

Press Release

SPIEL Essen: New record for exhibition space and a full programme

- All eight exhibition halls used for the first time
- New B2B matchmaking tool and city initiative "Essen spielt!"

The world's largest consumer fair for board games continues to grow: with the addition of Hall 8, SPIEL Essen will showcase across the entire exhibition centre for the first time, setting a new record for exhibition space for the fourth year in a row. From 22 to 25 October, visitors can look forward to not only plenty of gaming fun across 81,200 m², but also a varied programme that also turns the city of Essen into a venue. In addition, the fair is offering the industry new opportunities to network this year.

Play connects

Once again, SPIEL Essen is expanding its footprint, fully utilising the exhibition centre's capacities. The new total area including Hall 8 enables the release of additional ticket allocations. Up to 230,000 visitors are expected – a new record. On the exhibitor side, 921 companies from 53 countries will present their new products this year. "At its core, SPIEL is a public fair for board game fans, but it has also become a genuine industry meeting point," explains Florian Hess, Managing Director of SPIEL. This is where representatives from retail, publishing/editorial, authors and illustrators meet, make contacts and initiate business. To make networking at the fair more targeted, simpler and more effective, the official SPIEL app has been improved this year with a B2B matchmaking tool. American illustrator and artist Peter Mohrbacher ("Magic: The Gathering", "Angelarium") will be welcomed as the new face of SPIEL Essen as Games Ambassador 2026.

Varied programme

Once again this year, SPIEL is bringing a diverse supporting programme of talks, presentations and other events to the stage. Interested attendees can follow the programme on all four days free of charge and without registration. Friday will also feature Educators Day, focusing on topics relating to games in schools, research, education and related fields. The entire programme will be streamed on SPIEL's official YouTube channel. In addition, there will be a live stream from the halls, bringing the unique SPIEL atmosphere to fans at home with live presenters on site. "It was important to us that people who are

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not otherwise at the fair can also experience something of SPIEL,” emphasises Carol Rapp, Managing Director of SPIEL. Under the title “Essen spielt!”, a joint initiative with the city has also been launched. Plans include three games nights at special venues and exclusive discounts for ticket holders.

Major industry awards

Several significant awards in the games industry will be presented at this year’s SPIEL Essen. These include the Deutsche Spiele Preis, a public award for board games, which will be presented at the fair on the Wednesday. Brand new this year are the TCG Awards, the world’s first global industry awards for trading card games. Here fans were able to vote in nine of the 13 categories and choose their favourites. The remaining winners will be determined by an expert jury. The ceremony will take place in an exclusive setting on the Thursday evening and will be broadcast via live stream. In addition, the world-renowned miniature painting competition Golden Demon, organised by Games Workshop, will once again be held at SPIEL Essen. Awards across the 14 categories will be presented on the Sunday on stage in Hall 4.

SPIEL Essen is open from Thursday to Saturday from 10 am to 7 pm and on Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm. Tickets can be purchased online only; there are no ticket offices on site. All information is available at <https://www.spiel-essen.de/en/>.

Images are available at www.spielwarenmesse-group.com/media.

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SPIEL Essen

SPIEL Essen is the world’s largest public fair for board games, bringing passionate board game fans together with national and international exhibitors in the heart of the Ruhr region. For more than 40 years, the fair has showcased thousands of new releases from exhibitors from over 50 countries. The focus is on coming together and playing together: at SPIEL Essen, visitors can try out the latest titles directly at the stands and also purchase them on site.

Spielwarenmesse Group

Versatile and internationally oriented: **Spielwarenmesse Group** brings together all the international activities of **Spielwarenmesse eG** under one corporate brand. Portfolio highlights for the toy industry and other consumer goods markets include two world-leading trade fairs: **Spielwarenmesse** in Nuremberg is the leading international event for the B2B sector, as is **SPIEL** in Essen for the B2C field. Also part of the portfolio are **BRANDmania** – Europe’s largest B2B networking festival for licences and collaborations in Essen – and the exhibition programme **World of Toys by Spielwarenmesse**, which opens up new markets for manufacturers

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through joint activities in **Hong Kong, Tokyo** and **New York**. The portfolio also includes **Kids India** as a stand-alone event in Mumbai. Subsidiaries in key locations in both **China** and **India** provide the relevant local expertise in their respective countries. With its concentrated know-how and global network, the organiser is a catalyst for the industry and trend scouts. The 60-member team operates from "ToyCity" Nuremberg and is supported by representatives in over 100 countries. Through both events and online activities, Spielwarenmesse Group is active all year round (www.spielwarenmesse-group.com).