



Barrier-Free Living

A barrier-free environment – often a necessity, not a luxury.

The general public often wrongly assume that the electric control and automation of roller shutters and sun protection systems are a luxury. They fail to recognize that these easy-to-use solutions are an absolute necessity for many people. It may be due to an accident or illness which impairs movement and natural use of a person's body or simply the demographic changes in the population.

“The term ‘barrier-free design’ is becoming a key selling point for specialist dealers”, says Erwin Pauwels, head of marketing at Becker-Antriebe GmbH. The specialist company based in Sinn, Germany, offers roller shutter and sun protection drives with corresponding control units and automation technology. These solutions provide disabled people with greater independence and freedom in their own homes.



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When illness limits a person's mobility

Yves Preisler from the German company ‘Optimus: Zentrum für Technische Orthopädie und Rehabilitation GmbH’ experiences on a daily basis how people struggle to lead a self-determined life. “People and their environment are often taken completely by surprise by the scale of immobility,” he explains. “For example, a stroke or an accident can prevent people holding or gripping objects.” A stroke is one of the most common causes of ill-health in Germany and a major cause of permanent disability.



“There are also illnesses which slowly but surely restrict mobility, for example multiple sclerosis,” adds Preisler. In Central Europe, it is the most common chronic progressive infection of the central nervous system. Patients initially experience tingling or numbness in their hands and feet, symptoms which usually become permanent. “Orthopaedic aids and rehabilitation treatment ensure that these people receive the best possible help. But it is still usually necessary to adapt their homes to the changing needs;” says Preisler.

Retrofitting radio-controlled drives makes sense

Existing homes then have to be converted at a reasonable cost. “Radio-controlled solutions are ideal for switching from belt operation to electric drives,” comments Erwin Pauwels. “They are especially suitable for

retrofitting existing installations.

Both the required work and the costs are easy to assess.” Radio-controlled drives can be operated either via wall-mounted transmitters or handheld transmitters.

A handheld transmitter, e.g. a TC4410, is perfect for people who have difficulty moving from room to room. It boasts more than 10 transmission channels – that is twice as many as most common models. “Just one device is enough to operate all the roller shutters in an apartment.” Further features, such as the integrated timer with astro function, guaran-



Just one device is enough to operate all the roller shutters in an apartment. Further features, such as the integrated timer with astro function, guarantee maximum comfort.



tee maximum comfort: If desired, it closes roller shutters automatically at sunset and reopens them the next morning. Another important selling point for retrofitting: Becker roller shutter drives are compact, thus ensuring that the shutter can be wound on the drive head. This means the drive can even be used in confined spaces.

Increasing demands of an elderly population

The term 'barrier free' originally had the underlying principle of making the environment accessible to disabled, older and infirm people: Today, there is a commitment to maximize independence, comfort and safety. The main reason is the demographic changes in the population.

In Germany, the number of people over 80 is set to increase to roughly 7.5 million by 2040. Thanks to intensive health care and excellent

medical treatment they will remain active for longer.



Becker unveiled Centronic-II at R+T 2009, the new generation of handheld transmitters for the simple operation of automated roller shutters and sun protection systems.

The survey 'Wirtschaftsmotor Alter' (Economic Potential of the Elderly) carried out by the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth indicates that the target group of the future is the over-50s. Within this age group, the over-65s, in particular, offer a significant potential for growth as a consumer group. By 2035, their share of total consumer spending will increase dramatically from about 18% to well over 26%. People over the age of 75 display the largest increase.



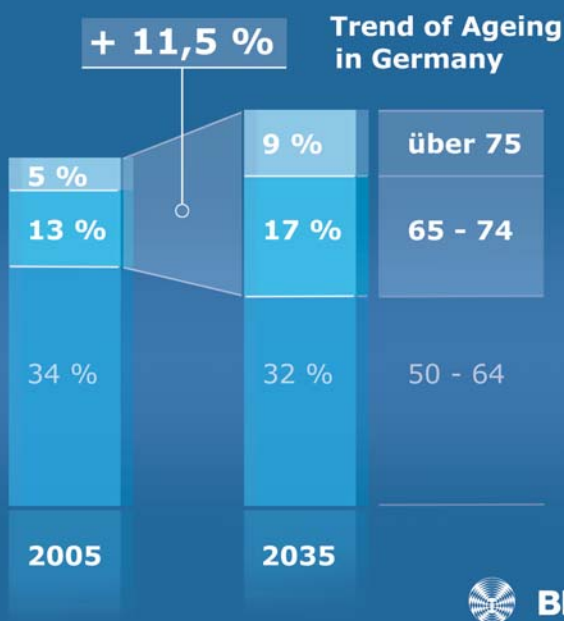
Funding opportunities for barrier-free environments

In order to cope with the growing demand for barrier-free living, the KfW Bankengruppe, the German government-owned development bank, has been offering the “Senior Housing Conversion” programme since 2009. Low-interest loans help to finance necessary modernization and

conversion projects. The goal is to enable barrier-free housing to a larger group of people, allowing them to live as long as possible in their own homes and familiar surroundings.

The KfW also explicitly states that these building projects must be carried out by specialist companies. “It finances twenty-one precisely defined conversion tasks,” explains Erwin Pauwels. Electric roller shutter drives are not included in these specifications, but windows are: The installation of comfort windows with a bottom handle and electric opener is demanded. “It goes without

saying that roller shutter automation is a major issue when converting living spaces.” A KfW loan application must include an estimate of the costs and confirmation from an architect or specialist that the funding criteria are fulfilled. “It may be advantageous if you work in collaboration with architects or window specialists.”



Barrier-free environment: A survey carried out by the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth showed that: not only the number of over-50s will dramatically increase in the coming decades, but also the percentage of people over 75 is set to rise to new levels.

**Professional support**

Becker-Antriebe actively supports specialist dealers to ensure that unique selling points are presented in a way that creates customer interest. Its 'Professional Partner' package is a comprehensive service portfolio that includes professional advice and training information. Becker-Antriebe also provides specially prepared texts for customer mailing lists or press releases. According to Erwin Pauwels, head of marketing at Becker-Antriebe GmbH, "they are designed to meet customers where they are: dealing with a problem for which Becker-Antriebe provides the solution."

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