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#didactamesse

didacta 2026 sets clear educational impulses for digital literacy and democracy education - over 2,000 events mark a new record

didacta
die Bildungsmesse

Cologne, March, 2026 - After five days dedicated to education, didacta 2026 draws a thoroughly positive balance. From 10 to 14 March, Europe's biggest education trade fair brought the sector together in Cologne. Under the motto "Everything undergoing change. Spotlight on education", exhibitors, the trade audience, politicians and business leaders discussed the key challenges of our era and offered concrete solutions for all education sections. didacta 2026 presented itself as a place for work and discourse where relevant themes were addressed in the context of education and its opportunities.

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Strong prelude on miracles and veracity

The opening of didacta 2026 sent a clear signal about the social and political relevance of education. **Dorothee Feller, Minister for Schools and Education of the State of North Rhein-Westphalia**, underlined the importance of democratic and basic competences. She stressed that social and emotional skills, in particular, are a key foundation for young people being able to face an uncertain future confidently. Education strengthens sustainability, participation and democratic stability. However, here she cautioned that one shouldn't wait for miracles. Educational work requires the active collaboration of all involved.

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Furthermore, the debate on digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) was also a major topic of discussion. **Christoph Holz** offered clever and at the same time critical perspectives on the wonders of both humans and machines and called for critical thinking and collaboration. **Mareike Lotte Wulf, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth**, emphasised the triad of protection, participation and empowerment in her opening speech and welcomed the growing social support for the protection of children and youths in the digital arena.

Executive Board:
Gerald Böse (President and Chief Executive Officer)
Oliver Frese

Chairman of the Supervisory Board:
Mayor of the City of Cologne
Torsten Burmester

Vibrant trade fair, intensive discourse, positive atmosphere

A constructive and lively atmosphere was also palpable in the exhibition halls. **729 exhibitors** from **58 different countries** took part in didacta 2026. A total of around **75,000 visitors** came to Cologne. As such, the trade fair recorded an approx. 20 percent increase in the number of visitors compared to the previous event.

Headquarters and place of jurisdiction:
Cologne
District Court Cologne, HRB 952

"We are very pleased about this strong development and the positive response to

didacta 2026. Highly frequented exhibition halls, very satisfied exhibitors and strong interest from all areas of education once again confirm the direction of the trade fair and impressively underline its leading position as Europe's largest education fair", **Oliver Frese, Chief Operating Officer of Koelnmesse**, stated.

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The trade fair's event programme set a new record. Never before have so many panels, panel discussions, workshops and seminars taken place. The high participation in the over **2,000 events** was also remarkable. Formats such as the opening event with **Prof. Dr. mult. Wassilios Fthenakis'** presentation on transitions in the educational trajectory, as well as the talk entitled "What are they frightened of? The transition into the triangle of day care centres/family/school triangle" met with great interest and reflected the ongoing importance of the transition process in all development phases. Furthermore, the strong and positive media response confirmed that the topics discussed at didacta in Cologne extend far beyond day care centres and classrooms.

"The high number of events and the strong political presence at didacta underlines its relevance as a platform for dialogue and the exchange of perspectives. As an association of the education sector and industry sponsor of the trade fair, we continue to identify the challenges facing our education system and show what the joint solutions can look like. In doing so, we make didacta itself a relevant educational venue," summarised **Dr. Hans-Joachim Prinz, President of the Didacta Association**.

Educational discourse and democracy education hand in hand

Following the opening, educational discourse formed an integral part of didacta 2026. There was a broad consensus that education strengthens understanding and the ability to act and thus promotes social resilience and cohesion. The economic significance of the entire educational sector should also not be underestimated either.

"The educational discourse at didacta demonstrated the key role education plays in the future of our education system and our society. And that is precisely what this trade fair is there for: The many different perspectives and input of the trade audience paint a picture of the industry's shared responsibility. The high level of commitment going in to the discussions and work here is a great success for us," said **Dinah Korb, Chief Operating Officer of Didacta Ausstellungs- und Verlagsgesellschaft mbH**.

Competitions and awards between AI and the classroom

A special tech highlight and a real crowd-puller were the **RoboCup German Open**, which took place on four of the five days of the fair and were opened by the **Federal Minister for Research, Technology and Space, Dorothee Bär**. In numerous competitions, the Major and Junior leagues demonstrated with their robots how future technologies can inspire enthusiasm for technological skills in an educational environment.

On Saturday, the winners were announced. The team **B-Human**, world champion of the **RoboCup 2025**, secured first place twice in the Humanoid Soccer League. The level of competition was also very high in the Junior League.

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And players from the areas of science, industry, politics and education came together at the **2nd German Robotics Conference** to discuss robotics and AI development and present concrete applications.

LifeTeachUs was voted **didacta Start-up of the Year** The non-profit educational project pitched how volunteers from all walks of life can be recruited to fill in for lost hours and project days to relieve schools and enrich lessons with diversified contents beyond the curriculum. The presentation of the platform, app and underlying commitment convinced both the jury and the audience.

"In 2026, didacta showcases the full spectrum of education and demonstrates how diversely the topic can and must be considered today. Personally, the immense innovative power of this trade fair particularly inspires me," said **Jörg Schmale, Director of didacta**.

Positive response from the exhibitors

The response from the exhibitors was positive both during and after the trade fair days. In addition to the high number of visitors, the nature of the discussions and the atmosphere were also highlighted.

"An overwhelming rush of visitors, warm encounters and discussions that opened up new perspectives - for Cornelsen this trade fair appearance in its anniversary year was a total success." - **Kathrin Berthold, Cornelsen Verlag, Exhibitions & Events Director**

"Artificial intelligence cannot replace the empathy of teachers. Because knowledge transfer thrives on the individual dialogue between teachers and pupils. Especially experiences like those offered by "Education for Sustainable Development" at farms and other nature-based learning places, cannot be replaced by virtual learning experiences." - **Tobias Wilke, Coordinator at i.m.a. e.V. for the joint exhibition "Agriculture & Nutrition - learning through experience"**

"We demonstrated at didacta with VRTalents® by ETS DIDACTIC GMBH, how immersive learning environments can bring knowledge to life, while at the same time making use of the inspiring atmosphere on-site and the opportunity to establish new business relationships. - **Bruno Mihm, CEO, ETS DIDACTIC GMBH**

"Eating and drinking also has to be learnt, which is why we were pleased to be able to present our household range at didacta and support the learning process at day care centres already." - **René Müller, CEO, KitaTraum**

Conclusion & Outlook

didacta 2026 impressively demonstrated how relevant education is for mastering

social challenges. Innovative and inclusive teaching and learning formats and versatile learning venues were showcased at the trade fair. Clear impulses for the future were set. It was emphasised that promoting resilience, mental health and the balance between digital and analogue formats should not be disregarded despite all the technological advancements. The close exchange between the policymakers, administrators and the education sector showed that education is only sustainable if clear concepts, binding strategies and clear lines of responsibility come together. didacta 2026 confirmed its role as the central meeting point of the education industry, where partnerships are intensified and new projects launched.

The next didacta is scheduled to take place in Hanover from **23 to 27 February 2027**.

Note for editorial offices:

didacta photos are available on the Internet at <https://www.didacta-cologne.com/imagetdatabase>

Press information is available at: <https://www.didacta-cologne.com/pressinformation>

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