

“Before we planned the new central kitchen we made several visits to similar installations,” says architect Jürgen Busack. “What struck us **was the terrible acoustic environment and the high noise levels in kitchens.** We were convinced that it was possible to create a **more humane** work place by tackling **room acoustics seriously.**”

The modern catering kitchen at Rickling psychiatric hospital, north of Hamburg, produces 3,600 meals each day.

The widely accepted “standard solution” would have been to install a suspended ceiling with a hard surface that permits cleaning. However, metal utensils and pans, combined with hard surfaces on the floor, walls and ceiling, always lead to a hopelessly noisy and stressful working environment.

#### **No compromise on room acoustics**

Thankfully the architect, Jürgen Busack, found the answer to the noise problem – an effective, sound-absorbing acoustic ceiling system

that meets the relevant hygiene requirements. The secret lies in the ability of the acoustic ceiling to let sound waves pass through to the backing layer of sound-absorbing material.

At the same time the smooth surface repels dirt and grease, and can cope with regular washing with disinfectant, and even spray washing. The surface is also resistant to bacterial growth, which is very important in environments where food is handled. In combination with a robust grid system that is resistant to moisture and chemicals, the result is an acoustic ceiling system that will perform its task for many years.

“It was worth going the extra distance to make life easier for our 60 staff,” says Ralf Lenschow, who is

on the board of the catering business at Rickling hospital. “It’s amazing how quiet it is, even when the kitchen is busy. I guess that’s unusual for a kitchen of this size.”

The catering kitchen does not just supply catering services to the hospital in Rickling. Meat, which comes from the kitchen’s own EU-certified slaughterhouse, is prepared and butchered here, and the bread, which comes from the kitchen’s own bakery, is also distributed to other institutions in the area. An area totaling 2,700 square metres is now fitted with acoustic ceiling panels and sound absorbers.



**“The noise that often dominates kitchen environments shocked me when I visited catering establishments, it’s an unreasonable noise level for employees. Effective acoustic ceilings and sound absorbers made a big difference to the acoustic environment in the central kitchen in Rickling,” says Jürgen Busack with conviction.**



Photo: H.G. Esch

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Continuous sound-absorbing panels on the ceiling are combined here with vertical sound-absorbing baffles. Dishwashing areas can otherwise be extremely noisy environments.



A continuous acoustic ceiling system of the highest absorption class covers the large catering space where meals are prepared.



Even the kitchen's own slaughterhouse has an acoustic ceiling.



The austere brick building that houses the central kitchen in Rickling matches its surroundings.



**Architect**  
Busack+Göb

**Acoustic systems from Ecophon**  
Ecophon Hygiene Performance™ A C3  
Ecophon Hygiene Protec™ Baffle C3