

Press release

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Trade fair activities more important than ever

Markus Quint
Tel. +49 69 75 75-59 05
press@messefrankfurt.com
www.messefrankfurt.com

Messe Frankfurt is looking ahead to the coming financial year 2022 with cautious optimism. Speaking at the End-of-Year Press Talk earlier today, Wolfgang Marzin, President and Chief Executive Officer of Messe Frankfurt, said: “We are registering a very strong desire on the part of our customers to participate in our trade fairs, even though the situation remains volatile and there is much uncertainty in the sectors.”

“For years, Messe Frankfurt has set one record after the next”, said Peter Feldmann, Chairman of the Messe Frankfurt Supervisory Board and Mayor of Frankfurt: “The coronavirus brought us to an abrupt halt. But we have a strong team of 2,300 employees with strong management at the helm. Rather than burying their heads in the sand when the crisis hit, they rolled up their sleeves instead. With new concepts and future-oriented trade fairs like Eurobike, Messe Frankfurt is ideally positioned for the post-coronavirus market. As the company’s shareholders, the City of Frankfurt and the federal state of Hesse are behind it 100 percent. We will do everything we can to ensure that the company gets through the crisis in good shape. Messe Frankfurt can rely on us.”

As Wolfgang Marzin emphasised: “The physical trade fair business model is alive and well – with a complexity and diversity that is only found in face-to-face interaction. The trade fairs that have taken place in recent months under tried and tested safety and hygiene standards have all pointed to a high level of intensity and customer satisfaction.” Nonetheless, the recovery is set to take longer than originally thought, especially in the case of the major international flagship events in Frankfurt.

While some 150 trade fairs and exhibitions were held around the world under the Messe Frankfurt banner before the pandemic, provisional figures for the current financial year 2021 indicate less than half this figure. In the first half of the year, in which a high proportion of Group trade fairs are usually held, it was scarcely possible for any events to take place, especially at the company’s Frankfurt base. Outside Germany, events were repeatedly postponed at the Group’s 50 or so locations around the world; in other cases, trade fairs that had been planned as analogue events were held in digital form instead. This means that, for the second year in a row, Messe Frankfurt has had to

contend with a pandemic. Accordingly, the company expects sales to be in the region of €140 million and the Group result to be even lower than in the previous financial year.

Wolfgang Marzin: “The effects of the pandemic will not be so easy to shake off, particularly as far as global travel is concerned.” In the short term, this could – depending on the sectors – initially lead to a trend towards a more continental focus for events, including in Europe.

Wolfgang Marzin: “Our practice of continually setting regional areas of focus for our international business early on is now paying off twofold.” Messe Frankfurt has been active in the key business centres for more than three decades and is extremely well networked with subsidiaries and events established in the domestic markets there. With corresponding structures and the market size that we have achieved so far, the company is giving its sectors access to continental, national and regional markets.

As Detlef Braun, Member of the Executive Board of Messe Frankfurt, explained: “When developing our trade fair platforms, we see it as our job to fuse the improved information provided digitally with the live experience of a trade fair event. Our customers will find many elements on our digital platforms that they are used to finding at our analogue events. This increases the international reach both for exhibiting companies and for retail buyers, allowing them to forge new contacts and facilitating knowledge transfer across borders and regardless of travel restrictions.” Wherever it makes sense to do so, Messe Frankfurt bundles its expertise and developments relating to common thematic areas and trade fairs by entering into cooperations and joint venture activities with associations and organisers. As Uwe Behm, Member of the Executive Board of Messe Frankfurt, stressed: “Over the past weeks, we have firmly established fairnamic GmbH, the company we set up together with Messe Friedrichshafen.” With the Friedrichshafen-based company, Messe Frankfurt plans to further intensify its longstanding collaboration in connection with the Aero South Africa and Eurobike trade fairs. Eurobike will be relocating to Frankfurt next year with a view to facilitating further growth.

The work on Hall 5 is progressing well. Uwe Behm: “We are on schedule for completing this final piece of our master plan for our exhibition grounds.”

After being forced to put the brakes on – or, at best, to remain in second gear – for almost two years, Messe Frankfurt wants to get started again in the new year. Wolfgang Marzin: “Even though the situation remains volatile, we are going into the new financial year with cautious optimism.” Feedback from customers, particularly international ones, has been very positive. Uwe Behm: “In recent weeks, we activated all of our halls again, meaning that our entire exhibition grounds were in operation.” For cost reasons, five halls were not included in the network in recent months.

Detlef Braun: “More than 500 events are planned for financial year 2022, including many flagship events at our Frankfurt base such as Ambiente, Light + Building and IFFA. We are optimistic that participants will be able to travel to Germany from almost any country in the world without being subject to quarantine.”

With around 30 new events currently scheduled to make their debut between now and 2025, Messe Frankfurt is continuing to invest within Germany and worldwide. On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economics, the company is also organising joint German activities at selected international events. More than 20 German pavilions will be set up in the coming year. In addition, Messe Frankfurt will be playing host to new guest events at its Frankfurt base in 2022, including Chemspec Europe, Enlit Europe and Parcel & Post Expo.

“We are concentrating on our strengths and, even in these challenging times, are continuing to invest in our portfolio around the world, in our Frankfurt base and in our workforce. This also includes the excellent training we give to young people”, said Marzin, summing up the Group’s strategic orientation: “However, the future development of our business will of course depend on the progress of vaccinations around the world, on the attendant relaxation of travel restrictions, the resumption of business travel and the desire to be globally active again.”

Background information on Messe Frankfurt

The Messe Frankfurt Group is the world’s largest trade fair, congress and event organiser with its own exhibition grounds. The Group employs approximately 2,300* people at its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main and in 30 subsidiaries around the world. In 2021, the company had to contend with the challenges posed by the pandemic for the second consecutive year. Annual sales will be approximately €140* million after having been as high as €736 million in 2019 before the pandemic. Even in difficult times caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we are globally networked with our industry sectors. We serve our customers’ business interests efficiently within the framework of our Fairs & Events, Locations and Services business fields. One of the Group’s key USPs is its closely knit global sales network, which extends throughout the world. Our comprehensive range of services – both onsite and online – ensures that customers worldwide enjoy consistently high quality and flexibility when planning, organising and running their events. We are expanding our digital expertise with new business models. The wide range of services includes renting exhibition grounds, trade fair construction and marketing, personnel and food services. With its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, the company is owned by the City of Frankfurt (60 percent) and the State of Hesse (40 percent).

For more information, please visit our website at: www.messefrankfurt.com

* Preliminary figures for 2021