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Koelnmesse 2022: despite difficult times, full programme with premieres at home and abroad

Koelnmesse resumes its growth trajectory following pandemic-related re-start | Investments in forward-looking Koelnmesse 3.0 project and digitalisation | Sustainability central pillar of corporate strategy

While the current crises once again posed major challenges for the economy, Koelnmesse ultimately managed to achieve a successful re-start. "We expect turnover of around 237 million euro for the fiscal year and have made significant gains compared to the previous year," says Koelnmesse President and Chief Executive Officer, Gerald Böse. "Although almost none of the trade fairs have returned to their pre-Covid-19 size, the upward trend shows that we are on track to regaining our former strength." The exceeded expectations of exhibitors and visitors also attest to this. "Throughout the trade fair year, everyone involved was clearly relieved to finally be able to engage in personal exchange again, both to establish and to expand international business," notes Oliver Frese, Chief Operating Officer at Koelnmesse GmbH.

Koelnmesse's 2022 programme comprised 59 of the 71 originally planned events including 18 of its own events, 20 guest events and three corporate events in Cologne, as well as 18 trade fairs abroad. In Cologne, these included DMEXCO, INTERMOT, ORGATEC, ART COLOGNE and the INTERNATIONAL HARDWARE FAIR, which was very successful with around 1,400 exhibitors from 50 countries despite being postponed to September. One of the highlights of the past year was gamescom, which attracted 265,000 visitors. Overall, 2022 clearly indicated that customers want to return to the trade fair halls.

Koelnmesse's commitment to new business was also in full swing. A total of 14 new events, which were developed or acquired for 2022 and the years to come, were kicked off in Cologne by polisMOBILITY and insureNXT – two of the company's own new formats for the future of urban mobility and the insurance industry respectively. These were followed abroad by ORGATEC TOKYO, h+h americas (Chicago) and gamescom asia (Singapore), with which Koelnmesse continued to successfully transform its established brands in the corresponding target countries. The success of the company's own events and the high demand from guest organisers in Germany and around the world underscore both the relevance of trade fairs as an important marketplace for business in general and the quality of Cologne as a trade fair location.

Confidence in trade fairs returns with around 237 million euro in turnover

Turnover in 2022 is expected to be approximately 237 million euro. A comparison illustrates the upward trend: in 2021 the turnover amounted to 134.2 million euro

Your contact:

Dr. Jasmin Fischer

Tel.

+49 221 821-2494

e-mail

jasmin.fischer@

koelnmesse.de

Koelnmesse GmbH

Messeplatz 1

50679 Köln

P.O. Box 21 07 60

50532 Köln

Germany

Tel. +49 221 821-0

Fax +49 221 821-2574

www.koelnmesse.com

Executive Board:

Gerald Böse (President and Chief

Executive Officer)

Oliver Frese

Chairwoman of the Supervisory

Board:

Mayor of the City of Cologne

Henriette Reker

Headquarters and place of

jurisdiction:

Cologne

District Court Cologne, HRB 952

and in 2020 it was only 94.3 million euro. Due to the returning confidence in trade fairs as a marketing tool, establishment of a care centre for refugees, and strict cost-cutting measures, the loss for the year is expected to be just over 60 million euro.

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The company's subsidiary Koelncongress, which is responsible for guest events, congresses and conventions, contributed around 38 million euro in turnover. In the past year, it organised over 1,500 events in Cologne as well as the accommodation for refugees on the trade fair grounds.

A full calendar abroad as well – entering new markets together

Koelnmesse also celebrated a successful year abroad, as its international teams organised a total of 18 trade fairs with more than 250,000 visitors. In addition to this, 24 participations in trade fairs abroad were organised from Cologne. International highlights included ANUFOOD Brazil in São Paulo and THAIFEX - Anuga Asia (Thailand), which almost doubled its exhibitor participation and occupied space compared to the previous event. Around 90 exhibitors from 23 countries came to gamescom asia in October, almost two-thirds of which were international companies.

Among other measures, Koelnmesse signed a memorandum of understanding for a strategic partnership with the Italian Exhibition Group to expand the global Anuga network. The company signed another memorandum of understanding with ANTAD, the leading retail association and organiser of Expo ANTAD in Guadalajara, thus laying the initial groundwork for business activities in Mexico.

After the German Pavilion organised by Koelnmesse at Expo 2020 Dubai in March 2022 received top awards and was rated good or excellent by 98 percent of the guests, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action commissioned the company with organising yet another German Expo Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka in Japan.

Sustainability a central pillar in the corporate strategy

Sustainability has been a focal point for Koelnmesse for many years and has since become one of the most important pillars of its corporate strategy. For example, Koelnmesse will make the operation of its buildings CO₂-neutral by 2035 at the latest, in line with the objectives of the city of Cologne. A number of measures have already been implemented. By operating its own combined heat and power plant, Koelnmesse saves around 3,200 tons of CO₂ annually and has been using 100 percent green electricity since the beginning of 2022.

Continuing to invest in the future: digitalisation and the quality of the trade fair venue

In November 2022, Koelnmesse celebrated the topping-out ceremony for its new Confex building. The future trade fair, congress and event location is an important part of the Koelnmesse 3.0 investment programme, with which Koelnmesse is investing in the quality of its trade fair venue by way of conversion, modernisation and digitalisation. Confex will enable Cologne to bring more than 6,000 congress guests together in a single location for the first time starting in 2024 – in a flexible,

fully digitalised space for live and hybrid events at world-class level. The first event highlight has already been acquired for November 2024, when Confex will serve as the venue for The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry's UFI Annual Global Congress, thus bringing the entire global event industry to Cologne.

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Optimistic start to the new year

Koelnmesse anticipates further normalisation of its event business in 2023 and is planning a total of 74 events this year. These include 46 of its own events, 23 guest events and five corporate events. The company will also be organising PMRExpo Cologne, the leading European trade fair for professional mobile communications, for the first time in November. It will continue going strong abroad in 2023 as well, with a total of 25 events including four premieres. With the debut of ISM Japan, for example, Koelnmesse will be consistently expanding its specialisation in the area of sweets and snacks. Starting in 2024, Anuga Select Japan will expand the company's Food and FoodTec fields of expertise, and further tap into the important food market of Japan.

Implementation of planning for 2023, which is based on an expected further increase in turnover to 380 million euro, largely depends on further developments in the geopolitical and economic situation.

"Koelnmesse is starting the new year with realistic optimism," says CEO Gerald Böse in summary. "In 2023, we are no longer speaking of cancelled trade fairs. On the contrary, all the signs are indicating implementation. We see a positive trend. Barring any new bad global news, I'm confident that we will have returned to the excellent level of turnover we were achieving before the pandemic as early as 2025."

About Koelnmesse:

Koelnmesse employs around 1,000 people. The city-centre trade fair at the heart of Europe occupies the third largest trade fair grounds in Germany and, spanning almost 400,000 square metres of hall and outdoor space, it numbers among the top ten worldwide. Each year, Koelnmesse organises and manages around 80 trade fairs, guest events and corporate events in Cologne and in the most important markets around the world. Its portfolio attracts over 54,000 exhibiting companies from 122 countries and approximately three million visitors from more than 200 nations.

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