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## The capital as a meeting place – a herald of Berlin's economic future

Among Germany's congress cities, Berlin ranks first place. Of last year's estimated eleven million accommodation bookings, nearly three million were made by visitors to conferences and conventions. This tendency has been increasing steadily, which is particularly evident in the premium segment.

One of the companies to benefit from this development is the exclusive Congress and Convention Centre "axica" on Pariser Platz, which celebrated its fifth anniversary in June 2004. Over 300 events of outstanding quality and with the highest organisational demands have been hosted here in the past.

The axica's German-Scottish Managing Director, Jochen A. Lohmar-McKinnon, sees his business model ratified – which is to promote the location's event spaces not as run-of-the-mill booking slots, but as a consistently exclusive premium product. Evidently, his approach is successful - ever since the axica first opened its doors for conferences, conventions and symposiums, the very top representatives of politics, the economy, arts and media have been opting for the Pariser Platz location.

With its unbeatable geographic proximity to the Brandenburg Gate, the building has a priceless location advantage. It is furthermore one of the few masterpieces of contemporary architecture used to host events. With this location, the architect Frank O. Gehry has most successfully instated his vision of the "open house". The axica is a must for any lover of fine architecture; on days when the building is not used for hosting events, up to 900 visitors will come into the entrance for a glance into the inner spaces of this fascinating work of architectural art. The interior courtyard, designed as an atrium, presents a dynamic interrelationship of geometric and organic shapes. This is where the conference and meeting rooms are located.

Currently, 85 percent of all events held in Berlin are being attended exclusively by German visitors. The potential for expanding into the international congress market is enormous!

Like many other companies, the axica is hoping that the steadily increasing significance of the congress market to the economy of Berlin will have a positive impact on the development of a major international airport for Germany's capital. Operators of event locations are directly involved in the promotion of the city they are part of; the lack of direct flights from Berlin to the US and Asia is

### Press contact

Hédi Körmendi  
Fon +49/30/2 02 41-664  
Fax +49/30/2 02 41-670  
presse@axica.de

axica  
Kongress- und Tagungszentrum  
Pariser Platz 3 GmbH

Pariser Platz 3  
D-10117 Berlin  
www.axica.de

becoming increasingly difficult to compensate.

A capital without a major airport is not particularly attractive to the international congress market, which is one of the main reasons why Berlin only ranks twelfth as an international congress city.

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**Press contact**

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Fon +49/30/2 02 41-664

Fax +49/30/2 02 41-670

presse@axica.de

axica

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