

Multi-faceted, international, pioneering: Spielwarenmesse eG celebrates 75th anniversary

- Ceremony took place at general meeting in Nuremberg
- Celebration of special birthday for Spielwarenmesse to follow in January

Spielwarenmesse eG has been making history for three-quarters of a century – and doing so with huge success. While the company enjoys its 75th birthday in 2025, it will not be until 2026 that the Spielwarenmesse fair itself celebrates its platinum anniversary as the Nuremberg cooperative's most important event.

With passion and foresight

The multifaceted positioning and international orientation of Spielwarenmesse eG is representative of the toy sector and related consumer goods markets. Right from the start, being a cooperative set it apart from other trade fair companies. In 1949, four visionary entrepreneurs embraced the risks and decided to launch the Spielwarenmesse in Nuremberg. After the successful premiere of the German Toy Fair in 1950, the deal to form the cooperative was sealed the same year. "With this legal structure we remain something of an exotic species in the trade fair world, and one of the most successful cooperatives in Bavaria", comments Christian Ulrich who, together with his colleagues Florian Hess and Jens Pflüger, has controlled the fate of Spielwarenmesse eG since 2021. This leadership trio is supported by some 60 colleagues at the company's base in Nuremberg and by a network of representatives in over 100 countries.

A promising future

The firm's highly international aspect is a particular characteristic, now more than ever. So is the passion with which its managers give life to the 'Spirit of Play' to bring together and inspire people across the world. At the centre of its portfolio are now two world-leading trade fairs: the Spielwarenmesse in Nuremberg, its B2B flagship – which has featured the rocking horse in its logo since its second ever edition – and SPIEL in Essen, the leading B2C event. The range of fairs is complemented by Kids India in Mumbai and by the international 'World of Toys by Spielwarenmesse eG' format, whose shared stands provide targeted access to markets in Hong Kong, Tokyo and New York. The Company's own subsidiaries in the key locations of China and India ensure that appropriate expertise

is available locally. “With this global structure and its combined expert knowledge, Spielwarenmesse eG is increasingly becoming a driving force with regard to trends, topics and new business models,” explains Ulrich. The latest example of this is BRANDmate – a fresh, future-directed event in Essen for everything related to licensing and brand collaboration. Online activities throughout the year round off the company’s programme.

Big party next year

For all its up-to-date structure, the team at Spielwarenmesse eG still looks back proudly to its roots: it honoured its 75th anniversary in traditional manner with an evening of celebrations for its members at the Imperial Castle of Nuremberg, in conjunction with its general meeting on 24 April. The coronavirus pandemic made it impossible to hold the Spielwarenmesse as an in-person event in 2021 and 2022. For this reason, celebration of the 75th anniversary of the trade fair itself has been pushed back to next year: its big birthday party takes place during the fair, which runs from 27 to 31 January 2026. “We’ll be celebrating this special occasion with all the participants – it’s a moment for appreciating what has been achieved and a prompt to carry our success story into the future, together with the entire sector,” says Christian Ulrich.

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

Spielwarenmesse eG company history 1949–2025: an overview

1949 Following the partitioning of Germany, toy manufacturers lack a suitable trade fair at which to present their products. As a result, Carl Ehmann (Märklin), Ernst Theodor Horn (Chief Executive Officer of the German Toy Industry Association), Arno Drottboom (Director of VEDES) and Hans Mangold (GAMA) decide in 1949 to form a Fair Committee to stage a toy fair for the trade in Nuremberg.

1950 The first German Toy Fair takes place from 12 to 18 March 1950 with 351 exhibitors and 4,300 buyers – 600 of them from abroad. The fair is organised by the Toy Industry Association of the German 'Trizonal Economic Area' and takes place in Nuremberg in and around the Wieseler Haus. It is opened by the Federal Minister of Economic Affairs, Ludwig Erhard.

After this successful premiere, on 11 July 1950 the Fair Committee and 46 companies form a limited liability cooperative (an eGmbH, registered with the District Court on 1 August 1950). The Managing Board Members are Ernst Theodor Horn and Fritz Drescher. Max Scheerer becomes Chair of the Supervisory Board.

1951 The rocking horse takes over from Nuremberg city tower as the symbol of the fair, and is subsequently retained by the Spielwarenmesse in varying forms.

1956 Fritz Drescher becomes the sole Managing Director of Spielwarenmesse eG.

1957 The number of attendees at the Spielwarenmesse breaks the 10,000 barrier with 11,500 visitors, 4,000 of them from abroad.

1958 The Nuremberg Spielwarenmesse opens up to exhibitors worldwide. Once the company invites international exhibitors, straight away 60 of the 830 exhibitors at the fair are foreign companies. The following year, this figure doubles and it has been rising steadily ever since. One-third of the 12,000 visitors are guests from abroad.

The name is changed from the German Toy Fair to the International Toy Fair Nürnberg.

1959 Emil Franke succeeds Max Scheerer as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board.

1962 Kurt Hausser succeeds Emil Franke as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board.

1966 Following further expansion into the newly built trade fair complex, auxiliary and secondary buildings and lightweight structures, with the construction of the Europahaus all of the available capacity in and around the exhibition centre at the Stadtpark is now exhausted.

1970 Hans-Otto Steiff succeeds Kurt Hausser as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board.

- 1973** The International Toy Fair moves into the newly constructed (and in record time) exhibition centre in Nuremberg-Langwasser. With an exhibition area of 52,000 m², this provides space for the first time to offer a consistent product group structure.
- 1974** On 1 April 1974, Dr Benno Korbmacher – Chief Executive Officer of the German Toy Industry Association – takes over as Managing Director of Spielwarenmesse eG. He negotiates with Messehallen GmbH, a forerunner of today's NürnbergMesse GmbH, for further expansion of the exhibition centre. Simultaneously, he succeeds in further raising the global standing of the fair.
- 1977** Visitor numbers break through the 30,000 barrier for the first time. 1,567 toy manufacturers – including 644 international companies – exhibit at the fair this year.
- 1984** 14 December 1984 sees the opening of the multipurpose Frankenhalle, providing the Spielwarenmesse with an extra 10,000 m² of exhibition space.
- 1988** Dieter Hahne succeeds Hans-Otto Steiff as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board.
- 1991** The international character of the Spielwarenmesse continues to strengthen and the total number of exhibitors breaks through the 2,000 mark: of the 2,078 businesses, 938 are from abroad. Among the 51,140 visitors to the fair are 15,737 international guests.
- 1996** Gerd Bise becomes Chair of the Executive Board.
- 1997** With the increasing marketing activity worldwide comes a need to modify the logo and the name of the event, which becomes the 'Spielwarenmesse International Toy Fair Nürnberg'.

The company is commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs to assist German toy manufacturers abroad. It is responsible for implementing federal participation in the American International Toy Fair in New York. In subsequent years, it is commissioned to manage federal involvement with the industry fairs in Hong Kong, Moscow and Los Angeles.

- 1998** Hall 12.2 introduces a fresh type of exhibition stand to the Spielwarenmesse in 1998 with the new concept of a permanent stand. Roughly 30 international businesses, some of them world-famous brands, rent stand space for the entire year.

Peter Walter succeeds Dieter Hahne as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board.

- 1999** The Spielwarenmesse International Toy Fair Nürnberg celebrates 50 years of existence. The book '50 years of Spielwarenmesse Nürnberg. The story of a success' is published for the occasion.

The company moves from the Nuremberg Exhibition Centre to a nearby office block in Münchener Strasse.

- 2001** The Spielwarenmesse wins the UFI Marketing Award for outstanding, service-focused visitor marketing.

German Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder opens the 52nd Spielwarenmesse International Toy Fair Nürnberg.

- 2002** In terms of trade visitors, the Spielwarenmesse breaks through the 70,000 mark.

Ernst Kick becomes Spokesperson of the Executive Board at Spielwarenmesse eG on 1 December 2012, and is appointed Chair of the Executive Board in June of the following year. He drives forward the internationalisation of the company's activities through a combination of collaborations, joint ventures with companies and the formation of subsidiaries.

Volker Sieper succeeds Peter Walter as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board.

- 2003** German President Johannes Rau opens the 2003 Spielwarenmesse.

- 2004** The Spielwarenmesse launches its new product campaign with the introduction of the InnovationCenter to present new products and to reward the most innovative toy ideas with the fair's new product prize, the ToyAward. The Industry Forum also celebrates a successful premiere, with presentations and expert panels to put the spotlight on knowledge-sharing.

- 2005** On the occasion of the 2005 Spielwarenmesse, the city marketing initiative 'Enjoy Toy Fair City' (later to become 'ToyCity') is launched in collaboration with Spielwarenmesse eG.

Cooperation between the Frankfurt Book Fair and the Spielwarenmesse provides for shared stands at both events.

- 2007** With the newly built Hall 4A, the gross area now available for the Spielwarenmesse is 160,000 m², allowing the fair to rearrange its hall allocations and product areas to meet visitor requirements.

- 2009** Spielwarenmesse eG initiates the 'World of Toys by Spielwarenmesse' overseas fair programme, providing support for manufacturers' entry into new markets and business development. The new group participation programme smooths the path for companies into high-turnover or high-growth toy markets around the world through national and continent-wide industry fairs. The first of these is the Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair, which takes place between 5 and 8 January 2009.

The Spielwarenmesse International Toy Fair celebrates its 60th anniversary. German Federal Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel opens the fair.

For the first time, a shared stand is provided for Chinese exhibitors offering high quality 'Made in China' toys.

The Spielwarenmesse Industry Forum is renamed the Toy Business Forum.

- 2010** Spielwarenmesse eG supports the German Games Archive, which curates a unique collection of over 40,000 board games from across four centuries. As the city of toys and games, Nuremberg now has yet another active and attractive facility in the sector.

The Spielwarenmesse eG cooperative further expands its worldwide network. In 2010, Spielwarenmesse Shanghai Company, Ltd. is launched as a standalone wholly-owned subsidiary, to coordinate both the marketing in China of services provided by Spielwarenmesse eG and Chinese involvement in the Spielwarenmesse International Toy Fair Nürnberg.

- 2011** At its Toys go green special area, the Spielwarenmesse highlights perspectives on sustainability in the toy sector – a pioneering topic that since 2022 has earned a permanent place in the exhibition halls.

- 2012** Hans Ulrich Remfert succeeds Volker Sieper as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board at Spielwarenmesse eG.

- 2013** The word 'Spielwarenmesse' is henceforth protected by the German Patent and Trade Mark Office.

On behalf of Spielwarenmesse eG, the trade fair Kids India takes place for the first time in Mumbai from 24 to 26 October 2013 under the auspices of the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC).

- 2014** Founded two years previously as in-house agency for the Spielwarenmesse, on 1 April 2014 'Rote Reiter' becomes a standalone advertising agency for the company's creative work as well as for external clients.

- 2015** A new product group, Fashionable and Trendy Articles is introduced at the 2015 Spielwarenmesse.

Spielwarenmesse eG expands its portfolio with the Insights-X trade fair for the stationery sector. The first event takes place from 8 to 11 October 2015 at the Nuremberg Exhibition Centre. With Insights-X, the trade fair and marketing service provider is responding to demand among leading brand manufacturers for a new tailor-made platform for the stationery market.

- 2016** On 1 April 2016, Spielwarenmesse eG sets up its Indian subsidiary Spielwarenmesse India Pvt. Ltd., based in New Delhi, to further strengthen its position in one of the biggest growth markets in the world.

- 2017** Spielwarenmesse eG moves to new offices in Herderstrasse in Nuremberg.

Spielwarenmesse eG launches its own print magazine 'Spirit of Play – The Global Toy Magazine', to appear once a year in November. The area of the same name on the Spielwarenmesse website delivers the latest information from the sector all year round.

The first collaboration with licensing association LIMA takes place at the 2017 Spielwarenmesse. Furthermore, the new 400 m² activity space Tech2Play puts the spotlight on technical and electronic toys.

2018 Axel Kaldenhoven succeeds Hans Ulrich Remfert as the new Chair of the Supervisory Board.

A new record is set at the 2018 fair, with 2,902 exhibitors from 68 countries.

2021 In view of the continuing coronavirus situation, the Spielwarenmesse is cancelled. In its place, 'Spielwarenmesse BrandNew' presents a digital preview of products from 25 to 29 January 2021.

On 23 June 2021, the Spielwarenmesse Podcast celebrates its first edition with Ernst Kick as its guest.

Board Directors Ernst Kick and Dr. Hans-Juergen Richter retire in mid-2021. Florian Hess, Jens Pflüger and Christian Ulrich (Board Spokesperson) take over as the new trio.

2022 Due to the global coronavirus pandemic, the Spielwarenmesse is again cancelled. To present their products and to network with others, exhibitors, retailers and media representatives get together online from 2 to 6 February 2022 on the new Spielwarenmesse Digital business platform.

The World of Toys programme is expanded for 2023 with involvement in Toy Fair New York and the Tokyo Toy Show.

Spielwarenmesse eG takes over the Internationale Spieltage SPIEL event on 1 January 2022. Previous shareholder Dominique Metzler remains as Managing Director, working with Florian Hess who represents Spielwarenmesse eG. On 15 November 2022, Carol Rapp joins the 'SPIEL in Essen' team as an additional director and Dominique Metzler withdraws from the company.

Spielwarenmesse eG and Eva Stemmer launch a new joint venture for the licensing sector with the founding of BRANDmate.

2024 To drive forward continued expansion in the forward-looking Indian market, Tanu Ailawadi – previously Project Manager – is appointed Managing Director of Spielwarenmesse India Pvt. Ltd.

2025 A new hall arrangement awaits those attending the 74th Spielwarenmesse. The architecturally spectacular Hall 3C at the Nuremberg Exhibition Centre is used

for the first time. In addition, the presentation area Toy Business Forum celebrates 20 years of existence with a new concept and design.

BRANDmate moves from the Fredenhagen Industrial Hall in Offenbach, near Frankfurt, to the spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Zollverein Coal Mine.

Spielwarenmesse eG marks its 75th anniversary as a company in 2025.

30 April 2025 – sw/sr

Spielwarenmesse eG

The multifaceted positioning and international orientation of Spielwarenmesse eG is representative of the toy sector and other consumer goods markets. With its legal structure as a cooperative, the business is unique among trade fair companies and is highly successful. Its 60-member team operates from the 'ToyCity' of Nuremberg and is supported by representatives in over 100 countries. Its portfolio includes two major global fairs: the **Spielwarenmesse** in Nuremberg is the lead international event for the B2B sector, as is **SPIEL** in Essen for the B2C field. To these can be added **Kids India** in Mumbai and the **World of Toys by Spielwarenmesse** trade fair programme, which opens up new markets for manufacturers through joint activities in **Hong Kong, Tokyo** and **New York**. The Company's own subsidiaries in the key locations of **China** and **India** ensure that appropriate expertise is available locally. With its accumulated knowledge and global network, the trade fair producer is becoming an ever stronger initiator and groundbreaker in the industry's issues and trends. The most recent example of this is **BRANDmate** in Essen, which casts an unconventional and future-directed spotlight on the topic of licensing and partnerships. With its combination of events and online activities, Spielwarenmesse eG (www.spielwarenmesse-eg.de) is active all year round.