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## **Koelnmesse breaks sales record on its 100th anniversary and opens one of the most modern conference centres in Europe**

- A strong upswing after the COVID-19 lockdown: Koelnmesse announces record sales of 416 million euro and the highest result in the company's history
- Financial prudence remains the guiding principle: offsetting deficits from the pandemic years and strengthening equity
- Anniversary and inauguration: Koelnmesse opens Confex, a state-of-the-art event and conference centre, to mark its 100th anniversary on 28 June

Koelnmesse is celebrating its 100th anniversary and preliminary results indicate the consolidated companies achieved record sales of 416 million euro in 2023. 67 events worldwide contributed to this success, including 19 of the company's own and 21 guest events as well as 3 corporate events in Cologne. The portion of international exhibitors was particularly outstanding at 78 percent. "The year 2023 served as an impressive comeback that saw Koelnmesse regain its former radiance," says Gerald Böse, CEO of Koelnmesse GmbH. Supported by the RECOVER25 efficiency program, preliminary calculations show Koelnmesse generated a positive result of 42 million euro, thus significantly exceeding its own expectations.

The increase in sales of more than 70% is due to the absence of COVID-related restrictions and the strong event year as part of the regular cyclical event schedule. While Koelnmesse achieved sales above the 400 million euro mark for the first time in 2019, sales slumped to 94.3 million euro in 2020 and only recovered slowly in the following years to 134.2 million euro (2021) and 240 million euro (2022). In the 2023 fiscal year, consolidated company sales increased to a provisional 416 million euro.

"The shareholders supported Koelnmesse during the difficult pandemic years. I have always been convinced that the trade fair business requires personal contact. The development of the figures confirms this. I am glad the trade fair has recovered as well as it has from the crisis. Koelnmesse also owes this successful trade fair year to its committed employees," said Supervisory Board Chairwoman and Mayor Henriette Reker, emphasising the contribution of the company's staff to its success.

The number of employees working for Koelnmesse's consolidated companies rose to an average of 1,106 in 2023 (previous year: 1,017), which is higher than in the pre-COVID years. Across Germany, the Cologne-based trade fair business secures over 18,500 full-time jobs in trade, crafts, transportation, logistics, hotels and restaurants.

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

In 2023, Koelnmesse's programme featured 67 events around the world, attended by over 37,800 exhibiting companies from 126 countries and more than 1.7 million visitors from 217 countries. "The year 2023 has impressively demonstrated that trade fairs remain an indispensable driver for the economy and are irreplaceable as a platform for sharing innovations and pioneering ideas," says Gerald Böse. Now more than ever, trade fairs are an important component for facing the challenges of the future and make a significant contribution to shaping a sustainable economy.

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### **Strong global positioning**

Gerald Böse is also positive about the company's international trade fair business: "Our new international business is more dynamic than ever before and we celebrated four premieres in 2023." A total of 24 Koelnmesse trade fairs took place abroad. A highlight was once again THAIFEX - Anuga Asia in Bangkok, Thailand, which will be split into a food and a HoReCa (hotel/restaurant/catering) area, and supplemented by additional segments starting in 2024 due to the high demand. Sales generated abroad amounted to 45.2 million euro in 2023.

Koelnmesse also started the 2024 international trade fair year with a tailwind. A total of 27 trade fairs are planned abroad this year. With ten subsidiaries abroad and a company holding as well as numerous representative offices, Koelnmesse is strategically very well positioned internationally in over 100 countries.

### **Strong presence of German retail chains at recent events**

"The brakes that retail outlets had put on trade fairs have been released," says Oliver Frese, COO of Koelnmesse. It is particularly pleasing that, following a strong comeback by foreign exhibitors, German exhibitors are now also returning with an increase in bookings of 15 to 30 percent in some cases. This upward trend is also reflected in the rising number of visitors from Germany, with an increase of over 20 percent. "Almost all the German retail chains were once again represented at the recent trade fairs in Cologne. Many retailers made substantial orders and order volumes directly on site," reports Frese based on feedback from exhibiting companies.

### **2024: tailwind starts off traditionally weaker year in the cyclical event schedule**

Despite record sales in 2023, Koelnmesse remains affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Losses during this period also reached record levels, which means the company will be busy recovering from these financial setbacks for many years to come. Individual measures of the Koelnmesse 3.0 investment programme have been postponed until 2040 and, despite the very successful 2023 financial year, Koelnmesse will continue to adhere to its RECOVER25 efficiency programme in the years to come. Particular emphasis will be placed on reducing debt and rebuilding equity in order to ensure a solid financial basis.

"We have once again planned the fiscal year ambitiously, but at the same time we recognise that there are still many challenges ahead of us and that we are operating in volatile markets," says Volker Ahrberg, authorised signatory, with a look ahead to the current year. Given the expected economic and business development, the planned turnover for the consolidated companies is 369.5 million euro in 2024, which will be a weaker year due to the normal rotation of events. "It is important to

keep our sights focussed on what we are all about: a financially sustainable trade fair industry as the foundation for a good future." 70 events are scheduled for the current trade fair year. The trade fair highlights in the second half of 2024 in Cologne include the leading international trade fairs spoga+gafa, gamescom, DMEXCO and ORGATEC.

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### **100 years of Koelnmesse: a success story of global proportions and continuous innovation**

The announcement of the positive figures coincides with the 100th anniversary of Koelnmesse, which was opened on May 11, 1924 by Cologne's Mayor at the time, Konrad Adenauer. From the first sample trade fair for household goods, hardware, textiles and furniture, which Koelnmesse organised in 1924 in the old Rheinhallen, today the headquarters of RTL and ntv, the company has developed into one of the largest trade fair companies in the world.

Joined by Minister-President of North Rhine-Westphalia Hendrik Wüst, Koelnmesse will be celebrating its 100th anniversary on June 28 with a ceremony at the new Confex conference and exhibition centre, which opens on the same day. "Confex will place Cologne in the league of top European conference locations," says Gerald Böse. Thanks to its location right beside the Deutz ICE train station, it will open up Cologne's city-centre trade fair even further towards the Rhine and the cathedral, thus embellishing the cityscape. Confex offers space for more than 6,000 people in 22 conference rooms and the large multifunctional Confex hall. It is already almost fully booked for 2024. An offering of this size was previously lacking in the western part of Germany. "We are planning to double sales in our conference business over the next five years," Böse continues. This is another important milestone towards securing Koelnmesse's sustainable future.

### **Press photos and video material for free use:**

Images with event photos 2023 images, current images of the Confex and historical photos can be found [here](#).

Video of a historical walk by Gerald Böse and the grandchildren of fair founder Konrad Adenauer, the brothers Paul Bauwens-Adenauer and Patrick Adenauer can be found [here](#).

### **About Koelnmesse:**

Koelnmesse employs around 1000 people. As a city trade fair in the heart of Europe, it occupies the third largest trade fair grounds in Germany and, with almost 400,000 m<sup>2</sup> of hall and outdoor space, is among the top ten largest trade fair grounds in the world. Each year, Koelnmesse organises and manages around 80 trade fairs, guest events and corporate events in Cologne and in the most important markets all over the world. Its portfolio reaches over 54,000 exhibiting companies from 122 countries and around three million visitors from more than 200 nations. Until 2040, Koelnmesse is investing more than one billion euro in the development of the trade fair grounds into the most extensive investment programme in its history, to allow it to cover all event formats in the future. Koelnmesse is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2024. 100 years in which Koelnmesse has brought people and markets together worldwide. 100 years in which it has reinvented itself time and again with

a visionary passion for the future: [Koelnmesse History | Koelnmesse](#)

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