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Top year 2018 for Koelnmesse: confirmation of leading position in the global trade fair sector

Continuing on track for growth:

With sales of more than 400 million euro, 2019 holds new records in store

Koelnmesse has confirmed its leading position in the trade fair sector:

“We managed to surpass our ambitious growth targets once again in 2018. It was the best even-numbered year of all time”, Koelnmesse President and Chief Executive Officer Gerald Böse recapitulates. At 337.4 million euro, sales are more than 23 percent higher than in the comparable year 2016 and are more than 15 million euros higher than forecast. Profit reached 53.4 million euro, and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) totalled to 81.3 million euro. After an outstanding year in 2018, Koelnmesse plans to increase these figures still further in 2019 to exceed 400 million euro in sales for the first time. It plans to generate a profit of more than 20 million euro for the current year.

“In line with the motto of our Annual Report, power is indeed meeting potentials at Koelnmesse: at our Cologne location, at our outbound trade fairs, in the digital world and through the Koelnmesse 3.0 investment programme”, Koelnmesse President and Chief Executive Officer Gerald Böse says as he summarises the positive developments of 2018. The solid result for 2018 is mainly attributable to the trend in own, outbound and guest events, as well as the service business. With a total of 78 trade fairs and exhibitions, Koelnmesse convinced more than 38,000 exhibiting companies from 101 countries and around 2.4 million visitors from 211 states. Added to this were another approx. 146,000 congress participants.

Henriette Reker, Mayor of the City of Cologne and Chairman of the Supervisory Board, has words of praise for these above-average developments: “2018 marked another year in which Koelnmesse has consistently worked on its sustainability - whether that was in digitalisation, the Koelnmesse 3.0 investment programme or internationalisation. This performance enabled our trade fair to confirm its place among the top ten organisers and locations in the trade fair sector worldwide.”

Sales growth for inbound trade fairs: more than eight percent

Sales in 2018 are a great success for Koelnmesse: This marks the first time since 2006 that profits were recorded for an even-numbered year. “We are on a clear path to growth”, Böse says. Compared to the respective previous events, sales for inbound trade fairs were more than 8% higher on average.

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Mayor of the City of Cologne

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The result for 2018 also reflects a special effect in the amount of 40.1 million euro owing to reversal of provisions for rental payments. Following years of dispute over rental amounts for the North Halls of the Cologne trade fair grounds, at the end of 2018 a lease was concluded at more favourable conditions.

Page
2/3

Koelnmesse celebrates premières and tradition at the same time

“The past year marked the premiere for ZOW, the supplier fair for the furniture and interior design industry, for THE TIRE COLOGNE, and for Feria Mueble & Madera in Colombia”, Böse points out. “All three events were already able to prove their potential for the respective sector at their kick-off events.” Premieres were celebrated in 2019 for ANUFOOD Brazil, followed in June by the CCXP Cologne - Comic Con Experience, in Cologne. Alongside premieres, Koelnmesse also relies on its traditional brands: Anuga marks its 100th anniversary in 2019. After an eventful half-century, COLOGNE FINE ART & DESGIN celebrates its 50th edition, and ISM will also turn 50 in 2020.

Koelnmesse is Number One in South America

28 own events were held worldwide outside of Germany in 2018 - registering total sales of 220 million euro. In addition to established markets in India, China and Southeast Asia, the focus continues to be on the Americas. With a total of nine events in South America, Koelnmesse is viewed there as the Number One among German trade fair firms. It is expanding its presence further with the establishment of the new subsidiary, Koelnmesse SAS, in Colombia.

From October 2020, the whole world will be looking to Dubai: for EXPO 2020, Koelnmesse is organising the German Pavilion on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economics and Energy, making this the third involvement in the four major world exhibitions held to date this century. Important milestones were reached in 2018; ground was broken in April 2019 on the 4,600 m² site.

gamescom asia in Singapore from 2020

For 2020, Koelnmesse announces a new international event in Singapore: gamescom asia (15-18 October 2020). Asia is considered the most attractive and fastest-growing gaming market in the world. This makes Singapore the perfect location for a high-profile gamescom asia for game developers and game releases with an Asian orientation.

Clear strategy for the digital transformation

At Koelnmesse, digitalisation is a very central guide to future success: A total of more than 50 million euro will be invested in digital technologies, infrastructure and processes between now and 2022. “Our objective is to play in the same international league alongside the leaders for digitalisation within the trade fair industry. We have gone from smart followers to smart movers”, Böse remarks.

The launch of the digital signage that Koelnmesse and Samsung SDS presented for the first time at gamescom 2018 on the northern section of the trade fair grounds marks the first significant milestone towards the digital transformation. The digital information and control system sets new international trade fair standards for infotainment and marketing on more than 200 m² of digital space. With initial marketing successes already achieved, expansion to cover the entire trade fair grounds is in progress.

Page
3/3

With the incub8 digital campus established in 2018, Koelnmesse is helping start-ups get together with established companies with ties to Koelnmesse. The aim of this partnership, which is unique in the trade fair sector, is to promote collaboration on digital solutions. incub8 means new inspiration for the economy and momentum for the digital scene in Cologne.

Koelnmesse 3.0: Strategic pillar for business success

Thanks to a comprehensive modernisation effort and new construction, by 2030 Koelnmesse will offer the most attractive inner-city trade fair grounds in the world. As the first new construction project under Koelnmesse 3.0 which, at around 700 million euro, is the largest investment programme in the company's history, Car Park Zoobrücke was commissioned on time in spring 2018 and features more than 3,200 parking spaces. Preparations for the new Hall 1plus, with 10,000 m² of exhibition space, began in 2018 as well. Plans for Confex[®], the multifunctional event location, are going forward. Confex[®] and Hall 1plus will boost Cologne's capacity for high-calibre conferences and congress fairs to a new level and represent further visitor potential for Cologne, even outside the already-strong trade fair periods.