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## **Nuremberg Exhibition Centre: Inaugurated 50 years ago today**

**As the new events year begins for 2023, international exhibition hub Nuremberg can celebrate a landmark anniversary: it was on 10 January 1973 that the city inaugurated its new Exhibition Centre. The Nuremberg Exhibition Centre has been hosting trade fairs, conferences and corporate events for 50 years now. The group of multifunctional halls in Langwasser, a new part of town at the time, represented an innovative counterpoint to a city whose urban landscape up to then had been defined most of all by its Old Town. “Today, the courageous step taken by the City Council in those days can be considered one of the most important moments in opening up Nuremberg as an international business location,” said Mayor Marcus König. “By building this exhibition venue, as a city we laid the cornerstone then for the subsequent success story of our NürnbergMesse.” But the exhibition company itself, today’s NürnbergMesse GmbH, will not be celebrating its own 50th anniversary until 5 April 2024 – commemorating the day when it was entered as a legal entity in the Commercial Register.**

The exhibition venue’s location, in the immediate vicinity of the Congress Hall, the Zeppelinfeld and the entire complex of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds, highlights the sense of obligation that the Franconian exhibition company still feels today. “The choice of this site back in the day, with the historical dimensions it implied, still charges us with the mission of dealing appropriately with the history of the place,” emphasises NürnbergMesse Group CEO Prof. Roland Fleck. And his joint CEO, Peter Ottmann, adds, “In light of the many international meetings that have taken place during trade fairs and conferences at this location since 1973, we could hardly have found a better place to underscore the cosmopolitan, economically vigorous, and thus internationally harmonizing side of the City of Nuremberg.”

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Centres Association



The Global Association of  
the Exhibition Industry

## **Spielwarenmesse sets the tone**

One motivating factor for the decision in the late 1960s to build an exhibition venue in Nuremberg was the evolution of the Spielwarenmesse, the famed trade fair for toys. The event had been held in Nuremberg for the first time back in 1950, when the city was chosen because of its long toy making tradition. The “Deutsche Spielwarenmesse” grew into the “Internationale Spielwarenmesse”, setting new records for numbers of exhibitors and visitors every year. Despite repeated construction projects to expand the original site on Bayreuther Strasse at Nuremberg’s City Park, space was in perpetually short supply. And on top of the toy industry, the professional association of the German exhibition industry, the AFAG (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Messen und Ausstellungen GmbH), headed by its founder and director Helmuth Könicke, had been holding trade fairs and fairs for the general public in that area since 1952.

Those events had taken place at the “Alte Messe”, not far from the City Park, with the “Wieselerhaus” that had opened in 1923 as a market building for the “Nürnberger Bund” trade association. Even today, the street called “Am Messehaus” in north-eastern Nuremberg remains as a relic of the old trade fair location. The Nürnberger Bund, founded in 1901 as a coalition of retailers for glass, porcelain and luxury goods, had held its exhibitions there as “shopping exchanges” since the 1920s.

## **City Council sets course for Nuremberg as a trade fair hub**

In February 1969, the City Council voted by a large majority to give serious consideration to building a new exhibition centre that would keep the successful toy trade fair in Nuremberg and offer potential for new trade fairs to come and join it. The area of today’s centre was chosen after a variety of other locations had also been considered. One advantage here was the site’s good transport connections with both the Autobahn and the centre of town. The underground rail system in the direction of the new Langwasser district had already been under construction since 1967 – the Langwasser-Süd stop opened on 1 March 1972. On top of that, there was sufficient space for parking. The City Council voted unanimously on 4 February 1970 to invite detailed plans for a new exhibition centre on the site. By a Council resolution of 17 February 1971, Messehallen GmbH, a city-owned subsidiary, joined with what was then Spielwarenmesse eGmbH to coordinate the new exhibition centre. (The Spielwarenmesse would withdraw from Messehallen GmbH the following year.) Finally, the City Council approved the first segment of

construction on 16 June 1971. Ground was broken on 20 September of that same year.

### **A successful baptism by fire**

Only 16 months later, at an investment of some 100 million DM, the new Exhibition Centre was festively opened by Mayor Dr Andreas Urschlechter at a New Year's reception on 10 January 1973. Now some 60,000 square metres of exhibition space were on offer in ten halls, along with extensive areas for services and open space.

The baptism by fire for the new facility followed shortly afterwards, with the 24th International Spielwarenmesse from 3 to 9 February 1973. An event that had opened 23 years earlier in Nuremberg with 351 exhibitors on around 3,200 square metres of exhibition space now attracted more than 1,560 exhibitors from 34 countries, offering their wares on roughly 70,000 square metres of space. Plans were already under way for a second phase of construction, adding a further 20,000 square metres of indoor space and a multipurpose hall.

### **Outlook: 50th anniversary of NürnbergMesse, 2024**

However, the organisational kick-off for the Nuremberg trade fair community as we know it today would not come until 1974. That was when the City of Nuremberg founded the "Nürnberger Messe- und Ausstellungsgesellschaft" as the legal successor of Messehallen GmbH, in which the Spielwarenmesse had been a part owner until 1972. The constituting meeting of the new company's Supervisory Board was held on 20 March 1974. The refounding was then completed with the entity's entry in the Commercial Register on 5 April 1974, and NürnbergMesse GmbH was born. Today, NürnbergMesse is one of the 15 largest exhibition companies in the world. The Nuremberg Exhibition Centre now has 16 exhibition halls and a total of some 180,000 square metres of exhibition areas and 50,000 square metres of open space. It also includes the NürnbergConvention Center (NCC), offering space for up to 12,800 visitors at conferences and corporate events. And the "Frankenhalle", known well beyond Franconia's borders, can accommodate up to 5,000 visitors for festive events and television shows.

### **About the NürnbergMesse Group**

The NürnbergMesse Group is one of the 15 largest exhibition companies in the world. It includes NürnbergMesse GmbH and that company's 15 subsidiaries and affiliates. The Group employs more some 900 people at eleven locations in Germany, Brazil, China, India, Italy, Greece, Austria and the USA. It also has a network of international representatives in more than 100 countries. Its portfolio comprises some 120 national and international exhibitions and conferences held in person and as digital events, focusing on five general fields: Retail & Consumer Goods, Building & Construction, Process Technology, Electronics & Security, and Social & Public. Its events safeguard jobs; generate tax revenues as well as billions of euros in purchasing power effects each year, making NürnbergMesse a major economic engine for the Nuremberg metropolitan region and Germany as a whole. As an employer and organizer of major events, NürnbergMesse assumes responsibility for people and the environment. It structures its corporate business in line with the 17 UN SDGs with the aim of achieving climate-neutrality by 2028.

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