

## Statement by Claire Steinbrück, Director of imm cologne, at the imm cologne press conference

20 October 2021 in Paris



imm cologne 2022  
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[www.imm-cologne.com](http://www.imm-cologne.com)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I don't think I need to tell you how delighted I am to be with you in person again here in Paris. With this press conference, we want to symbolically announce the re-start of the trade fair, and tell you live and in person how the engines are being revved up for imm cologne, which will take place from 17 to 23 January. The strength of imm cologne lies in a unique mix of major national and international brands, a strong German interiors industry and an offering that is unparalleled in its breadth. Taking place right at the start of the year, imm cologne is the most relevant forum for the interior design industry worldwide. Next year's event may be smaller in terms of numbers, but nevertheless it sends a clear signal to the world that international trade fair events can once again be held in Germany. And that is a good thing against the backdrop of international competition.

As the first major international event for the interior design industry, our trade fair is undergoing a transformation. Recent experiences and the challenges encountered call for new approaches. And this commitment to change is also reflected in the key conceptual idea for imm cologne - "It's Time for an Exchange".

You may well be asking yourselves: "What exactly does "It's Time for an Exchange" mean?" It is precisely in times of upheaval that trade fairs feel both a longing for the familiar and a desire for improvement and change. And this conflict is an enormous opportunity for imm cologne, because it is a chance to combine the traditional design of a trade fair with visionary ideas, to innovatively blend the best of both worlds and thereby create a new trade fair experience that nevertheless feels familiar. I will now illustrate the idea behind it based on three statements that set out the functions a leading international trade fair like imm cologne needs to perform now and in the future:

A trade fair must generate business.

A trade fair must embrace digitalisation.

A trade fair must sell emotions.

### Statement 1: A trade fair must generate business

In my view, trade fairs as marketing tools will continue to be highly significant in

future as platforms for business. With the globalisation of the interior design market constantly moving forward, in Cologne the world trades not only with Germany, but increasingly also with the rest of the world. And in such a heavily globalised market, imm cologne offers optimum access to the important German interior design market. In the European context, Germany remains the market with the strongest sales for furniture producers. imm cologne 2022 will be not only the first but also the largest interiors show in Europe following the restart of the trade fair sector.

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Much to our surprise, time and time again we are hearing questions like: Can Cologne really pull off a trade fair of this size as early as January? Who is actually going to take part? First of all, let's make one thing perfectly clear: it goes without saying that imm cologne 2022 will take place! In total, we expect 600 exhibitors, 74% of them from abroad. This sends a strong signal to the industry, which Koelnmesse and the trade fair industry as a whole can build on. We are setting a benchmark for a strong interior design platform in the market with the greatest business potential in Europe. The fact that the new coronavirus provisions no longer take the number of new cases as the sole indicator and include the relaxation of many measures is making it easier to hold trade fairs. Combined with the overall very high rates of vaccination in Germany, Europe and the world, sophisticated hygiene and safety concepts, and a market that is stable and even starting to show signs of growth again, this should be an encouragement to every business. The first trade fairs held have shown that Koelnmesse's safety and hygiene measures work brilliantly even at a highly complex event. Our Ch3ck concept, requiring attendees to be fully vaccinated, or have recovered from an infection within the last six months (but at least 28 days ago), or test negative for Covid, forms a superb basis not only for making the trade fair experience safe, but also for offering enough space for personal, inspiring and emotional moments.

After the experience of the crisis, imm cologne is the ideal place for companies to take stock of their position in the market and for visitors to fine-tune their existing partners. This is their chance to make a renewed, comprehensive comparison of concepts and products, and hold the face-to-face conversations that will ultimately lay the groundwork for future innovations. That is why imm cologne will doubtless help many trade visitors to determine their position: what worked well in the pandemic? Which supply chains was I able to rely on? Which partners supported me and which new partners do I need? Another reason to attend imm cologne in person in January. This makes the industry gathering the driver for future success for both exhibitors and visitors.

So does all this mean that things will be returning to exactly the way they were before the pandemic? Absolutely not. The theme of digitalisation, which I am about to address in my second statement, will shape the trade fair of the future. In fact, I am confident that in the long term there will be completely new stand concepts too. For a long time, we as a trade fair organiser have been offering attractive solutions for smaller stand areas, particularly in the design segment, with Pure Platforms. Against this backdrop, a new feature this year will be the German Hub - an innovative stand concept within the Home Settings interior world. Here, participants can stage individual highlight products so they make a real impact within a compact space. The 800 square metre show area in Hall 8 offers the perfect

setting for exciting meetings with the visitor groups most relevant to the companies exhibiting here. In the innovative meeting spaces, which have a high-end, industrial appearance, exhibitors will be in very close contact with their target groups. We have developed this concept together with the Association of the German Furniture Industry (VDM) to enable exhibiting companies to participate in the trade fair in an innovative way in the coming year.

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## **Statement 2: A trade fair must embrace digitisation**

The digital transformation of the trade fair sector had already begun before coronavirus, and the effect of the pandemic was really only to accelerate this development. After all, a trade fair has to evolve with the market, so we needed to expand our digital activities to be able to continue operating effectively in future. As we considered this, we felt it was important to steer clear of “hybridisation” and avoid merely extending imm Cologne into the online sphere, as is the case with so many other events. We wanted to develop a new, truly seminal concept so we could offer our clients a dynamic, agile business platform that can adapt to a rapidly changing environment. With imm cologne 365, we have developed a concept that takes the industry’s leading international trade fair to a new level and offers the sector the best platform for business, networking and inspiration. The new imm cologne 365 stands for:

**Inspiration:** With the magazine by imm cologne - the content platform for the latest trends and most fascinating innovations on the interior design scene - users gain valuable insights throughout the year into all the developments relevant to them and our living environments.

**Networking:** Users can network with relevant players, decision-makers and trendsetters in the interior design industry and nurture their contacts and partnerships easily with a single network the whole year round - with ambista, the business network for successful lead generation before, during and after the trade fair.

**Business:** While participants can now interact throughout the year via ambista, they can of course also continue to do business during our in-person event, which offers exciting commercial opportunities in the form of tangible experiences, innovations seen first-hand and face-to-face business. That’s why, at the beginning of the new year, the imm cologne live event remains the highlight for the industry.

With its 365-day approach, imm cologne is shaping the trade fair path into the future. As the industry’s leading international trade fair, it provides exhibitors and visitors with unique added value and creates the optimum conditions for conducting business, networking and sharing inspiration throughout the year. imm cologne 365 offers exhibitors and trade visitors the ideal forum where they can share knowledge and content and seize commercial opportunities all year round, rather than being restricted to a pre-determined, limited period of time only. Companies can present their product highlights 365 days a year to an interested audience, without being dependent on fixed trade fair dates.

## **And now on to my final statement: A trade fair must sell emotions**

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As one of the most vibrant and progressive trade fairs for interiors and design, imm cologne must in future not only be a platform for business contacts, it must also define itself more through emotions. A good example is the “Das Haus” project. To mark the tenth edition of this highlight event, an installation showcasing new forms of urban living awaits visitors to the interior design trade fair in Cologne. Three creative teams, put together by Luca Nichetto, Sebastian Herkner und Studio Truly Truly, were invited to be involved in planning and further developing the “Das Haus” format. The result is an inspiring, holistic installation event that conveys ideas for urban living in the future.

But emotions will be addressed in other aspects too. The theme of sustainability - a topic that is often highly emotive - will be taken up in various ways. In Hall 9, the issue of mattress recycling will be discussed. In Hall 4.2, the sustainable use of modern technology in the furniture industry is a key topic. And the subject of supply chains will also be included in the programme of talks on The Stage.

On top of our exhibitors' contributions and the events organised by us, the city of Cologne itself will be offering additional highlights. With its Passagen programme, Cologne is home to the largest ephemeral design festival in Germany, with exhibitions and presentations by the crème de la crème of the international designer scene. To complement this, every aspect of interior design competence will be concentrated along the interior design mile - the stretch of the Cologne Ring between Ebertplatz, Friesenplatz, Rudolfplatz and Zülpicher Platz - which incidentally is the longest interior design mile in Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in summary we can say that the new imm cologne 365 is a platform that combines inspiration, networking and business for the furniture and interior design industry all year round. This means that imm cologne 365 is not just a business event that takes place on seven days of the year. Rather, it is a forum where new business emerges every day, bringing the industry together at a top international level. But the transformation doesn't stop there. Together with our exhibitors, we have developed a new hall concept for 2023 that is even better adapted to the needs of visitors. Additional, highly effective formats for participation have also been developed with exhibitors. These formats emphasise the added value of a trade fair and meeting point for the international industry, while further accentuating the benefits the digital dimension has to offer. Our view is that with all the conceptual approaches I have outlined, we are taking the trade fair to a new level - not as an end in itself, but because we believe this will bring our customers more success and promote the industry as a whole.

I look forward to seeing many of you again at imm cologne in January 2022. Sometimes it almost seems to me that we need to get used to moving around among groups of people without restrictions again, much like someone who cannot yet quite adjust to their regained freedom. It's time to move forward with confidence - responsibly, of course - and ramp business up again, seizing the moment to take advantage of this opportunity for a successful re-start. I am confident that if we do so, the topics we need to engage with will automatically come to the fore again.

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