

## The story of Berlin as a trade fair venue

The history of Berlin and its many exhibitions goes back to the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the first industrial exhibition in 1812 the Prussian government of the day brought together individual markets and trade fairs. Thus began an era of organised exhibitions with Berlin as their venue.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> industrial exhibition in Berlin from 1 September to 15 October 1822 there were 182 exhibitors at the Gewerbehaus on Klosterstrasse who, in front of an audience of 9,514 visitors had 998 different products on show, among them a locomotive from Borsig, a high-tech product of the age known only to very few.

In contrast to Leipzig and Frankfurt/Main, where exhibitions also took place, Berlin quickly began to specialise in exhibitions and particularly in specialist events. The topics of these exhibitions varied, as did the venues in the city.

The first specialist exhibition was the "building and furniture industry exhibition" in 1874, which at the time took place in an old drill ground building on Karlsstrasse. In 1882, four days before the opening of the "Nationwide German Exhibition for Hygiene and the Rescue Services" a big fire burned down the wooden pavilions, whose display area had covered more than 11,000 square metres.

In 1897 the motoring organisation "Mitteleuropäische Motorwagenverein" organised the first automobile show on what was already a famous boulevard, Unter den Linden. Today's exhibition grounds had not yet been built. It was not until 1913 that the foundations of the grounds were laid in an area where a parking lot now stands, to the north of today's Neue Kantstrasse, opposite the International Congress Center, the ICC Berlin. It consisted of a steel-framed structure with three bays covering 17,500 square metres, and was the so-called automobile hall, which was completed in 1914. Today's site was chosen at the western end of the Charlottenburg district, since it could easily be reached from the Witzleben light railway station, construction of which had begun in 1913.

### **The birth of the exhibition grounds**

In 1920, after the "law pertaining to the formation of the new township of Berlin" was passed, 8 towns, 59 rural municipalities and 27 manor estates combined to form Greater Berlin, a city on an altogether new scale. In 1923 a limited company, the "Gemeinnützige Berliner Messe-Aufbau-GmbH", was set up with a capital of 100 million Reichsmarks, which in 1924, following an agreement with the Automobile Industry Association of the Reich, was permitted to lease and use the association's two halls. In the same year the company known as Messe-Aufbau-GmbH was renamed the "Gemeinnützige Berliner Messe- und Ausstellungs GmbH", and a local Berlin authority was established to run the organisation's affairs. Again in 1924, this authority concluded an agreement with the Radio Industry Association, enabling the first big radio exhibition, the "Grosse Deutsche Funkausstellung", to take place the same year. In other important events in 1924, construction took place of an additional new hall, the Radio Industry Building and the Radio Tower (Funkturn).

At the time the municipal corporate bodies, i.e. the government and parliament of Berlin authorised the construction costs totalling 2.1 million Reichsmarks.

Two years later the Green Week came into being. Previously the only thing the public had known was an outdoor event, the "Grand Farming Weeks", where traders put farming products on sale on various streets. The Radio Tower was also opened in 1926 and soon became a landmark of Berlin and the exhibition grounds. Originally the tower had been

designed simply as a mast supporting an aerial, but later received an observation deck and restaurant, which soon made it very popular with Berlin locals and visitors alike.

As early as 1928, the year of the first "International Aviation Exhibition", some 2.25 million visitors came to see nine fairs and exhibitions in the halls next to the Berlin Radio Tower. Hall 3, covering 3,000 square metres, was built the same year, and Martin Wagner and Hans Poelzig submitted a comprehensive building plan for the entire site, bordering on the area of the light railway station S-Bahnhof Eichkamp (now "Messe-Süd"). At last there was a plan which combined the grounds for a trade fair and congress into a single entity inside a leisure area, and brought the nascent medium of radio onto the scene. But nor did the second version of the plan, completed in 1930 after a stream of criticism, come to fruition.

Expansion of the exhibition grounds took place in 1929 and 1930, with construction of three halls and completion of a circular route around the garden of the Radio Tower. Thus expansion of the grounds continued, with the hall areas increasing by 12,500 square metres, only to be halted in the first year of the war.

### **Trade fair business flourishes despite the obstacles**

In 1935 a fire destroyed the wooden Radio Hall, damaging neighbouring halls as well as the Radio Tower. Reconstruction of the premises was carried out based on a new design by Director of Town Planning Richard Ermisch. While reconstruction of the Radio Hall took place the Deutschlandhalle was also being built, taking nine months. Originally intended as an assembly hall and sports hall it formed part of the overall plan.

In 1937 the Main Hall (no. 9) was completed (currently Halls 18 to 20). Now covering a display space of 52,259 square metres the Berlin Exhibition Grounds had reached their furthest extent prior to the Second World War, except for a few minor supply buildings built at a later date.

Berlin with its large-scale exhibition grounds and its many events was now finally among the top trade fair venues. During the pre-war years the trade fair calendar listed many events. They included the Green Week Berlin and the Grand German Radio Exhibition, fairs which, under similar names, still flourish today. Also among the events were a big water sports exhibition, an international automobile and motorcycle exhibition, attended in 1937 by an impressive tally of 534 exhibitors, an international crafts exhibition, as well as events for the restaurant and hotel trade, the textile and clothing industry, the dairy industry and for huntsmen.

In 1939 the trade fair organisation was renamed "Berliner Ausstellungen, Eigenbetrieb von Berlin" and was combined with Berliner Anschlag- und Reklamewesen GmbH, known as the BEREK division.

In the same year preparations for war abruptly halted the promising developments at the trade fair venue, when in August 1939 the Grain Office of the Reich requisitioned all the halls for storage. Immediately afterwards the Second World War broke out, and the last summer flower show took place in the outdoor display area in 1943. During the war Berlin and its exhibition grounds were destroyed almost completely. The new Deutschlandhalle also lay in ruins, and the Radio Tower was badly damaged.

## **A new beginning after the Second World War**

Reconstruction of the exhibition grounds began in 1946. In 1947 the first exhibition after the war took place in the Radio Tower casino, called "Werte unter Trümmern". In 1948 there followed the Green Week and the "Building Services Exhibition and Christmas Exhibition".

In 1950 five new halls, the Platz der Nationen with its pavilions, and the G.C. Marshall House were completed, all in time for the first German Industrial Exhibition. Overall hall display space covered 37,000 square metres. In 1950, only five years after the war had ended, there were already five trade fairs taking place at the grounds next to the Radio Tower, in a city that still bore the scars of destruction, but where reconstruction was also going apace. Besides the Green Week Berlin there was a car show with international participation, attended by 403,000 visitors, a pharmaceutical exhibition, the German Industrial Exhibition, to which 1,110,000 visitors came, and the Christmas Exhibition.

Trade fair business was gradually taking over from other special events, such as concerts, theatre performances, sporting events and other festive events, the election of the Bundestag and the Federal President of Germany. To redress the balance, in 1956/57 construction began of the Palais am Funkturm, a venue for festive events, and the Deutschlandhalle was rebuilt. The venue of numerous sporting events and shows until 1997, ownership of the Deutschlandhalle was transferred to the trade fair organisation in 1960, and in 1977 also came under its organisational direction.

As part of the INTERBAU project the congress hall in Tiergarten was built in 1957 and was under the directorship of the trade fair organisation until it partially collapsed in 1981.

Berlin's trade fair organisation made good use of the positive economic developments of the Sixties by putting measures into place from which it would continue to benefit even decades later.

In 1961 the German Radio, Television and Phonographic Exhibition, later known as the Internationale Funkausstellung (IFA), guested in Berlin. The same year the Green Week celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **New, forward-looking trade fairs. The exhibition grounds expand**

A year later the German Industrial Exhibition was augmented by a special show called Partners for Progress, whose topic was Africa. This subsequently developed into an independent trade fair for overseas imported goods, and is now the IMPORT SHOP BERLIN. The exhibition service Ausstellungs-Dienst Berlin (ADB) was set up in 1964 for the purpose of organising special events such as Partners for Progress, as well as for organising trade fair participation by the Land of Berlin abroad. It also organised the ITB and Interchic etc.

The foundations were also laid in the Sixties for the next major international trade fair, the International Tourism Exchange ITB, which took place for the first time in 1967. For considerably longer than a decade the ITB has now been the world's largest tourism trade show. With more than 10,000 exhibitors from over 180 countries and territories it is also one of the world's most international trade fairs.

In 1966, with trade fair business on the increase, the trade fair organisation took the far-sighted decision to stage a competition inviting architects to submit plans for development of the southern section of the grounds and for a multi-purpose building and congress centre. Events eventually overtook the original plans, but the recipients of the first prize, U. Witte and R. Schüler, built the International Congress Center ICC Berlin, and one of the two recipients

of the third prize, H. Frankel, built the halls on Jafféstrasse, which in the late Nineties were replaced by more modern buildings.

### **A concentration of resources and new opportunities for the trade fair and congress**

In the Seventies there were various far-reaching developments. The three organisations Berliner Ausstellungen, Ausstellungsdienst Berlin and AMK regrouped as the new AMK Berlin - Ausstellungs-, Messe-, Kongress-GmbH. They had been separate entities since the war, but their responsibilities overlapped. Now no longer fragmented, they were able to concentrate their resources much more efficiently on the trade fair market.

Furthermore, there was extensive and unparalleled building activity taking place at the trade fair venue in Berlin, which, with its International Congress Center ICC Berlin, was becoming a conference venue attracting visitors from all over the world. Taking six years to be completed, the ICC was opened on 2 April 1979. It was Europe's largest and most modern conference venue, and remains so today. In the intervening years the ICC Berlin has received the "Best Convention Center of the Year" award on numerous occasions, and has played a decisive part in helping Berlin to be constantly listed among the world's ten major cities hosting congresses.

Congresses did not replace trade fairs as a business at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds, they simply complemented one another, benefited from synergies, and even today are jointly responsible for Berlin's exceptional standing on the global events market. Combining trade fairs with conference events, as well as congresses with specialist exhibitions, was a reaction to increased demand in a dynamically unfolding economic and science environment.

Even before construction of the ICC Berlin began, six new fair halls had been opened on Jafféstrasse in 1971. These had become necessary due to rising demand for trade fair events in Berlin. In 1975 the long-established car show became known as the "aaa".

In 1981 the Internationale Funkausstellung, now the IFA - CONSUMER ELECTRONICS UNLIMITED, returned to Berlin and since then has been a welcome addition to the extensive calendar of events at the capital's exhibition grounds, a unique high point in the consumer electronics world for trade visitors and audiences alike.

In the face of global competition, Messe Berlin and gfu have developed the Internationale Funkausstellung IFA into a very successful CE business platform, the most important annual meeting place for discovering new trends, technology and innovation. Ever since 1924, the IFA has always been a place where innovation, knowledge, and the presentation of products and services are regularly experienced anew. Without the IFA, the global impact of radio and television would have been unthinkable. Examples of innovative developments included the valve radio (1924), the first TV demonstrations (1928), the rise to fame of FM (1950), portable TVs (1957), the audio compact cassette (1963). Memorable events were the launch of colour TV (in 1967 by Willy Brandt), quadrophony (1973), 16:9 wide screen TVs, digital satellite radio (1989), laser TV (1993), digital TV and radio, plasma screens (1995), rewritable discs (1997), MP3 players, internet mobile phones (1999), and since 2003, HDTV. The IFA Berlin is the industry's number one trend setter and continues to present innovative consumer electronics developments in Berlin.

As a result of continuous modernisation and expansion, by the end of the Nineties the Berlin Exhibition Grounds had become one of the world's leading international marketplaces for goods and services.

At the end of the Eighties AMK Berlin held more than ten in-house events – among them several trade fairs that were world leaders, on exhibition grounds which covered 83,500

square metres. However, the available hall space very soon was not enough to meet the growing impact of this international venue for trade fairs in Berlin.

Rising demand and a growing number of in-house and guest events in Berlin demanded expansion of the exhibition grounds, and hall space now covered 160,000 square metres. The construction measures ahead required far-sighted planning. Interference with the day-to-day running of events was intended to be minimal, but what was essentially an ideal inner-city location now became a hindrance, as available space was very limited. Thus, for example, the old halls on Jafféstrasse had to be demolished to make way for Halls 2 and 6, and the road nearby had to be rerouted.

### **Opening up European borders provides opportunities for new developments**

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the opening up of Europe's internal borders brought great changes to the situation in the city. Berlin was at the heart of a continent of evermore closely-knit nations, and nothing now stood in the way of it becoming a major city of international importance. Berlin's trade fair organisation made good use of the available opportunities and successfully achieved its aim of no longer being institutionally dependent on the financial support of its principal owner, the Land of Berlin.

This occurred in 1992, the year in which AMK Berlin was renamed Messe Berlin GmbH, and in which the company – as Messe Berlin – recorded positive business results for the first time, something a trade fair organisation was by no means able to take for granted.

Despite the extensive building measures on the exhibition grounds, between 1991 and 1999 Messe Berlin succeeded in staging more than 20 new events, or in securing their return after a prolonged absence. They included major international events such as the International Aerospace Exhibition Berlin-Brandenburg ILA, which returned to its original venue in 1992, the FRUIT LOGISTICA, which first opened in 1993, and which was such a success that the Asia Fruit Logistica was launched in Bangkok in 2006, and InnoTrans, the International Trade Fair for Transport Technology, which every two years since 1996 has attracted rail transport experts from around the world to Berlin.

Increasing the hall display area also served to meet the rising demand from organisers of guest events. For Berlin as a trade fair venue, the business generated by guest events, in terms of volume and quality, was both a new aspect and one that was becoming increasingly important.

In 1999, construction measures neared completion, and Messe Berlin was able to expand its international programme of events yet again. An entrance area at the southern end of the exhibition grounds for better access to the new Halls 1 and 2 still remained to be built.

### **Amid global competition a modern services provider remains on course**

In November 2000 e/home was launched, a trade fair and convention for the networked home.

In February 2001 BuildIT, the IT and Communication Trade Fair for the Construction Sector was launched. The same year, CMS - Cleaning. Management. Services. -, a new, international trade fair for cleaning equipment, facility management and services was held for the first time in Germany, following up the tradition of Reinigungs-Technik Berlin.

By jointly establishing Capital Facility GmbH along with HOCHTIEF and GegenbauerBosse, Messe Berlin improved its technical services at the exhibition grounds in Berlin. Along with

other subsidiaries, Capital Services GmbH and Capital Catering GmbH, it was now possible to offer guest event organisers, exhibitors and visitors a comprehensive range of services on a scale hitherto unknown.

In 2002 HomeTech, the International Trade Fair for Domestic Appliances, made its successful market debut at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds, and in November 2002 fashion berlin - shop & show -, a fashion show for the consumer, was launched.

The Main South Entrance was completed in time for the International Green Week Berlin 2003, directly linking the exhibition grounds with the light railway station S-Bahnhof Eichkamp/Messe-Süd, while also providing space for numerous service facilities and an arena for open-air events.

One year later, in 2004, Messe Berlin made improvements to the trade fair infrastructure with the construction of a new services building next to the railtrack area on Jafféstrasse. It was in this year that Popkomm moved from Cologne to Berlin, acquiring a new international dimension over the years to come.

### **Outstanding business results buck the trend**

In 2005 the trade fair and convention IT Profits, and PostPrint, Berlin's first trade fair for printing and finishing, were added to the calendar of events. Trade fair activities abroad had been dormant for many years, but were revived in style with the successful launch of THETRADESHOW in Orlando, Florida, a collaboration between the ITB Berlin and the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA). The premiere of this first and only tourism trade fair in the USA was immediately the largest industrial trade fair in North America, gathering experts from all walks of the tourism industry. For the ITB Berlin the debut event in Orlando was a perfect start and launchpad for international activities and for wider marketing of the brand. In 2007 THETRADESHOW returned and was held in Las Vegas.

In 2006 three new collaborations signalled yet another eventful year in terms of Messe Berlin's worldwide activities. As a result of Messe Berlin's expertise organising WASSER BERLIN, a collaboration was launched with local partners in Kiev at the AQUA UKRAINE and at Water Sofia in Sofia.

Acting as majority shareholder, Messe Berlin set up a joint venture with the media company Fruitnet Ltd. under the name of Global Produce Events GmbH, with the aim of organising a new trade fair in Asia, the ASIA FRUIT LOGISTICA. The premiere of the ASIA FRUIT LOGISTICA in September 2007 was a marked success. More than 3,000 top-level decision-makers from 54 countries travelled to Bangkok to attend Asia's first trade fair for fresh produce. The quality of the fair and the supporting Asiafruit Congress, Asia's leading specialist conference event, was reciprocated by the high-level decision-maker status of the trade visitors attending. The results of the trade fair also exceeded Messe Berlin's high expectations by far.

Despite its successful and substantial involvement in other countries Messe Berlin's earns its income first and foremost in the German capital, and in doing so has prospered exceedingly well. Business in 2006 produced the highest turnover to date, reaching 168 million euros (132 million in 2005), with positive overall results.

Over a five-year period from 2001 onwards the German trade fair market was in poor shape, only returning to form in 2006. But trade fair business in Berlin grew by over 50 per cent. At the end of 2006, Raimund Hosch, Chief Executive Officer of Messe Berlin was quite clear: "Business developments here show that, with the right concepts, it is possible to achieve above-average growth both in Germany and in Berlin. In the end we also owe our successes

to the basic agreement concluded with the Land of Berlin, which have made it possible for us to invest in events.”

In that record year, 21,243 exhibitors (21,027 in 2005) from more than 180 countries and territories showed their products and services to interested visitors at 32 trade fairs and exhibitions organised by the Messe Berlin GmbH Group of Companies in Berlin. Altogether this expanding group of companies organised 115 trade fair events in Germany and the USA, attended by around 28,000 exhibitors and 1.8 million visitors.

“Investing in our events has paid off“, said Raimund Hosch at the end of 2006. “With new ideas, brave decisions and the right concepts we have shown that it is possible achieve above-average growth. Messe Berlin now boasts a portfolio that can compete at any international level.“

Approximately 1.7 million visitors attended a total of 47 trade fair events in Berlin, among them 15 guest events. Two-thirds of the exhibitors taking part in in-house events came from abroad, and in terms of its international appeal Berlin was ranked among the leading venues on the global trade fair market. This high ranking underlines both the growing significance of the exhibition grounds as a hub at the heart of Europe and Berlin's extraordinary appeal.

In particular, exhibitors and trade fair visitors from abroad are of major importance to the region surrounding the capital. According to surveys by the Institute of Economic Research in Halle (IWH), foreign exhibitors, trade fair visitors and congress participants who were at Messe Berlin in 2006 generated additional spending power in excess of 860 million euros. In the region surrounding the capital Messe Berlin is unquestionably the biggest driving force behind business travel.

According to the results of an Emnid survey in 2006 these facts were echoed by the opinions of the German public. When asked which companies people readily associated with Berlin, respondents named Messe Berlin first (81 %), and then Air Berlin (78%), Hotel Adlon (75%), Deutsche Bahn (63%) and the publishers Axel Springer Verlag (61%).

The responses to the question as to which company promoted the most positive image of Berlin gave an even clearer result in favour of Messe Berlin. 37 per cent replied that Messe Berlin's represented Berlin best in business terms, with events such as the IFA, ITB, the International Green Week, InnoTrans, Popkomm, FRUIT LOGISTICA and the ILA.

Due to organisational cycles, in 2007 there were relatively few in-house events. However, by expanding its services and those of its subsidiaries, with guest events attracting good business, and with conferences achieving outstanding results, Messe Berlin was able to exceed the targets set by the Land of Berlin by a margin of more than 10 per cent.

In 2008 Messe Berlin is introducing four trade fairs to their respective marketplaces in Berlin, as well as one in Asia, where the ITB Asia in Singapore will be making the expertise gained by the world's leading tourism trade show, the ITB, available to both exhibitors and trade visitors. Not only are more than 40 trade fairs taking place in the German capital in 2008, numerous large-scale conferences are also being held. Thus in 2008, trade fairs and congresses in the city will achieve a new high in terms of turnover figures, representing another milestone in the history of Berlin.