

### **SPIEL Essen 2024 sells out for the first time and in a record area**

- World's largest B2C fair for board games celebrates major successes
- Attractive supporting programme provides wide variety

SPIEL Essen has finished on a note of special success: every day of the world's largest public fair for board games was completely sold out. For four days, 204,000 people from around the globe filled the Messe Essen with their enthusiasm for board games and their enjoyment of playing them. From 3 to 6 October, the heart of the Ruhr region buzzed with play, laughter, shopping and conversation. The fair once again demonstrated the international nature of board games and of the event itself. Visitors from over 80 nations attended, and the 923 exhibitors presented more than 1,500 new products from 52 countries spanning all continents.

### **Sold-out days**

Even before the fair started, SPIEL Essen achieved an absolute first. The organiser initially announced that for the first time, all tickets for Thursday and Friday were sold out. During the course of the fair, Saturday and Sunday then also sold out. By the end, the visitor count stood at 204,000, significantly exceeding last year's figure. "This year, we worked with a ticket quota for the first time to create a pleasant experience for as many people as possible and to comply with safety regulations. There were never allowed to be more than about 50,000 people on site at any one time," explains Carol Rapp, Managing Director of the organiser, Merz Verlag.

### **New record area**

As early as June, the space for exhibitors was sold out. This year the board game fair filled 68,500 square metres in the six halls used at Messe Essen. This made it once again the largest SPIEL of all time. "When we had to open a waiting list in June because we couldn't immediately accommodate all the demand from exhibitors, we knew that this year there would again be a need for more space. We had to do a lot of puzzle-solving to coordinate the requests for more playing space and the wishes of new exhibitors," says Carol Rapp.

### **Enthusiastic exhibitors**

Exhibitors, too, proved enthusiastic about this year's SPIEL. "It was an impressive and successful fair," says Yasin Ates, Director for the DACH region at Ravensburger. "The halls were full, yet it still felt comfortable. It was great to see so many people playing with such enthusiasm." For Ravensburger, SPIEL is also an important indicator of how a new title for autumn and winter will be received, Ates explains. The publisher and distributor Asmodee similarly confirmed how successful the fair was. "This year again, SPIEL was a fantastic fair. What a pleasure to see so many people here, discovering so many great games from such a wide range of publishers," says Thomas Koegler, CEO of the Asmodee Group.

### **Successful continuation of modernisation**

Having started the modernisation of SPIEL Essen with last year's changes to the hall planning, a significantly improved app, a new logo and a mascot, Merz Verlag continued along the path to the future of the world's leading fair this year with some fine-tuning and enlargement. The thematic hall structure was retained following excellent feedback, and further improved. The app acquired user-requested features such as a filter to display newly added games and the ability to integrate specific games into route planning. The Meeps mascot was also more fully integrated into SPIEL. Visitors could meet the playful kitten as a walking act in the halls and take photos with major exhibitors in the foyers. A plush toy and the game 'Loot' with Meeps as the principal character were available for the first time to purchase at the fair and online.

### **Star guest and many highlights**

This was also the first year in which there was an official face for SPIEL: Alea, the frontman of the rock band Saltatio Mortis. The enthusiastic gamer is part of the cross-genre project Finsterwacht, which combines music, fantasy novels and role-playing games. The fair dedicated an entire day to this unique interplay of three cultural forms as part of the 'SPIEL.talks – Finsterwacht'. Another premiere at SPIEL was the Golden Demon, the renowned competition for painted miniatures, hosted by Games Workshop and comprising over 1,000 entries of impressively painted models. On the Sunday, a ceremony crowned the winners in various categories and awarded the coveted Slayer Sword as the grand prize. The fair programme also included the 'SPIEL.talks – Sustainability', where experts from the board game world presented various aspects of

sustainability in and around gaming. The Educators Day again took place, attracting around 500 people from education, research, child-raising and other pedagogic fields to the international presentations. On the Wednesday before the fair, the German Games Prize was presented. First place went to Mischwald (Lookout Spiele), second place was claimed by Sky Team (Kosmos), while 3rd place went to Die weiße Burg (Kosmos/Devir). The Best Children's Game award went to Die magischen Schlüssel (Game Factory/Happy Baobab).

### Planning for 2025 begins

"This year's SPIEL was a complete success and again shows how closely the team works with the community and how well it copes with the many challenges of a leading global fair," concludes Florian Hess, Managing Director of Merz Verlag and board member of Spielwarenmesse eG. He adds: "The fair is heading in a fantastic direction and we have great plans ahead to keep SPIEL up-to-date and attractive to exhibitors and visitors from all around the world."

For Merz Verlag, it's that time of year again: post-SPIEL is pre-SPIEL. The team will take a short breather before collecting feedback, evaluating responses, and planning for 2025 to ensure that the next fair will be even more successful. SPIEL Essen will take place from 23 to 26 October 2025.

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

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### 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



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## Press Release

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