

BRANDmate inspires with innovative ideas and a strong location

- Successful relocation: Zeche Zollverein as a central meeting point for the industry
- New name, proven format: BRANDmate becomes BRANDmania

Two days full of energy, encounters and ideas: on 25 and 26 June, the Grand Hall of the Zeche Zollverein in Essen became the place to be for brand makers, licensing professionals and creative minds. BRANDmate brought together around 900 participants from a wide range of industries. With innovative formats and numerous highlights, the event impressively underlined its position as a platform for collaborations, partnerships and licensing. Managing Director Christian Ulrich and his team will continue to focus on continuity in the format and openness to new ideas in the future – most recently with the rebranding of BRANDmate to BRANDmania, which has to take place for legal trademark reasons.

Location with impact

BRANDmate took place for the first time in the grounds of the Zollverein Coal Mine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. "The move from Offenbach to Essen was extremely well received by everyone," says Business Development Manager Katrin Störr. The industrial charm and relaxed atmosphere have remained. "The atmosphere is fantastic. It's a great place for networking and new business opportunities," says Loïck Boinnard, Trade & Retail Marketing Executive at Toei Animation Europe. BRANDmate thrives on personal dialogue – whether in matchmaking, in the brands' lounge areas or in spontaneous conversations between panels and the parade. With over 2,650 networked contacts contained in the appointment tool alone, dialogue was once again at the heart of the event this year. "BRANDmate is the ideal place to find fresh stimuli together with strong brand partners and to take away innovative approaches for our licence business with existing and new partners," affirms Anto Crepulja, Director Consumer Products at Warner Bros. Discovery.

Exciting productions, new perspectives

Other well-known brands and companies such as Bavaria Media, El Cartel Media, Hasbro Germany, Koziol, Mattel, Paramount, RTL Consumer Products, Seven.One AdFactory, Story House Egmont, Studio 100, The Smiley Company, Universal, Wildbrain CPLG and

ZDF Studios brought their themes to life with particularly appealing stands, photo spots and presentations in the entrance area. Fresh impetus came from new exhibitors such as La Plume Dorée, Riethmüller, The Pokémon Company and CNC Cosmetic. Nicole Wülfing, Sales Manager of the cosmetics brand, says: "The organisation and the supporting programme exceeded our expectations." These included a strong performance in the parade with around 35 walking acts – powered by Vontz – and the tried-and-tested BLINDmate format of the MARKENkuppeler. The companies Wholey and Oetinger have come together here and see the opportunity for a special co-operation, which if successful will result in a new BRANDbaby. Another example of creative community building was the signing session with comic artist Ralph Ruthe at the Kiddinx stand. Julia Wurzer, Head of Brands at WDR mediagroup, sums it up: "Coming together as an industry on these two days always feels like a class reunion and the evening programme is another opportunity to have nice and valuable conversations." Founder Eva Stemmer, who was there in person on the second day of the event, also received a lot of positive feedback.

Content for the community

The strong location, the relaxed atmosphere and the genuine community feeling were particularly emphasised at the fourth BRANDmate. "The open framework enabled high-quality discussions at eye level – direct, uncomplicated and effective. Particularly impressive were the inspiring keynotes and innovative programme," says Sarah Laura Kleen, Key Account Manager of first-time exhibitor G. Güldenpfennig. On the Speaker Stage, three very well-attended topic blocks provided structure: 'BRANDS for Future' (AI, innovation, strategy), 'BRANDS for Mates' (fandoms, kids, culture) and 'BRANDS for Retail' (retail cooperation, best practices, studies). Retail Day, which was held in cooperation with the global trade association Licensing International Germany for the first time alongside the event, emphasised the successful collaboration between retailers and brands.

Into the future with a new name

After four years, BRANDmate is opening another chapter – and will become BRANDmania with immediate effect. The renaming is necessary for trademark reasons. In terms of content, everything that characterises the event today remains the same:

networking on a partnership basis. "Much as we would have liked to keep the name, BRANDmania will remain a strong stage on which imaginative people, brands with potential and promising industries come together. We look forward to next year – and thank everyone who made this edition something special," concludes Christian Ulrich. BRANDmania will take place in Essen from 24 to 25 June 2026.

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

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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 **BRANDmania** 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.