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UFI Global Congress in Cologne: Hotspot for the future of the trade fair industry

**Largest annual meeting of the event business makes it Confex debut.
New visitor record: around 550 industry experts from around the world.
Trade fair industry secures more than 3.4 million jobs worldwide.**

The 91st UFI Global Congress will bring the international trade fair industry together from 20 to 23 November 2024 in Koelnmesse's Confex. For four days, the industry's leading minds will be discussing current challenges facing the trade fair industry at the Global Congress of the UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry - setting the course for the future of the global event and networking business. "The motto of this year's congress 'Changes to Chances' could hardly be more apt. It emphasises how profoundly changes and opportunities are connected and how crucial it is to approach both with an open mind," said Gerald Böse, CEO of host Koelnmesse GmbH, at today's opening press conference.

Trade fair companies around the world have made a strong comeback since the global coronavirus pandemic came to an end. UFI is forecasting record sales for 2024 and further growth of 17 percent on average compared to the previous year for the global exhibition industry. An analysis by UFI and consulting firm Oxford Economics found that trade fair participants generated global business sales totalling over 299 billion euros (335 billion US dollars). According to the study, the industry directly and indirectly secures some 3.4 million jobs worldwide.

At the same time, the trade fair industry is experiencing some profound technological and cultural shifts, which are fundamentally changing requirements. "These developments offer opportunities to make events more inclusive, accessible and efficient, but also require the development of new skills," says Geoff Dickinson, president of UFI. "The opportunity to develop strategies together, especially in intense times, to transform the changes of today into the opportunities of tomorrow is unique," adds Kai Hattendorf, CEO of UFI.

Trade fairs and congresses as drivers of a sustainable economy

With a new record of around 550 participants from over 55 markets and regions and a diverse programme featuring some 50 speakers, the 91st UFI Global Congress in Cologne is raising the bar. Speakers include leading names from the trade fair industry and external experts from such renowned organisations as the Economist Intelligence Unit, The Guardian and Gapminder.

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“Networking events like this are platforms for people from different cultures and countries to engage in dialogue and work on solutions together,” says Jörn Holtmeier, Managing Director of the Association of the German Trade Fair Industry, AUMA. “At the same time, trade fairs make a contribution to climate protection, by efficiently pooling face-to-face meetings and helping to prevent individual journeys.” A recent study by the association found that, per trade fair day, trade fair visitors avoid an average of five additional business trips by pooling their meetings at the trade fair. International visitors save as many as eight journeys per trade fair day on average.

Change is on the agenda in Cologne

“Koelnmesse is the ideal venue for the UFI Global Congress, especially in its centennial year,” said Gerald Böse on the opening day. “Permanent change is deeply rooted in our history, from the first classic trade fairs in 1924 to state-of-the-art digital formats and this new location, Confex, which offers a one-of-a-kind blend of conference and exhibition hall.” Böse added: “I am looking forward to the new ideas and insights that this congress will offer in all areas - including the topic of sustainability. At Koelnmesse, we are consistently pursuing the goal of climate neutrality by 2030 and are focusing on innovative solutions to achieve this.”

In its 100th anniversary year, Koelnmesse announced a historic sales record and a profit of 42 million euros. Overall, Cologne’s trade fair activities contribute a total of 2.0 billion euros to the German economy each year, 1.1 billion euros of which is generated directly in Cologne. They secure around 18,500 jobs, including 12,000 in Cologne. Koelnmesse is further expanding its global presence through its latest international expansions, particularly in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

About UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry

UFI is the global trade association of the world’s tradeshow organisers and exhibition centre operators, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations, and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI’s main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry. UFI directly represents more than 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally and also works closely with more than 72 national and regional association members. Close to 900 member organisations in 90 countries and regions worldwide are presently signed up as members. Over 900 international trade fairs proudly bear the UFI-approved label, a quality guarantee for visitors and exhibitors alike. UFI members continue to provide the international business community with a unique marketing media aimed at developing outstanding face-to-face business opportunities.

For more information concerning UFI, please contact UFI Headquarters: Email: media@ufi.org; Tel: +33 1 46 39 75 00 or www.ufi.org

Press photos: Under the following link you will find new pictures of the congress and event location Confex as well as current city views for download: <https://>

koelnmesse.omn5.com/showLinkedImagesEN.jsp?keywordPath=/ISY3/Abteilungen/Presse_Mitteilungen/Presse_Mitteilungen_2024/20241120_PM_UFI_Congress&cms=neu.

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Pictures of today's press conference will be available from 17:00.

About Koelnmesse:

Koelnmesse employs around 1,100 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 43,100 exhibiting companies from 125 countries and approximately two million visitors from 220 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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