

# PRESS RELEASE

Hatten, 27.03.2026

## New impetus for the retail sector: The 40th IAW trade fair closes with positive results

When innovative exhibitors showcase diverse product ranges and conversations turn into business deals, it means that the key players in global trade have once more gathered at the International Trade Fair for Retail Promotions and Imports (IAW). From 24 to 26 March 2026, the 40th edition of the IAW fair took place at the Cologne Exhibition Center. Accompanied by a top-notch program, around 4,900 trade visitors met with 280 exhibitors from 25 countries to view new product lines, negotiate attractive deals, and learn about the latest trends in the retail industry. In its anniversary edition, the IAW once again positioned itself as a leading trade show in the international market environment.

Project Manager Kerstin Manke is optimistic in view of the event's success: "I'm convinced that we have made a significant contribution to the retail sector with this 40th edition of our trade fair. At a time when the market is being put to the test by rising energy prices and geopolitical tensions, the IAW fair serves as a powerful link between the various players in the retail industry."

The core of the IAW trade show is the diversity of its exhibitors and their innovative product ranges. The Italian company International Tex Trade participated in the IAW once again and Gioele Cozzolino, the company's Sales Director, highlights the trade show's success: "We're very satisfied. People we hadn't seen in recent years came back to us and we were able to reconnect with them. As a result we managed to secure some lucrative orders and schedule a number of meetings. He sees particular value in the IAW trade show's role as a hub for international customers: "We meet many people here from non-European countries who are looking for European quality."

Niklas Mertens, a sales representative at Expo-Börse GmbH, also appreciates the diversity and international nature of the clientele: "At the IAW we attract many new customers who aren't just from the clearance goods sector. They come here to snap up bargains and diversify their business strategy." He notes that his company was also able to make many new business contacts and secure some valuable orders at the 40th edition of the IAW.

These contacts are invaluable at a time when the future of the retail sector is constantly being redefined. Geopolitical tensions, rising energy costs and economic uncertainties are weighing on the industry and are also affecting exhibitors at the IAW. Ralf Benzler, Regional Sales Manager at STYLEX GmbH, states: "The market is currently a big question mark. Companies are paying increasing attention to their inventory levels and want to sell their products faster - overall volumes are shrinking." He views innovation, flexibility, and a keen sense for trends as essential skills for a company wishing to remain competitive in this situation. What role does the IAW trade show play in this? "The IAW is increasingly becoming an information exchange where you can fine-tune all the details. It's a platform where you can follow up with new customers and interested parties. Personal discussions are the only real way to figure out where the journey is heading."



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The IAW is also frequently used by new exhibitors as a platform for strategic development. At the 40th edition of the trade fair, no fewer than 58 newcomers showcased fresh product lines in the exhibition halls. Mehmet Emin Arli attended the IAW with his company, Arli GmbH, in order to further develop his business strategically. "We wanted to establish a presence here, partly to understand how the market for clearance items and promotional goods operates and how retailers make their purchases." After 17 years of online operations, the company now aims to establish itself in bricks-and-mortar retailing as well. Mr Arli's conclusion is thoroughly positive: "Customers come here to make purchases, not just to visit a trade show."

Uwe Alsen, who was exhibiting at the IAW for the first time with his company Alsen Handelshaus GmbH, draws a similar conclusion. In addition to connecting with new customers, he sees the added value of the trade show in the opportunities it provides for networking and inspiration: "In our market, you have to be quick and respond to trends. At the trade show we get direct feedback on our product range and can also connect with competitors."

At the IAW, industry professionals have the opportunity to incorporate these new market trends directly into their stocks, and visitor satisfaction with the event was correspondingly high. Bassem Chour, Operations Manager at BaMu Post und Bürobedarf GmbH, was attending the IAW for the first time. His verdict is unambiguous: "The trade fair went really well for us." In his view the IAW is not only a place to find new suppliers, but also a source of inspiration and ideas. "Visiting the trade show makes a lot of things easier for us. Here you can hold the products in your hands, talk to the right people, and get things done right away," states Bassem Chour at the end of his visit.

The IAW trade show is worthwhile for visitors and exhibitors not only because of the valuable discussions it enables, but also thanks to an impressive supporting program. At the 22nd edition of the E-Commerce Arena, e-commerce experts shared experiences, tips and insights from their own success stories. "I'm very pleased with how things went," said organizer Michael Frontzek on the final day of the show. "We had a very highcalibre line-up. The topics ranged from marketplaces via AI and tools to hacks. Our visitors received everything they were looking for and experienced a significant impact." The stage is surrounded by the booths of the e-commerce quarter, where leading players in online retailing present their products and services.

One of the key themes of this edition of the E-Commerce Arena was the variety of marketplaces in which e-commerce retailers can operate to sell their products. In addition to presentations on major marketplaces such as Amazon, eBay or Kaufland, smaller players such as the British B&Q Marketplace also showcased what they have to offer. "I'm not a fan of one-sidedness. We make the program as broad as possible so there's something for everyone, with the highlights being generated by the differences among our participants," explains Michael Frontzek.



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With fresh product ranges and a friendly, productive atmosphere for discussions, this 40th edition of the IAW trade show established itself once again as the leading event in the international retail sector, even in the face of a challenging market situation. Visitors and exhibitors benefited not only from productive new business contacts, but also from industry insights and exclusive presentations.

The next IAW trade fair will take place from 8 to 10 September 2026 in Halls 6 and 9 of Koelnmesse, Cologne's Exhibition Center.



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