

SPIEL Essen ends as largest event ever

- A perfect start with a new team and many highlights
- New hall concept works: More space, more exhibitors
- 193,000 visitors from 85 countries

Essen is the world capital of games – as the past four days have once again impressively demonstrated. From October 4 to 8, 193,000 game enthusiasts from 85 countries came to SPIEL Essen, the largest international public fair for board games. Thanks to this impressive number and a total area of 62,500 m², the biggest SPIEL ever took place. The variety of more than 1,700 novelties, which were shown at the world's leading fair, proved that board games are more modern and up-to-date than ever.

Successful start

The success of SPIEL Essen 23 is also overwhelming for the new seven-member team of the organizing Merz Verlag. "We had hoped that more people would come to SPIEL than last year, but we didn't expect this number," says Carol Rapp, managing director of Merz Verlag since November. "It was wonderful to feel so much joy in the halls, at the game tables, in the aisles and among the exhibitors. We changed a lot of things this year to make SPIEL even more accessible and appealing, and the number of visitors on all days, as well as the general feedback, shows us that we've done it." Part of those changes was the thematic sorting of the halls into family games, connoisseur and expert games, and role-playing, trading-card and miniature games. The new hall concept, coupled with much wider aisles, helped to better distribute the crowds in the halls. This measure also made it easy to find small booths of rather unknown exhibitors in all halls. With 935 exhibitors from 56 nations, SPIEL was again extremely international this year.

Increased interest also for exhibitors

The significantly increased interest in SPIEL Essen had a particular impact on the frequency among exhibitors: "Our stand was really well attended on all four days. The game tables were almost always completely occupied," says Andreas Finkernagel, managing director of the Friedberg-based publisher Pegasus Spiele, and adds: "We had significantly more sales at the fair than in previous years. Although the individual receipt was somewhat lower, we had many more customers at our cash register." Ravensburger

laid down a real blockbuster with its new trading card game 'Disney Lorcana' for which an exclusive special card was released at SPIEL Essen. The queue for the game broke through the hall wall and had to be directed through a gate into the adjacent Hall 7. Never before has the fair experienced such a rush.

Events and awards

In addition to the many games, extensive program items and activities in the exhibition halls and rooms provided variety. In addition to signing sessions, tournaments and special game demos by exhibitors, Merz Verlag once again offered an additional program. On the Thursday of the fair, there were panels about change and the future of the games industry. On Friday, the Educators' Day, which has been established for four years, took place with topics on education, research, and teaching around board games. With around 1,000 educators from various countries, Educators' Day was the most successful panel day SPIEL has ever had. At times, there was no more room in the conference room. Those interested had to be referred to the video recording, which will be available on the YouTube channel of SPIEL Essen in the next few days. Instead, they were able to spend more time at the information booths of the exhibitors, who this year also provided more information than ever about their games suitable for education.

Winners of the game

A special program offered by Merz Verlag was available on all days in the Galeria. Here, all visitors could paint miniatures of SPIEL's new mascot, the cat Meeps, free of charge and take them home. A total of 1,200 of the little figurines were distributed to children and adults. On the Wednesday before the fair, the Deutscher Spiele Preis was awarded. The joy among authors and publishers was great when Germany's biggest community award for board games went to 1st place 'Planet Unknown', 2nd place 'Dorfromantik' and 3rd place 'Heat', as well as Best Children's Game 'Mysterium Kids'.

"It's great to see that we struck a chord with the gaming community with many new ideas. The team staged everything perfectly," sums up Florian Hess, managing director of Merz Verlag and member of the Executive Board at Spielwarenmesse eG, emphasizing, "SPIEL will continue to be just as exciting, as we still have a lot planned for the next few years." Now the organizers are getting down to the business of evaluating the feedback

and starting directly to plan and further optimize the next SPIEL. They have almost exactly one year to do this: SPIEL Essen 24 will take place from October 3 to 6 2024.

Images are available at www.spielwarenmesse-eg.de/media.

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Spielwarenmesse eG

Spielwarenmesse eG is the fair organizer and marketing services provider for the toy sector and other consumer goods markets. The Nuremberg-based company organizes the world-leading **Spielwarenmesse®** in Nuremberg, complemented by the services available on **Spielwarenmesse® Digital**. Its range also includes the **Internationale Spieltage SPIEL** gaming event in Essen, **Kids India** in Mumbai and the **Insights-X** in Nuremberg. Expanded coverage of the topic of licensing and collaborations comes with **BRANDmate** in Offenbach. The range of services provided by the cooperative also includes industry campaigns and the international fair programme, **World of Toys by Spielwarenmesse eG**, which enables manufacturers to exhibit at pavilions featured at trade fairs in Asia and the USA. Spielwarenmesse eG operates a worldwide network of representatives in over 90 countries. It also has several subsidiaries, including Spielwarenmesse Shanghai Co., Ltd., responsible for the People's Republic of China and Spielwarenmesse India Pvt. Ltd., covering the Indian market. The complete company profile of Spielwarenmesse eG can be found on the Internet at www.spielwarenmesse-eg.com.