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Inauguration in 1977 with 14 exhibitors – History of the leading international trade show for general aviation in Friedrichshafen

30th AERO: General aviation in Europe celebrates the AERO anniversary show

Friedrichshafen - Aviation in Europe has every reason to celebrate: This month (April 17 to 20, 2024), AERO is launching its 30th anniversary edition. The international trade show has developed into the leading global trade show for general aviation. On the shores of Lake Constance, manufacturers and companies showcase their innovations and new products from the entire sector, from gliders, ultralight aircraft through to business jets. Companies from the entire supply chain will also be present in Friedrichshafen. World and European premieres from general aviation will be presented to the public, with around 480 journalists from all over the world reporting on the latest developments.

There will be another airshow at the AERO anniversary edition on Saturday. With a special one-hour flight program the trade show will focus on electric aircraft and sustainable flying. With the AERO Sustainable Aviation Trail, the Engine Area and the AERODrones drone exhibition (April 17 - 19) for civilian drones and unmanned aircraft, other frontline topics of the sector will be in the spotlight. With its comprehensive offerings and the many innovations announced, AERO is one of the world's most important trade shows for the sector.

The AERO international aviation show started with gliders in 1977 before growing strongly on the back of the boom in ultralight aircraft. In recent years, business aviation has also grown enormously. Today, the trade show spans the entire gamut of general aviation, air sports and business aviation. Everything that can fly is represented on the exhibition grounds, apart from commercial airliners and military aircraft which are omitted from general aviation.

This year, over 680 exhibitors from 36 countries will present the full range of general aviation on the entire exhibition grounds in Friedrichshafen with over 95,000 m² of exhibition space. The offering mainly includes the business aviation segment with business jets and single- and twin-engine aircraft, the sports aviation segment with its comprehensive range of gliders and ultralight aircraft, as well as avionics, maintenance and services and pilot supplies. The typical AERO trade visitor is a highly qualified professional looking for new technologies, products and company contacts. According to trade show surveys, more than 60% of all visitors hold one or more pilot licenses.

Inauguration in 1977 with 14 exhibitors



AERO Friedrichshafen was created as part of the regional motorsport exhibition RMF (racing, engine, leisure). In 1977, 14 exhibitors presented gliders and pilot supplies for the first time at this trade show as part of a special "Air sports" show. In the first year alone, public interest far exceeded the expectations of the show management. The former managing director of the trade show, Ernst Haller, launched the airshow before handing over the reins to Roland Bosch in 1988. In 2018, Tobias Bretzel joined Roland Bosch as AERO project manager and has been solely responsible for the show at show organizer fairnamic GmbH since 2022.

Numbers soar

Since there was no comparable trade show for general aviation in Europe in the 1970s, AERO doubled exhibitor numbers as early as its second year. In the following years, the number of exhibitors and visitors increased continually with double-digit growth rates. In the mid-1980s, AERO left the RMF behind in terms of size and importance. In 1985, given its international importance, AERO was admitted to UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry.

1993: First independent AERO

It was only a matter of time before AERO cut ties with its "trade show mother" as an aviation event and flew on as an independent event. The step to becoming a trade show was completed in 1993. Besides the concept of a trade show tailored to the needs of general aviation and the clearly defined target group, the success of AERO is also linked to the tradition of Friedrichshafen as a cradle of aviation. Major manufacturers such as Zeppelin, Dornier, Kober and Maybach developed airships, flying boats, engines and aircraft in Friedrichshafen early on, thereby establishing Messe Friedrichshafen's image and competence in aviation.

Multinational corporations such as Airbus, Dornier, ZF, Zeppelin Metallwerke and Zeppelin Luftschiffbau have their roots in Friedrichshafen and today operate as leading companies in the aviation industry and other high-tech sectors.

Meeting point for general aviation

While AERO was already a world leader in the air sports sector in the early 1980s, activities in the 1990s were increasingly focused on new product segments. As a result, AERO Friedrichshafen managed to significantly expand its offering, especially in the areas of avionics, maintenance, overhaul and services, but also in business aviation.

2002: Relocation to the new exhibition grounds

Another turning point in the development of AERO was the relocation of the trade show to the new exhibition grounds situated right at the airport in 2002. The far better infrastructure on the new site offered new development and expansion opportunities for the aviation show. The exhibition grounds are one of the few in the world that are



connected to the airport via a direct taxiway. Exhibitors can roll their aircraft directly onto the static display and to the halls, guaranteeing visitors only have to cover short distances as part of efficient trade show visits.

The success of AERO is also thanks to the trade show's ability to constantly adapt its concept to the needs of customers and exhibitors. It also set its own and sector-relevant topics early on, adding important impetus to general aviation. For example, the e-flight-expo has been integral to the trade show for over a decade. The first e-flight expo took place at a time when no one expected electric flight to be an alternative to internal combustion engines in the aviation sectors. The AERODrones, Avionics Avenue and the 'Be a pilot' area are further examples of the early adoption of important key topics.

About the event:

AERO 2024 will take place on the exhibition grounds of Messe Friedrichshafen from April 17 – 20, 2024. AERO is the leading international show for general aviation, business aviation and air sports. It presents aircraft from civilian drones to gliders, ultralights and gyrocopters, helicopters, business and training aircraft with piston engines or turboprops right through to business jets. New propulsion systems, electric flight, state-of-the-art avionics, services and supplies for pilots are other key areas. These topics are also reflected in the AERO Conferences, making Europe's largest general aviation event an important platform for knowledge sharing and training.

About fairnamic GmbH:

With the founding of fairnamic GmbH, the trade show companies Frankfurt and Friedrichshafen are sealing a partnership focusing on innovative mobility. The market position in the future markets of general aviation, ecomobility, e-bikes, and bicycles is strengthened by pooling expertise and market knowledge, global positioning, brand strength and speed. The joint venture focuses on the AERO and Eurobike brands and their satellites. The objective is to expand and further develop the two leading trade shows.