

## **SPIEL Essen: World's largest game fair breaks visitor record after four sold-out days**

- Happy exhibitors: valuable audience feedback and business contacts
- Successful premieres: from a gigantic stage to new records

SPIEL Essen 2025 was a record-breaking trade fair. With 220,000 people from all over the world, the largest gaming event surpassed the previous visitor record set in 2019. The trade fair was sold out on all days. A new exhibition space record of 77,500 m<sup>2</sup> was announced even before the event began, as Hall 7 was opened for the first time and all spaces were fully booked. 948 exhibitors from 50 countries presented over 1,700 new products. And a world record for the largest Catan game was achieved on Friday.

### **New hall expands capacity**

220,000 people over the four fair days is a new visitor record. Merz Verlag remained below maximum capacity again this year. 'We want people to be able to move freely through the aisles and, at the same time, we want as many people as possible to be able to visit us,' explains Carol Rapp, Managing Director of the organising Merz Verlag. She cites the opening of Hall 7 as another positive effect: 'This allowed us to increase the number of tickets available. The fact that we were still sold out on all days is absolutely impressive,' says Rapp. The combination of available tickets per day, wide aisles and sensibly structured halls all played a key role in fulfilling the brief: SPIEL in Essen was full, but at the same time not overwhelming.

### **Success for exhibitors and organisers**

'Direct feedback from visitors is one of the most rewarding aspects of the fair for us as exhibitors,' says Hermann Hutter, owner of Hutter Trade/Huch! and chairman of Spieleverlage e.V. But business appointments and meetings are also high on his agenda: 'Nowhere else can you maintain contacts as efficiently as at SPIEL.' Robert Geistlinger, president of the American publisher Arcane Wonders, agrees: 'SPIEL is the most important trade fair for us to meet partners from all over the world and make new contacts. Especially in the current global situation, it is more important than ever to come together and talk to each other.' Another highlight was announced by Kosmos Verlag, which celebrated a new world record at the Grugahalle with 'Catan – Connect'. To mark

its 30th anniversary, the publisher invited visitors to take part in the largest simultaneous game ever played at SPIEL. 1,170 people responded to the call and set the new record. 'At the fair, the exhibitors also focus on the joy of gaming. At the same time, an incredible number of effective business developments take place here. I don't know of any other event that is such a powerful springboard for launching a business as SPIEL,' sums up Florian Hess, Managing Director of Merz Verlag and Member of the Executive Board at Spielwarenmesse eG.

### **Successful supporting programme**

Merz Verlag set new standards with a large, state-of-the-art stage area in Hall 4, bringing the accompanying SPIEL.talks programme directly to those in the hall. By moving the event from the previous conference rooms directly to the exhibition area, it attracted significantly more visitors. Stage events such as talks about jobs in the industry, a cosplay catwalk, featuring a variety of beloved characters, a panel discussion about various international events, and a live role-playing game drew in crowds. Trade fair ambassador Mháire Stritter was also in attendance. The journalist, presenter and role-playing game leader, best known for her LARP and cosplay, brought SPIEL and her enthusiasm for gaming to an even wider audience. The Golden Demon – the well-known miniature painting competition from Games Workshop, the European part of which takes place at SPIEL – was equally well received. Over 1,000 miniatures were submitted to be judged on site and prizes were awarded across 14 different categories.

### **The German Game Award: Winners announced**

Germany's largest community award for board games, the German Game Award, was presented on the Wednesday before the fair. Anyone from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland can vote online for their favourite game from the current year. This year's winners are:

- **1<sup>st</sup> place:** 'SETI: Auf der Suche nach außerirdischem Leben' by Tomáš Holek, published by CGE and HeidelBär Spiele
- **2<sup>nd</sup> place:** 'Endeavour: Die Tiefsee' by Carl de Visser and Jarratt Gray, published by Frosted Games and Board Game Circus
- **3<sup>rd</sup> place:** 'Bomb Busters' by Hisashi Hayashi, published by Pegasus Spiele

- **Best Children's Game:** 'Die kleinen Alchemisten' by Matúš Kotry, published by CGE and HeidelBär Spiele

#### After SPIEL is before SPIEL

It was a fantastic fair, and for four days Essen became the centre of the international gaming world once again. To ensure that SPIEL will be a celebration for all gaming fans again next year, Merz Verlag is already starting to plan the next fair. Feedback is currently being collected and evaluated, reflected upon and discussed to determine what needs to be done for 2026. The next SPIEL will take place in Essen from 22 to 25 October 2026.

Images are available at [www.spielwarenmesse-eg.de/media](http://www.spielwarenmesse-eg.de/media).

27 Oct 2025 – rdc/sw

#### SPIEL Essen

SPIEL Essen is the world's largest public fair for board games and brings passionate board game fans together with national and international exhibitors in the heart of the Ruhr region. The fair has been around for over 40 years and presents thousands of new releases from exhibitors from over 50 nations. The focus is on socialising and playing together, as the new titles can be tested directly on site at the booths at SPIEL Essen.

#### 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](http://www.spielwarenmesse-eg.de)) is active all year round.