



Premiere at the Spielwarenmesse: Value of Play Conference focuses on the role of play and games

- Multifaceted and practical insights from international experts
- Specialist platform for fresh ideas and intensive dialogue

To mark its 75th anniversary, the Spielwarenmesse is expanding its on-site offerings with a new style of event: on Wednesday, 28 January 2026, the Value of Play Conference will take place for the first time in the Toy Business Forum at the Nuremberg Exhibition Center. From 8.30 to 10.30 am, trade visitors can look forward to a high-calibre programme that will highlight the cultural, educational and economic facets of play. Admission begins at 8 am with a champagne breakfast. The event is primarily aimed at experts from the fields of science and education, media representatives and content creators, as well as PR and marketing experts. The conference will be hosted by games and toy researcher Dr Volker Mehringer from the University of Augsburg.

Relevant topic with many perspectives

‘The Spielwarenmesse reflects numerous facets of the value of play – but until now, there has been no format that brings them together in a compact and in-depth way. As an international event, we see the need to create a platform for this,’ explains Christian Ulrich, Member of the Executive Board at Spielwarenmesse eG (Spokesperson). The programme combines scientific insights, practical perspectives and socially relevant topics related to play. The focus is on five contributions that highlight the potential of play across a wide variety of different outlooks. The event kicks off with an improvised dialogue between Prof. Dr Martin Geisler (Ernst Abbe University of Applied Sciences, Jena) and Prof. Dr Jens Junge (Director of the Institute for Ludology, Berlin), explaining both entertainingly and scientifically why play is a key human skill. This is to be followed by a discussion between Dr Volker Mehringer and Pablo Busó from the Spanish research institute AIJU on the added value of gaming on a pedagogical level, and its growing importance for education and training.



First-hand information

This is followed by a practical insight from Prof. Dr. Thomas Voit (Technische Hochschule Nürnberg). Using the 'Empamos' model, he will discuss the application of game-typical mechanisms in various working environments. Katriina Heljakka (University of Turku) deals with the international Kidults trend. The Finnish researcher explains how the market is being driven forward by this older, adult audience, and the opportunities for retailers that come alongside it. Brian McCarty, Founder of WarToys, will provide an emotional and socially relevant conclusion. He describes the role that play has for children in war zones and how creative forms of expression can strengthen their resilience. After each presentation, conference participants will have the opportunity to ask the speaker questions directly. 'We are delighted to be enriching the Spielwarenmesse with a new and powerful format that provides fresh momentum for change, promotes forward-thinking and encourages lively exchange,' says Christian Ulrich.

Further information is available at [Spielwarenmesse Digital](https://www.spielwarenmesse.de/digital). Early access to the event is exclusively via NCC Ost. The conference will be held in German and English with real-time interpretation. Participation is free of charge – a binding registration by 23 January via email is required (presse@spielwarenmesse.de). The Value of Play Conference is supported by the German Toy Industry Association (DVS).

Image material is available at www.spielwarenmesse.de/media.

January 2026 – sw

Spielwarenmesse®

The world's leading event for the sector – that's the Spielwarenmesse®. At this B2B event, key players as well as startups present their innovations and trends to retailers from all over the globe, live in Nuremberg. Alongside the extensive range of products, participants also gain a wealth of inspiration for day-to-day business together with valuable knowledge and useful guidance on the market, at what is for them the most significant industry gathering. The event is complemented by year-round coverage of themes, analyses and insights from the multifunctional platform Spielwarenmesse Digital and the e-journal 'Spirit of Play'. Since 2013, the term Spielwarenmesse® has been a protected word mark in Germany.

Fair date: Spielwarenmesse®, Tuesday to Saturday, 27 – 31 Jan 2026