

Press Release

Hamburg Messe und Congress Expects Significant Upturn In 2022

Hamburg, 2 February 2022 – When more than a dozen physical trade fairs were able to take place in autumn 2021, everything seemed to indicate that the exhibition business was recovering. But by the end of the year, the rapid spread of the omicron variant of Covid-19 put an abrupt end to these hopes. With few exceptions, trade fairs and congresses scheduled for the first quarter 2022 had to be cancelled or postponed to late spring. Nevertheless Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH (HMC) anticipates a significant upturn of the exhibition business in 2022.

“Things had just started to pick up towards the end of 2021. Then omicron arrived,” said Bernd Aufderheide, President and CEO of HMC. “But most recent forecasts indicate that the current COVID-19 wave will subside in a matter of a few weeks. Of course we very much hope this prediction comes true. We are preparing a wide spectrum of physical events, including our three flagship fairs, INTERNORGA, SMM and WindEnergy Hamburg.”

All three fairs had been confined to the digital space, with INTERNORGA and SMM being two of six purely virtual trade fairs and conferences held during the year 2021. In addition, two hybrid events and 21 physical trade fairs, meetings and other events took place. Of the 51 events originally scheduled for the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, 29 were realised. 22 had to be cancelled or postponed, including many popular international fairs that are traditionally well-attended.

Sales revenues in 2021 amounted to 28 million euros. By maximising savings in material and maintenance expenditures, utilising the Federal Government’s pandemic emergency fund, implementing a stringent short-time work strategy, and delaying the filling of vacancies, HMC succeeded in reducing the predicted year-end result of -58 million euros by 11 million to -47 million euros.

What made the year 2021 unique was the setting up of Germany’s biggest vaccination centre in exhibition halls A2 and A3, where more than one million anti-coronavirus inoculations were administered between January and August. Counting the many staff members working at the vaccination centre, our complex was accessed more than 1.5 million times during this period.

An exceptional event was the partial hand-over of the CCH – Congress Center Hamburg after having been closed for comprehensive renovation and modernisation for nearly five years. The first event to take place in the redesigned Hall 1 was the opening ceremony of the ITS Mobility Congress, which attracted global attention. In fact, the Hamburg event set a new participation record in the 35-year history of the congress. Following the commissioning of the East and Centre sections of the CCH, the complex is now going through a ‘soft opening phase’ of several months during which its technical systems are being tested and fine-tuned. Most of this can only be done during regular event operations.



Another highlight of the year was the successful première of PHOTOPIA Hamburg, not only one of very few debuts of the pandemic year 2021 but also one that received extraordinary attention internationally in social media channels, thanks to its unique concept. The festival of imaging, intended for both photography top stars and a general audience of film and photography enthusiasts, received positive feedback even from Hollywood.

Furthermore, HMC has used the last business year to develop the FUTURE MOVES concept together with its partner, ramp106 GmbH. The goal is to position Hamburg, a hotbed of innovative ideas and initiatives, as a leading international platform for future-looking, interconnected mobility visions and applications. FUTURE MOVES will become a real-life experience for the first time at the 2022 OMR Festival on the Hamburg exhibition campus.

Another novelty will celebrate its debut this year, the H₂ EXPO & CONFERENCE, which will be held in parallel with WindEnergy Hamburg 2022. This new event, designed as an international gathering focused on the generation, distribution and use of green hydrogen, targets the entire, booming hydrogen-related industry, from major project developers to young start-ups.

Thus HMC's business year 2021 was very much dedicated to the development and implementation of new events. Co-operating closely with long-standing exhibitors, trade fair committees and other partners, HMC was able to work in an interactive environment characterised by flexibility, maximum mutual courtesy and respect as well as a profound willingness to understand each other's situation during this unusual time.

Because of the pandemic, our HMC staff spent much of the year working short time and preparing events remotely from their home offices. Despite the fact that many events ultimately had to be postponed or cancelled, this strategy enabled HMC to make good use of the time windows during which it was possible to carry out trade fairs and congresses.

For the year 2022 Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH expects sales revenues in the upper eight-figure range. We are unable to provide a precise forecast of the number of trade fairs and congresses at the present time.

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