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Introduction and welcome

This is the first edition of the conference proceedings to be published in digital form on a USB Stick. As with the previous LEHM conferences, it contains the conference papers in both German and English along with many of the poster presentations in text form. This move is both a response to increasing digitisation and the many advantages it offers, as well as a contribution towards minimising our use of resources. It allows us to provide more information and images on the LEHM 2016 than was previously possible in printed form, and all texts are now searchable. As an added bonus, the USB stick also contains the conference proceedings of the last three LEHM conferences in 2004 (Leipzig), 2008 (Koblenz) and 2012 (Weimar).

I would like to welcome you to the 7th International Conference on Building with Earth here in Weimar. And I welcome you in my capacity as the new chair of the board of the Dachverband Lehm, taking over from Horst Schröder, who after twenty years of dedicated voluntary work for the association retired from the position in 2012. I would like to take this opportunity before our international guests to thank him officially on all our behalf for what he, the board and our 300 association members have built up over the years. In 2012, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Dachverband Lehm, a new generation took over the reigns of an association that although small by the standards of many other associations, has achieved a great deal for the field of earth building and is recognised around the world.

Horst Schröder gave a good overview of the work of the association in his introduction to the LEHM 2012. Since then a lot has happened both within the association and in the earth building sector. The most "groundbreaking" achievement has to be the elaboration and introduction of the DIN norms. The norms

for factory-made earth building materials – specifically for earth bricks and blocks, earth masonry mortars and earth plaster mortars – represent a milestone in our commitment to establishing earth as a recognized building material in the construction sector.

Even though the regulation frenzy in Germany and especially in the EU is often cause for bewilderment, and we sometimes find one or the other DIN somewhat extreme, these regulations do bring advantages for the building material.

Since their introduction, earth is becoming more widely used and more widely recognised within the building industry. A further aspect as the increasing need to incorporate earth as a "serious" building material into education, further education and training curricula. The conventional building sector is increasingly taking note of earth as a building material, and that at all levels.

The topics of the LEHM 2016 cover the range of activities of the DVL. Alongside publicising the members and the building material, developing standards and supporting research, the association works actively to promote education and training activities.

"We need to introduce earth building to upcoming generations!" began a letter to our members at the end of 2014. The sooner young builders and craftsmen, distributors and academics come into contact with earth building, the earlier they will develop an affinity to the material and the broader the acceptance and readiness to employ earth building materials, perhaps even to earn their living with earth building.

To this end, we are announcing as part of this year's conference the first *DVL Earth Building Prize for Young Academics*. The prize recognises academic

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work of excellent quality that demonstrates a firm knowledge of earth building and makes a forward-looking and original contribution in the fields of design, construction, research or development.

The papers submitted to the DVL for the LEHM 2016 show that earth building projects are being realised around the world. In many areas a long-standing tradition is being rediscovered and people are re-learning how to work with earth. As we shall see over the next few days, there are a number of exciting projects and new initiatives underway.

This conference, like others before it, is not immune to the effects of political crises and conflicts. Several visitors have been unable to travel to join us, not least from countries with a strong culture of building with earth. This unfortunately applies to some of speakers too. I would therefore also like to extend our greetings to those who cannot be here today.

On behalf of the association, I would like to thank all the speakers as well as the poster presenters for their contributions over the next few days. Likewise I would like to thank all those from the association involved in running and preparing the conference, most notably Stephan Jörchel who runs the day to day activities of the association and plays a vital role in ensuring the success of the association's activities.

I wish us three interesting days of stimulating input, constructive discussions and pleasant exchanges here in Weimar. Take delight in the facades of historical Weimar, enjoy the romantic old town as well as the occasional modern addition. As you will discover, some of them have been made with earth.