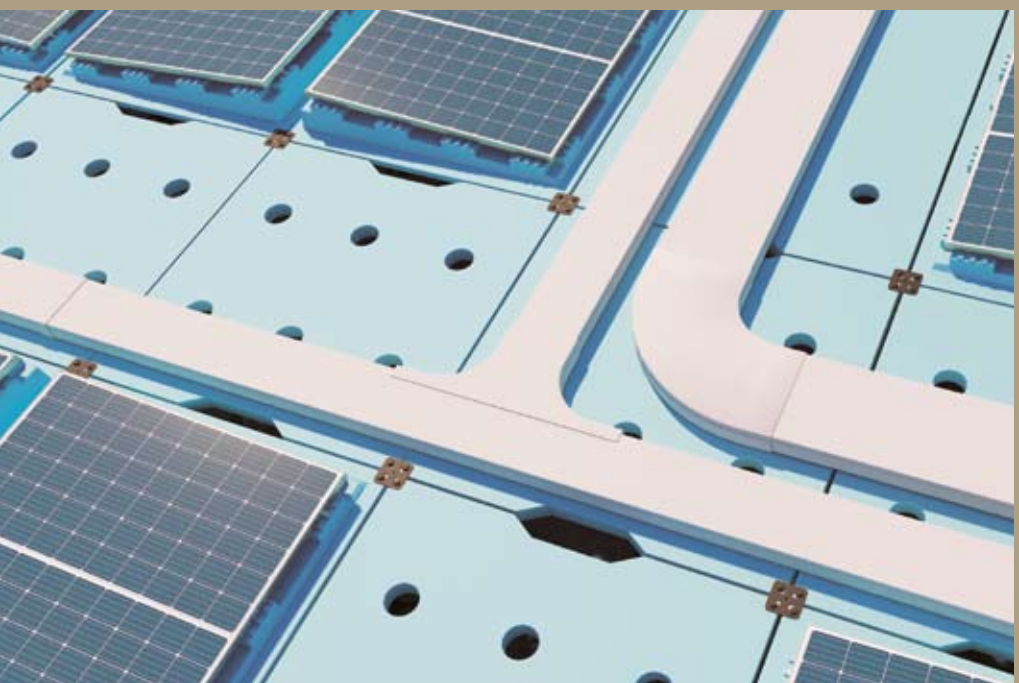
The River Space district currently under construction in Vilnius is an impressive example of both the technical and visual qualities of modern PVC windows. ››

Photo above and photo right: A floating PV system with over 12,000 photovoltaic modules has been installed on the Alqueva reservoir in Portugal. It is equipped with a corrosion-resistant PVC cable management system that is suitable for outdoor use. Photos: EDP Renewables/Unex

The building complex, with its 154 residential and commercial units, is creating a new district in the Lithuanian capital. Heat-insulating PVC windows with black-grey profiles from GEALAN characterise the brick façades of the buildings with their historic industrial style and ensure economical energy consumption.

Durable Flooring Solutions

PVC flooring is extremely resistant and durable. These properties are particularly beneficial in heavily frequented educational and healthcare facilities with high hygienic requirements. The 'rehamed physiotherapy practice' in Constance is a prime example of this. Vinyl flooring from PROJECT FLOORS was installed in this modern healthcare facility, covering an area of 700 square metres. The planks, with a 0.55 mm thick wear layer, are extremely robust and resistant, easy to clean hygienically and therefore offer low maintenance costs. The warm wood finish of the flooring also creates a feel-good atmosphere that actively supports the healing process of patients. Tarkett has developed modular click tiles made of vinyl for particularly heavy-duty use in high-traffic and commercial areas. Thanks to their surface finish, they offer high resistance to scratches and stains and are easy to clean. After use, the vinyl tiles can be recycled as part of Tarkett's ReStart® flooring take-back and recycling program to save CO_2. Other major flooring manufacturers also operate their own take-back and recycling systems. In addition, many vinyl floors already contain a proportion of recycled PVC to increase resource efficiency. ››



The PV system in Portugal, with its PVC cable routing system, was honoured at the European Sustainable Energy Awards 2023.

Photo: EDP Renewables/Unex

The easy-to-clean vinyl click tile flooring in this delicatessen department can bear loads of up to 6 tonnes and is suitable for commercial spaces with high foot traffic.
Photo: Tarkett

Cable Trays for PV Systems

Cable routing systems made of rigid PVC offer both mechanical protection and secure insulation in floating PV systems. The hybrid solar park built by EDP Renewables on the Alqueva reservoir in Portugal is impressive: a symbolic showcase project in the field of renewable energies with over 12,000 photovoltaic modules. The plant, with a capacity of 5 megawatts and a storage capacity of around 2 megawatt hours, currently supplies more than 30 percent of the population in the Portel and Moura regions. It combines technologies for generating energy from hydropower and photovoltaics with those for long-term and short-term storage. A cable routing system from Unex was used for the cabling of the solar modules, with a PVC material specially developed for this purpose, which has proven itself in cable support systems such as ducts, tracks and trays. The cable tray used in Portugal protects the cabling from weather-related corrosion, UV radiation and mechanical stress, thus ensuring the longevity of the systems. The insulating material also offers a high level of electrical safety. The floating PV system was awarded the European Commission's European Sustainable Energy Awards in the Innovation category in 2023.

Exemplary Innovations

Many companies in the PVC value chain and member companies of VinylPlus Deutschland will be showcasing their innovative strength at the world's leading trade fair, K 2025, in October. Here, too, the topics of circular economy and CO_2 reduction in products and companies play an important role, as does the technical performance of the applications. In addition, the special exhibition 'Plastics Shape the Future' by Plastics Europe Deutschland and Messe Düsseldorf will focus, among other things, on the current status and the latest circular economy developments in PVC construction products. Another important forum for innovation is the Inovyn Awards, which are regularly presented during the K-fair by PVC manufacturer INEOS Inovyn. This year, particularly sustainable and groundbreaking projects will be honoured in the categories of climate neutrality and CO_2 reduction, circular economy, and performance & design.

INFO www.vinyl-erleben.de

This physiotherapy practice in Constance was designed with 700 square metres of easy-care, highly durable design flooring in a warm wood finish.
Photo: PROJECT FLOORS

Fit for the future: the Citywohnpark in Duisburg with its identity-defining colour concept after renovation.

Photo: © Ralph Richter, Düsseldorf

MODERNIZATION CREATES FUTURE

The Citywohnpark in Duisburg, built in the 1970s, is getting a new update with 2,800 new PVC window units made from VEKA profiles.

The former showpiece property with a total of 421 flats on the outskirts of Duisburg city centre in Duisburg-Hochfeld is one of the largest residential complexes owned by GEBAG Duisburger Baugesellschaft mbH and still plays an important role in its portfolio today. However, the last 50 years have certainly left their mark on the 16 buildings. This is why GEBAG put out a tender in 2019 for a comprehensive urban and architectural renovation of the two meandering building complexes with a gross floor area of around 51,000 m².

The declared goal was to modernise and upgrade the neighbourhood, which is home to over 1,200 people from 30 nations. The focus was on both the active participation of the residents and the ecological assessment. The winning design by Druschke Architekten from Duisburg in cooperation with wbp Landschaftsarchitekten from Bochum is correspondingly sustainable: in addition to the structural upgrading of the building fabric, particular attention was paid to the optimisation of social aspects. Implementation has been taking place in four consecutive construction phases since March 2021, with overall completion planned for mid-2026.

Coloured Façade Concept

The most striking innovation of the modernised Citywohnpark is the façade concept.

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Photos above and downstairs: Unmistakable style: window profiles laminated with wood like finishes harmoniously complement the colour scheme.

It accentuates the six building tops with colour, creating a pixel-like landscape in light grey, green and yellow, which provides orientation and rhythm within the ensemble. The colour palette is also used on façade parapets, in stairwells, auxiliary buildings and on the playground equipment in the outdoor areas. A less obvious but equally important part of the overall concept is that the energy upgrade and continued use of the existing building stock will save approximately 14,500 tonnes of CO_2 over the next 50 years. This means that, from an emissions perspective, the renovation saves up to 53% more emissions than other scenarios such as demolition and new construction or continued use without renovation.

2,800 New PVC Windows

VEKA SOFTLINE 82 window profiles play a key role in meeting the associated energy requirements, among other things. With a total of 2,800 window units to be replaced, the project benefits both from the good price-performance ratio and the excellent structural properties of the PVC window profile.

The new windows are covered on the outside with a decorative film in a real wood look, emphasising the classic window appearance in the strictly geometrically segmented façade structure. Golden Oak was chosen as the decorative finish, as it blends harmoniously with all the colours used on the façade. The interior views of the profiles are kept in neutral white to give residents free rein in their design options.

INFO www.veka.de

Katrin Basler (chemical laboratory assistant at Evonik Oxeno) checks the yellowness-index of a weathering sample of a PVC roofing membrane that has been exposed for 24 months.

Photo: Evonik Oxeno

DURABLE CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS

Flexible PVC products such as flooring and coated fabrics are particularly durable and resistant thanks to the plasticizer ELATUR® DINCD.

The plasticizer ELATUR® DINCD manufactured by Evonik Oxeno GmbH & Co. KG is suitable for demanding exterior and interior products due to its excellent UV resistance, outstanding low-temperature flexibility and very low volatility. These include numerous applications in the construction industry, such as floor coverings, coated fabrics, roofing membranes, cables and wallcoverings. This has been demonstrated by laboratory tests and corresponding feedback from customers.

Coated fabrics play an important role in textile architecture, for example for roofing large football stadiums or smaller sports facilities for popular sports. Thanks to the innovative plasticizer, PVC-coated membranes are particularly resistant to impacts from weather and UV irradiation and also offer excellent low-temperature flexibility. The plasticizer is also used in PVC-coated truck tarpaulins, which are permanently exposed to the weather and extreme temperature fluctuations on the road, ensuring the longevity of the tarpaulins.

High Indoor Air Quality

The very low volatility of the plasticizer reduces emissions from PVC products, thereby ensuring good indoor air quality. This applies, for example, to vinyl flooring and wallcoverings, popular applications for interior design with a very good emission profile. At the same time, the products offer enormous design variety, are easy to clean hygienically and are durable. They therefore impress with both their good visual and functional qualities.

Tested Properties

Evonik Oxeno tests the performance of PVC products not only in the laboratory, but also under real outdoor conditions. ››

Thanks to the use of ELATUR® DINCD, PVC flooring offers a very good emission profile and thus high indoor air quality. Photo: Evonik Oxeno/AdobeStock

Oxeno's application technology team carries out UV and weather resistance tests on roofing membranes, tarpaulins and coated textiles, among others. These tests are performed at specially equipped outdoor weathering stations on one of the company's buildings in Marl. External service providers also test the products under extreme weather conditions – dry and hot in Arizona and humid and warm in Florida. Roofing membranes, which must withstand weathering for at least 20 years or longer, are installed outdoors on special roof constructions for a 24 months testing period. The subsequent determination of the yellowness-index provides information about colour changes or yellowing of the weathering sample. Additional tests are carried out on mechanical strength, volatility and cold flexibility in order to assess the product properties in comparison with other common plasticizers and to guarantee a long service life.

Lower CO_2 Emissions

The ELATUR® DINCD plasticizer is easy to process, particularly in plastisol applications, due to its low viscosity. It also makes PVC products flexible and pliable. Evonik Oxeno offers its product in both standard fossil-based and bio-based versions, as well as a bio-circular version made from second-generation waste and residues, for example from the food industry. In the latter eCO types, renewable or circular raw materials are used via the mass balance approach to reduce CO_2 emissions. With ISCC Plus and ISCC EU certification (International Sustainability and Carbon Certification), the plasticizer manufacturer has certified the traceability of sustainable raw materials in the supply chain for its products manufactured in Marl and Antwerp. In addition, the company markets a fossil-based variant of the product based on green electricity under the name 'ELATUR® DINCD GREEN POWER'.

Information on the entire plasticizer portfolio is available on the digital platform myFLEXINO®, which offers a wealth of technical content and documents as well as summarised expertise from application technology.

INFO

Renewable energies are increasingly being used for energy-efficient PVC production in the interests of climate protection.
Photo: shutterstock/Orbia Polymer Solutions (Vestolit)

SUSTAINABILITY MEETS PERFORMANCE

With innovative PVC solutions, Orbia Vestolit is setting the course for a successful future for the plastics industry.

Orbia Polymer Solutions (Vestolit) represents cutting-edge PVC solutions driven by sustainability, innovation and partnership. With the ambition to create products that deliver today and endure tomorrow, the PVC manufacturer is setting new benchmarks for a responsible and high-performance plastics industry with its FUTURE FIT® PVC.

The new generation of PVC enables a reduced carbon footprint through the use of recycled raw materials, bio-attributed materials and energy-efficient processes. The PVC manufacturer is thus making an active contribution to the circular economy and to achieving global climate targets.

High Quality – Extensive Portfolio
Customers rely on a world-leading portfolio of PVC grades. Whether for construction, infrastructure, packaging or special applications, the products meet the highest technical requirements and stand for durability, safety and performance. In the construction sector, window profiles, pipes, cables and special applications made with FUTURE FIT® PVC are the answer to increasing demands for environmental compatibility, recyclability and regulatory compliance. The PVC solutions are REACH-compliant, recyclable and ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

Innovation with Responsibility
For over 75 years, Orbia Vestolit has been developing innovative vinyl solutions with the aim of continuously expanding the strengths of PVC as a sustainable, efficient and future-proof plastic. Its strength lies in the combination of experience and innovative power. As part of Orbia, Vestolit thinks globally and acts locally.

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Recycled raw materials, bio-attributed materials and energy-efficient processes reduce CO_2 emissions in PVC production.

Customers are supported on their journey towards more sustainable value chains – in a spirit of partnership, solution-oriented and reliable.

Experts from research and development, logistics and customer service bring comprehensive problem-solving expertise to the table and support customers as reliable partners. Together, they find solutions to individual challenges – quickly, practically and with real added value.

INFO www.vestolit.com

FUTURE FIT® PVC actively contributes to the circular economy and to achieving global climate targets.

EXPERIENCED PVC MANUFACTURER

Orbia's Polymer Solutions Business Vestolit is one of the world's leading suppliers of raw materials for PVC specialities and operates Europe's largest fully integrated PVC production facility in Marl, Germany. With over 75 years of experience and a long-standing commitment to efficient production with low resource consumption, the company offers durable and high-performance products that are valued by leading industry partners and used in numerous everyday applications – from automotive, construction and infrastructure to household products and medical materials.

With around 2,500 employees at 13 production sites and three research and development centres in North, Central and South America as well as in Europe, Orbia Vestolit supplies more than 80 countries worldwide via a global distribution network.

Photos: shutterstock/Orbia Polymer Solutions (Vestolit)

ALWAYS UP TO DATE WITH THE APP "PVC HUB"

For ten years, AGPU MEDIA has been compiling reliable information from experts on PVC in the PVC HUB app, bringing together the latest knowledge on the material, products in use, consumer protection and the environment, including recycling and sustainable development. The PVC HUB app offers experts from Germany, Europe and around the world a comprehensive knowledge platform. It is available for devices running Apple iOS and Google Android operating systems and can be downloaded from the respective app stores. In addition, all content in the app is also available in a desktop version.

IMPRINT

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Cover picture: Inflatable concert hall Ark Nova made of PVC-coated polyester fabric, Sendai 2014
Photo: Lucerne Festival

EDITORIAL

ACTING TOGETHER

The road to joint, decisive action on climate protection is rocky. This is evident from the failed three-year negotiations between the approximately 180 participating countries on a global agreement against plastic pollution. While Germany and more than 100 other countries are advocating particularly ambitious goals that call for a functioning circular economy and restrictions on plastic production, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Russia only want to limit themselves to better waste management.

Plastics Europe, the Brussels-based association of plastics manufacturers, aims to end plastic pollution by 2040 through the transition to a climate-neutral circular economy, with all plastics being handled responsibly during production, use and end-of-life. The PVC industry supports the same goals with its value chain for its own material. The examples in this issue show how this can be achieved. High-performance, durable PVC building products such as windows, floor coverings, pipes and coated textiles offer attractive value for money and contribute to both climate protection and affordable housing. The use of non-fossil raw materials and energy-efficient manufacturing processes reduce the carbon footprint. The recycling of PVC building products such as windows, floor coverings and pipes, which has been practised successfully for many years, promotes the circular economy and increases resource efficiency. Last year alone, around 725,000 tonnes of PVC waste were recycled across Europe as part of VinylPlus®, which corresponds to 35% of the PVC waste stream.

The reuse of used materials and entire building solutions is becoming increasingly attractive. A striking example of this is the inflatable concert hall Ark Nova, which toured several locations after the earthquake in Japan almost 15 years ago and has now been rebuilt in Lucerne, the place where it was originally conceived, for concerts. The Swiss pavilion at the EXPO in Osaka, with its five spheres, is also to be dismantled and rebuilt elsewhere: another remarkable example of responsible, resource-saving reuse.

Dr. Alexander Kronimus
Editor of STARKE SEITEN/THE VINYL EDGE

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Students created an innovative retail design studio with a wide range of possible uses on a vacant space in Düsseldorf's KÖ Galerie. Photo: Simon Fricke

RETAIL DESIGN REIMAGINED

A retail design studio developed by students has opened in Düsseldorf's KÖ Galerie.

The 'Retail Design StudioKÖ' was created by students from the Design Department of the Peter Behrens School of Arts at Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences. The project involved transforming a 150 square metre vacant space on the first floor of the luxurious KÖ Galerie into a multifunctional room for students. Custom-made PVC products were also used in the project.

Over-the-counter commerce is increasingly migrating to digital platforms, freeing up large retail spaces. These could be repurposed for cultural, social and medical uses or educational institutions to promote a vibrant public life. Under the guidance of Professor Bernhard Franken, course director for Retail Design in the Design Department, students demonstrated what the transformation of retail space into mixed-use properties could look like in practice with a prototype they developed themselves.

Flexibly Usable Space

In this project, which AGPU MEDIA GmbH supported together with other partners from the business community, a vacant space within Düsseldorf's KÖ Galerie, an exclusive shopping centre on the eponymous Königsallee that spans three floors, was redesigned. The result is a new work area with a flexible usage concept that students can use as an exhibition space, event location, teaching room and workplace.

Versatile Modular Furniture

The modular furniture system 'The Studio Playground' by Viktoria Klinger is also part of the exhibition, consisting of unique pieces specially made for this purpose.

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This multifunctional piece of furniture made from raw chipboard, UPB boards and PVC pipes made of recyclate is part of the Retail Design Studio. Photo: Viktoria Klinger

She developed it specifically for co-working and presentation areas as part of her master's thesis for the student project 'Modular Furniture Concepts for the KÖ Gallery in Düsseldorf'. The furniture, which is easy to assemble and disassemble, consists of three basic elements that can be used as bench, table or bar table. They are made from resource-saving products such as recyclate pipes from Hundhausen Kunststofftechnik GmbH, which are made from shredded business cards, and UPB boards from Resysta, which consist of 60% rice husks, a waste product from rice production. In addition, digitally printed vinyl flooring was laid in one section of the room. It clearly separates the lounge from the other areas. Vinyl floor coverings are often used in high-traffic areas in retail, healthcare and educational facilities because they are extremely easy to clean, hard-wearing and therefore durable. Thanks to their customisability, they are an ideal advertising medium in retail.

INFO www.vinyl-erleben.de

A part of the new work area was designed with digitally printed vinyl flooring. Photo: visuals united AG

Westlake Vinnolit reduces the carbon footprint of PVC with renewable electricity and bio-based or circular ethylene. Photo: Westlake Vinnolit

THE FUTURE IS 'LOW CARBON'

Westlake Vinnolit produces PVC using green electricity and bio-based or circular ethylene.

PVC is one of the most important plastics worldwide and is indispensable in many industries, such as construction, automotive and medical technology. The use of renewable electricity and bio- or circular-based ethylene reduces the carbon footprint of PVC, as Westlake Vinnolit demonstrates with its Vinnolit GreenVin® product line – a new generation of PVC.

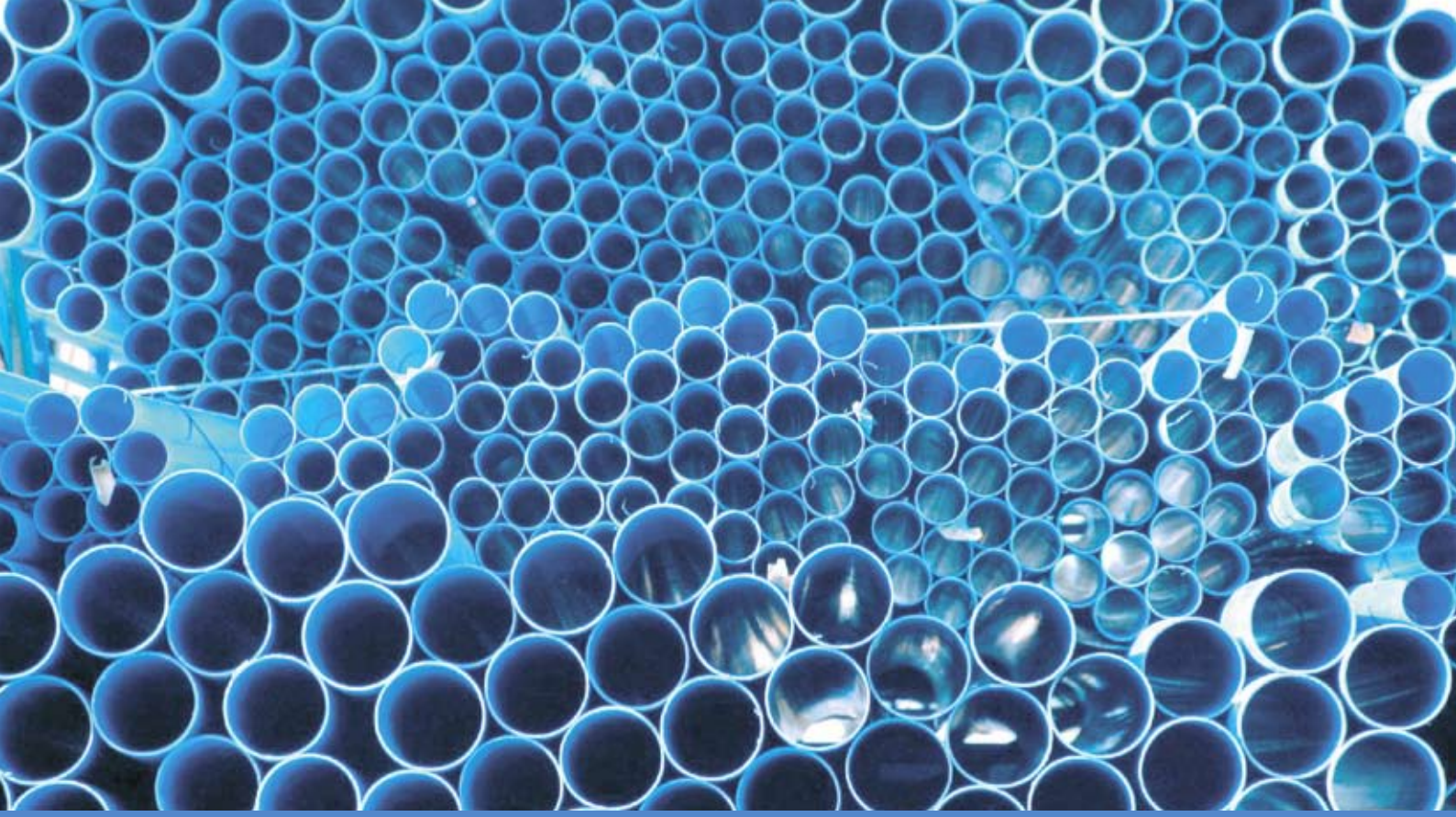
Energy plays an important role in the production of PVC. This is precisely where the company comes in with its GreenVin® products, using 100 percent renewable electricity based on high-quality Guarantees of Origin (GOs) for its entire production chain, from chlorine to PVC. This reduces CO_2 emissions by around 30 percent compared to conventionally produced ®Vinnolit PVC – with identical technical properties and the same product quality. The respective carbon footprint for the entire product portfolio was calculated in accordance with the DIN EN ISO 14067 standard and the PCF Guideline (Version 3) of 'Together for Sustainability (TfS)' and certified by TÜV Rheinland. The use of renewable electricity – alongside the continuous improvement of energy efficiency in production processes – is a key step on the path to a completely CO_2-neutral PVC production.

Approximately 30 Percent Less CO_2

Many customers already rely on Vinnolit GreenVin® to effectively reduce CO_2 emissions. This PVC is used in all common market segments: from floor coverings, window profiles and films, to technical coatings, artificial leather and automotive interiors, to vinyl records.

Biomass Replaces Fossil Fuels

With GreenVin® bio-attributed PVC, Westlake Vinnolit offers an even more sustainable alternative: this PVC is additionally produced with renewable ethylene from second-generation biomass, such as plant residues and waste materials that do not compete with food production. ››



GreenVin® bio-attributed PVC – made from renewable ethylene derived from biomass – is used in PVC pipes, window profiles, floor coverings, coated fabrics and as artificial leather in the automotive industry, among other things.
Photo: shutterstock/Westlake Vinnolit

GreenVin® bio-attributed PVC is certified according to ISCC PLUS mass balance. For PVC processors and users, nothing changes here either: the specification, quality, durability and performance of the products are identical to conventional alternatives.

Circular Ethylene from Plastic Waste

PVC is highly mechanically recyclable, and this recycling technology remains the method of choice for ecological and economic reasons. However, thermochemical recycling processes are also being developed for plastic waste that is difficult to recycle and would otherwise end up in landfill or incineration. New to the GreenVin® portfolio is circular-attributed PVC, which is produced using circular ethylene based on mixed plastic packaging waste. This product is also mass-balanced according to ISCC PLUS and guarantees the same product quality as when using primary fossil raw materials.

A New Generation of PVC

PVC is one of the most important plastics worldwide and demonstrates its strengths every day in many applications. These include not only highly durable construction products such as profiles for energy-saving windows and doors, easy to clean floor coverings, lightweight pipes and coated fabrics for roofings and façade membranes, but also applications in the automotive industry. PVC is also indispensable in medical technology: blood bags, oxygen masks and infusion tubes make an important contribution to patient care every day.

With GreenVin®, Westlake Vinnolit is helping to make this important material more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

INFO www.westlakevinnolit.com

The new generation of PVC is also used in coated fabrics for truck tarpaulins.
Photo: shutterstock/Westlake Vinnolit

Switzerland presents itself as a centre for cutting-edge technology and innovation in the bright exhibition spheres at EXPO 2025 in Osaka.
Photo: FDFA, Presence Switzerland

SPHERICAL APPEARANCE

Switzerland is presenting its innovations at EXPO 2025 in Osaka until mid-October in five walk-in spheres constructed using lightweight materials. The temporary structure is an impressive example of particularly climate-friendly construction using innovative building products. These include PVC-coated membranes inside the spheres.

Under the motto 'From Heidi to High-Tech', Switzerland is positioning itself as a centre for cutting-edge technology and innovation with its alpine heritage. The three topics 'Life' (life sciences, health and nutrition), 'Planet' (environment, sustainability, climate and energy) and 'Augmented Human' (robotics and artificial intelligence) will be examined one after the other, to demonstrate Switzerland's innovative power in the service of sustainability and prosperity.

PVC-Coated Membranes

The Swiss innovations are presented in five lightweight pavilions and a four-storey building at the rear of the exhibition area. The interiors of the four pneumatic, walk-in spheres on the ground were designed with PVC-coated polyester fabric, while the exteriors were covered with ETFE film. The EXPO presentation has the smallest ecological footprint of any Swiss pavilion to date. If a buyer is found, it will be dismantled after the world exhibition and rebuilt elsewhere. Otherwise, recyclable components will be reused to promote the circular economy and thereby increase resource efficiency.

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The paper installation surrounding this round pavilion depicts Switzerland's breathtaking landscapes and milestones in the country's development.
Photo: FDFA, Presence Switzerland

Experienced Partners

NÜSSLI, together with Manuel Herz Architekten and BELLPRAT PARTNER, won the tender for the design, construction and dismantling of the Swiss pavilion. The structural engineering firm schlaich bergermann partner - sbp, which also played an active role in the conversion of the MHP Arena Stuttgart with its iconic PVC-coated membrane roof, is responsible for the structural design.

INFO www.vinyl-erleben.de

The Swiss Pavilion consists of five walk-in spheres and a four-storey building in the background.
Photo: sbp / David Sommer

In 2017, the aubergine-coloured concert hall made a stop in the Japanese metropolis of Tokyo. Photo: Lucerne Festival

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

The inflatable concert hall Ark Nova travels to Lucerne, the place where the idea originated.

When Japan was hit by a devastating earthquake and subsequent tsunami on 11 March 2011, the idea arose in Switzerland to bring a little hope and joy back into the lives of traumatised people through music concerts. The venue for this was the world's first mobile, inflatable concert hall, Ark Nova. After several stops in Japan, the ark, made of PVC-coated polyester fabric, recently arrived in Lucerne, its spiritual birthplace.

The Lucerne Festival Ark Nova concert series visited Matsushima, Sendai, Fukushima and Tokyo in Japan between 2013 and 2017. The aubergine-coloured membrane shell with its round, soft shapes provided comfort and warmth to people affected by the natural disaster in the midst of a severely devastated environment. The concerts made a cultural contribution to the reconstruction of the country and at the same time were a symbol of hope and renewal. Ark Nova was initiated by Michael Haefliger, artistic director of the Lucerne Festival for classical music, and concert agent Masahide Kajimoto. The design was created by internationally renowned artist Sir Anish Kapoor and architect and Pritzker Prize winner Arata Isozaki who has since passed away.

Music Gives Hope

The Ark Nova hall is made of six-millimetre-thick PVC-coated polyester fabric and does not require any additional supporting structure. At the Swiss location, it was inflated in a short time by three blowers using sustainably generated electricity and kept in shape by the overpressure. The heat generated by solar input and visitors is dissipated at the highest point of the hall via an air outlet.

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The temporary hall in Fukushima during a concert in 2015.

The amount of air dissipated corresponds to the amount of fresh air flowing in, ensuring a constant exchange.

Unique Atmosphere

From a bird's eye view, the soft building envelope with its inversion in the middle resembles an oversized doughnut. Inside, however, guests are greeted by an organic concert hall bathed in aubergine and pink, with a geometric structure created by numerous welded seams. With an interior height of almost 18 metres and a total length of 36 metres, the music venue is of considerable size.

Inflatable Giant Sculpture

The concert hall joins the ranks of giant inflatable sculptures by London-based artist and sculptor Sir Anish Kapoor. These include, for example, the membrane sculpture 'Leviathan' in the Grand Palais in Paris, also made of PVC-coated polyester fabric, which caused a worldwide sensation at Monumenta 2011. The Tokyo-based firm Isozaki, Aoki & Associates was responsible for the implementation of Ark Nova on site in Japan. The main focus here was on reaching as many people affected by the disaster as possible with the events. ››

Photos: Lucerne Festival

The inflatable music hall Ark Nova was the venue for 35 short concerts on the Lidowiese in Lucerne in September.

In 2014, the concert hall made of PVC-coated polyester was on display in Sendai, Japan. Photo: Lucerne Festival

Up to 500 people were able to attend each of the concerts in Japan.

A Cloud of Sound in Lucerne

The spectacular mobile concert hall made a guest appearance in Lucerne from 4 to 14 September on the Lidowiese by Lake Lucerne, offering space for 300 people. This was its first visit to Europe, and it hosted 35 concerts, each lasting 45 minutes, featuring a variety of musical styles: from classical and folk music to jazz and pop. Music lovers could decide for themselves how much they wanted to spend on concert tickets. Prices started at 15 Swiss francs. All proceeds will go to the Lucerne Festival's 'Music-for-Future' projects, which promote young musical talents. An accompanying exhibition on Ark Nova is on display at the Hans Erni Museum in Lucerne until 12 October.

INFO www.arknova.ch