**Sustainability as a top topic in school construction**

**Rubber flooring** **creates a feel-good atmosphere in Europe's schools**

*Weinheim, November 2018 –* How must modern schools present themselves in order to be equipped for the future? This question is currently being dealt with intensively not only by German cities and municipalities, but also by European ones. For the first time in this country since the school construction wave in the 1970s, municipalities and states will receive substantial federal funding for school construction over the next few years. With an estimated investment backlog of currently EUR 32.8 billion[[1]](#footnote-1) , this is an opportunity to make innovative use of financial resources and to make school buildings fit for the future. After all: demands on high-performing schools are high.[[2]](#footnote-2) Among other things, they call for architecture based on an overall pedagogical concept, rooms with welcoming qualities and maximum flexibility of use. Very important: Schools should provide healthy and safe conditions for learning, living and working. This also places high demands on the building materials used in the construction or refurbishment of school buildings: They must be ecological, durable, sustainable and economical. Rubber flooring by nora systems is therefore used in many European schools. In the last five years alone, approximately 4.7 million square meters of nora flooring have been installed in German and (Western) European educational facilities. The top seller is noraplan sentica with its particularly harmonious colour scheme, followed by other products in the noraplan range: signa, stone and unita. norament grano is also used by planners in these areas. After all: Regardless of the product line, the "Made in Germany" rubber flooring combines an attractive design with the best functional properties such as extreme resilience, good ergonomics and acoustics.

**Natural material: Rubber for a harmonious overall concept**

In most cases, a school is far more than just an educational building. It is a vital component of a town or community and should fit in harmoniously with the overall image: Klumpp + Klumpp Architects, based in Stuttgart, implemented this approach in an exemplary way at the Evangelical Firstwald Gymnasium school in Kusterdingen, Baden-Württemberg: "The new school structure gives a new focus to the urban planning concept of the existing Kusterdinger school campus and fits in with residential developments," the planners said. The massive masonry construction is a visible sign of sustainable construction and stands for lasting and reliable values in fast-paced times. According to the architects, the architectural concept of the new school building is intended to express appreciation for the students and teachers who spend a lot of time in this building with its "honest and natural materials and surfaces." The heart of the school is the atrium hall, which completes the material concept with the exposed board-marked concrete walls and the subtle terracotta shade of the rubber floors. The colour of the noraplan unita, a synthesis of rubber and real granite splinters spread over around 3,000 square meters, was custom-made in Weinheim specifically for this project. In total, more than 230,000 square meters of the red dot design award-winning rubber floor have been laid in Western Europe over the past five years.

**Attractive design: A floor that lasts decades**

The planners of C.T. Stork College in Hengelo, Netherlands, also opted for the authentic rubber material. Erik de Jong Architects used nearly 9,000 square meters of noraplan unita and more than 1,000 square meters of norament arago in a dark gray when two schools merged in early 2018. The new building, which was created from the merger of two different secondary schools, has two dimensions. A strong industrial character with straight lines on the urban side, soft and undulating shapes on the other side facing the open landscape. The nora systems rubber floors connect the rooms and building complexes with their colour theme and thus ensure a low-key, harmonious overall impression across the outer design lines. Sustainability of the flooring was also a top priority in this construction project. nora rubber coverings do not contain plasticisers and thus ensure healthy indoor air. In addition, due to their extremely dense surface, they show hardly any signs of wear and tear even after decades; their attractive appearance is always preserved. Since the floors do not need to be coated, they can also be easily and economically cleaned.

**Good acoustics: More peace in school buildings**

Thanks to their permanent elasticity, the rubber floorings also reduce walking noise and ensure good acoustics in school buildings, as Henny Heerts, technical team leader at the C.T. Stork College, emphasises: "The floors dampen the clacking sounds of heels, for example. This reduction in noise level, which influences the ability to concentrate and the well-being of students and staff should not be underestimated."

The synthesis of aesthetics and function, combined with a high degree of sustainability, make nora flooring an ideal all-rounder for Europe's schools.\*

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***About nora systems***

*nora systems develops, produces and markets high-quality, elastic floor coverings as well as shoe components under the nora® brand. The company, which has its headquarters in the German town of Weinheim, was created from Freudenberg Bausysteme KG in 2007 and, as the global market leader, has shaped the development of rubber floor coverings for many years. With its more than 1,100 employees, nora systems generated a turnover of € 229.1 million in 2017. In 2018, nora systems was acquired by Interface Inc., Atlanta (USA). Interface is the world's largest manufacturer of modular carpet tiles for the commercial sector.*

1. KfW Municipal Panel 2017, Frankfurt am Main, May 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Guidelines for high-performance school buildings in Germany, Montag Stiftung Urbane Räume gAG, Montag Foundation for Youth and Society, Confederation of German Architects BDA, Association for Education (VBE), Bonn/Berlin, p. 13 et seqq. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)