

Munich: Where Congresses Connect with Knowledge

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A City with Something to Say

Munich gives an international congress a substantial starting point. Its universities and hospitals investigate questions that fill scientific programmes; its companies develop technologies that reshape entire professions. An association arriving here finds a city already engaged with its subject, alongside the infrastructure and hospitality needed to bring an international membership together.

The Bavarian capital's appeal rests on that combination. Scientific depth gives a meeting intellectual relevance. A diversified economy supplies expertise across disciplines. International connections make participation possible, while the city's cultural life and accessible neighbourhoods give delegates reasons to spend time together beyond the scheduled programme. Each contributes to the decision to attend, and to the experience once people arrive.

"Trade fairs and congresses are an integral part of Munich's innovation ecosystem, connecting local expertise with international perspectives. The city combines world-class research with excellent infrastructure and global connectivity. These strengths attract people and ideas, generating economic value across the region," say Dr. Reinhard Pfeiffer and Stefan Rummel, CEOs of Messe München.

Knowledge on the Doorstep

Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU) and the Technical University of Munich (TUM), both Universities of Excellence, anchor a substantial academic community. Their work spans medicine, engineering, natural sciences and the humanities. The breadth matters for meetings whose subjects cross traditional boundaries, bringing different professional perspectives to questions that cannot be answered within one discipline.

The research landscape extends well beyond universities. Munich is home to the headquarters of the Max Planck Society and the Fraunhofer Society, whose respective strengths in fundamental and applied research broaden the city's scientific range. Helmholtz Munich adds health and environmental research, while the wider region includes Leibniz institutions and the German Aerospace Center (DLR) at Oberpfaffenhofen. This regional reach widens the pool of expertise available to a congress without requiring its programme to concentrate on a single campus.

Industry gives that expertise another dimension. BMW and Siemens are established names in a city that also attracts international technology businesses and supports young companies developing new products. For congress programmes concerned with how discoveries move into use, Munich offers perspectives from research, clinical practice, manufacturing and entrepreneurship within the same destination.

Dr. Christian Scharpf, Head of Munich's Department of Labour and Economic Development, places this breadth at the centre of the city's appeal. In his view, a diversified economy gives organisers

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Address
Avenue des Volontaires 19 – 1160 Brussels, Belgium | info@boardroom.global | www.boardroom.global | T. +32 2 743 47 20

Founder & Managing Partner
Cécile Koch | cecile@boardroom.global | T. +33 6 72 78 27 37

Founder & Chief Editor
Remi Deve | editor@boardroom.global | T. +33 7 71 89 43 99

Editor
Vicky Koffa

Design
Paf ! | pafdesign.be | info@pafdesign.be | T. +32 2 743 47 28

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greater stability, backed by reliable infrastructure and experienced services. It also gives associations a choice of relevant local interests, rather than tying the destination to one industry or a single flagship institution.

Munich offers a rare combination of economic resilience, excellent infrastructure and strong ecosystems in science, technology, mobility and life sciences.

DR. CHRISTIAN SCHARPF, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CITY OF MUNICH

Room to Enjoy the City

Munich's international outlook is accompanied by an everyday ease that becomes apparent on foot. Around the historic centre, museums, cafés and public spaces give visitors plenty to explore between appointments. During Boardroom's visit, the greenery was particularly striking, a city with considerable commercial energy also makes room for people to pause.

Sören Huber, COO of Bayerischer Hof, sees that balance reflected in the response of visiting groups. Delegates value the opportunity to combine concentrated meeting time with gardens, outdoor activities and evenings in the city. The hotel's own location near Marienplatz brings that experience into a short stay, with the historic centre close at hand.

"You will get the best of the city, but also the best of the congress," he says.

The experience is distinctly Bavarian. Beer gardens and shared tables provide informal settings for conversations that would feel different in a meeting room. Cultural visits, culinary experiences and time in the surrounding countryside can give a programme a sense of place. Lakes and the Alps also offer possibilities for delegates extending their visit.


English Garden

© München Tourismus, Tommy Loesch

Munich Airport connects the destination with international markets, while rail and public transport provide options for arrival and travel within the city. The Congress Center and exhibition grounds sit outside the historic centre, linked by underground services. A broad accommodation offer allows organisers to consider different budgets and locations when planning the delegate journey.

A Local Perspective

Benedikt Brandmeier, Head of Tourism, Events and Hospitality for the City of Munich, encourages organisers to look beyond the familiar landmarks. The city's Local Love campaign introduces neighbourhoods and lesser-known experiences, opening up options for social programmes that reflect everyday Munich.

"A congress should invite delegates to experience Munich beyond the conference venue," he says. That invitation can be as simple as leaving time for a neighbourhood walk or choosing a cultural visit that introduces another side of the city.

Munich brings academic substance and a rewarding visitor experience into the same conversation. LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN provide a practical entry point, with a choice of venues and teams accustomed to international congress requirements.

MUNICH AT A GLANCE

Nearly 140,000 students; two Universities of Excellence, LMU and TUM; headquarters of the Max Planck Society and Fraunhofer Society; research expertise across the wider region, including Helmholtz, Leibniz and DLR.

Designed Around the Delegate

If Munich provides the ecosystem, LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN provide the platform on which it all comes together. The four venues—the Trade Fair Center, the ICM – International Congress Center Messe München, the CCN – Conference Center North Messe München and the MOC – Event Center Messe München—allow organisers to match the scale and format of their event without losing the advantages of an integrated destination. The ICM, Trade Fair Center and CCN are located on or alongside the exhibition grounds and can be used in combination. The MOC is a separate venue in the north of Munich.

At the heart of the exhibition grounds is the ICM, purpose-built for international congresses and designed to accommodate different programme formats within a clear and compact layout. Its combination of auditoria, breakout rooms, foyers and exhibition areas gives organisers the freedom to configure the venue around the event rather than the other way around.

Flexibility & Scale

"One of our biggest strengths is flexibility and scale," says Patrick Keller, Director Sales at LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN. *"A standalone congress of up to around 6,000 delegates fits perfectly within the ICM. If an event grows or requires exhibition space, it can expand directly into the neighbouring halls of our Trade Fair Center, all within walking distance and without leaving the campus."*



ICM

That flexibility is reflected in the way delegates experience the venue. Unlike many convention centres, the ICM is filled with natural daylight. Its central lobby acts like a marketplace at the heart of the building, bringing participants back together between sessions and making navigation straightforward. Breakout rooms can be found around this central meeting point, creating a layout that feels open rather than overwhelming.

"I sometimes get lost in convention centres," Keller admits with a smile. *"Here, everyone naturally finds their way back to the marketplace. It becomes the place where conversations continue between sessions."*

The design also extends beyond the building itself. Outdoor terraces, landscaped areas, the lake in front of the ICM and the green atrium linking the exhibition halls provide delegates with opportunities to step outside, recharge and continue informal discussions. The outdoor areas regularly become extensions of the congress programme, hosting receptions, networking events and, naturally, Bavarian beer gardens.

Those features provide the aesthetic side of the place. But they also contribute to a venue that feels welcoming despite its scale. Continuous investment has ensured that the ICM, which opened in 1998, remains remarkably contemporary.

"Clients often tell us the building looks no more than ten years old," Keller says. *"We invest significantly in maintenance because we believe delegates should experience a venue that feels modern every time they return."*

This long-term perspective includes a major development project intended to keep the Munich exhibition grounds and congress centre competitive, efficient and attractive over the coming decades.


Internet World at the Trade Fair Center



IAA MOBILITY at the Trade Fair Center

People First

Infrastructure, however, tells only part of the story. Throughout the visits and conversations, one aspect that emerged repeatedly was people. Experienced project managers, long-standing catering and audiovisual partners, and close collaboration with organisers ensure that every congress receives support tailored to its objectives rather than a standardised solution.

"Our project managers become emotionally involved in every event," says Keller. *"They genuinely want to deliver the best congress possible. We listen carefully to what organisers want to achieve and build a proposal around those ambitions rather than offering the same solution every time."*

Ultimately, a successful congress depends on the confidence organisers feel throughout the process. At LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN, that confidence comes from experienced people who take personal responsibility, anticipate challenges and remain closely involved from the first conversation to the final session. For organisers, this means having a committed team at their side throughout the planning and delivery of a major congress.

LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN

Trade Fair Center Messe München

- 18 modern, column-free exhibition halls
- 200,000 m² of exhibition space, plus 414,000 m² of outdoor exhibition grounds
- 100 conference and meeting rooms close to the exhibition halls
- Direct integration with the ICM for congresses requiring exhibition components or future expansion

ICM – International Congress Center Messe München

- Purpose-built for congresses, conventions and association meetings
- Capacity for up to 6,000 delegates
- 20 halls and 27 conference offices and small meeting rooms
- 7,000 m² of exhibition space
- Direct connection to the Trade Fair Center allows congresses to expand into the exhibition halls when required

CCN – Conference Center North Messe München

- Ideal for conferences running alongside exhibitions
- Capacity for up to 1,000 delegates
- 3 conference halls, 4 meeting rooms
- Flexible foyer spaces for networking and exhibitions

MOC – Event Center Messe München

- Separate venue in the north of Munich
- Designed for mid-sized congresses, conventions and specialist exhibitions
- 3 exhibition halls / 13,500 m² of event space
- 21 show and breakout rooms
- Flexible room layouts for conferences, congresses and other events

Connected by Design

International associations rarely work with a single partner when planning a congress. They need venues, hotels, destination support, local ambassadors, academic expertise, government backing and, increasingly, help in creating a meaningful legacy. In Munich, those elements are brought together through a collaborative network that has evolved over more than a decade.

Tourismus Initiative München (TIM), the Munich Convention Bureau, LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN, hotels, universities, research institutions and the City of Munich work closely throughout the bidding process and beyond. Regular meetings allow partners to identify congress opportunities, exchange information and coordinate support long before an event arrives.

"We provide the platform where all relevant partners come together," explains Michael Höflich, Managing Director of Tourismus Initiative München. *"Before TIM was founded in 2012, that exchange simply didn't exist. Today, hotels, venues, cultural institutions, the airport, universities and the city administration all sit around the same table."*

That collaboration continues throughout the life of a congress. Rather than promoting individual organisations, Munich presents itself as one destination. Hotels coordinate accommodation strategies, the team at LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN works alongside the Convention Bureau, universities help identify scientific ambassadors and local experts, while destination partners ensure organisers gain access to the networks most relevant to their field.



Marienplatz View

© München Tourismus, Jörg Lutz

Understanding the Needs

Steffen C. Schmid, General Manager of Holiday Inn Munich – City Centre, believes that understanding the specific requirements of association meetings is just as important as providing meeting space. *"Associations need partners who understand how scientific meetings work because every group, from keynote speakers to young researchers, has different requirements."*

Practical support also includes the Congress Fund Bavaria, introduced by the Bavarian State Government to attract congresses that generate economic and scientific value for the region. The programme provides direct financial support, giving eligible organisers greater flexibility when planning their event.

"If we understand what is important to a client, we can connect the dots together with the Convention Bureau and bring in our ecosystem – our universities, research institutes and industry partners," says Patrick Keller. *"The more we understand an association's objectives, the more we can tailor those connections."*

That approach is particularly valuable both for associations that arrive with clear legacy objectives, and for others that are only beginning to explore how a congress can create longer-term impact. Munich's partners are able to identify researchers, institutions, businesses and community organisations that align with the congress theme, helping organisers create connections that continue after delegates return home.

A Stage for Innovation

These sector networks give the Convention Bureau and venue team a starting point for identifying contacts relevant to a congress programme.

Artificial intelligence and deep technology are among the city's fastest-growing strengths. Munich Business identifies AI as one of the region's defining innovation clusters. Initiatives and organisations such as AI+ Munich, UnternehmerTUM and Munich Quantum Valley support the wider technology community.

These technologies are closely linked with application sectors including automotive engineering, medical technology, aerospace, robotics, security systems and advanced manufacturing, giving organisers a range of research and industry expertise to draw on when developing sessions.

AI is also already changing how events are delivered. Practical applications such as chatbot assistance, digital avatars and live translation can improve the visitor journey and make events more accessible. At the same time, meaningful face-to-face interaction remains at the heart of the event experience, creating business value and moments that matter.


Messe München

Life sciences provide another compelling example. Around 21% of Germany's biotechnology companies are located in the Munich metropolitan region, while approximately one quarter of the country's clinical trials take place there. BioM and IZB offer starting points for connections with biotechnology companies and potential industry contributors.

Mobility completes the picture. Home to BMW, MAN, Siemens Mobility, Flix and Sixt, the city has developed an ecosystem where established manufacturers, software developers, start-ups and research institutions are working on electric mobility, autonomous driving, connected transport and new mobility services. Munich Urban Colab provides a setting for collaboration on urban challenges.

CONGRESS FUND BAVARIA

Who can apply?

For events in Munich, the programme requires at least 300 participants attending on site each day and a minimum duration of two days. Eligibility also depends on conditions concerning new or rotating congresses.

How is funding calculated?

Funding takes account of attendance and duration, with additional support available for international participation and events held during specified off-season periods.

Support provided

Direct financial funding for eligible congresses. Organisers should consult Bayern Innovativ for the full conditions and application requirements.

Sustainability in Action

Sustainability has become a standard expectation in the meetings industry. Associations and organisers are now concerned with how venues manage energy, how suppliers use materials and what options are available when planning an event.



English Garden



ICM – International Congress Center Messe München and Trade Fair Center Messe München



ICM – International Congress Center Messe München

© München Tourismus, Jörg Lutz

At LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN, the exhibition grounds and congress facilities have undergone continuous investment in measures aimed at improving energy efficiency and reducing resource consumption in event operations. These include the use of renewable electricity, intelligent energy management systems, photovoltaic installations, green roofs and waste separation. Messe München also provides organisers and exhibitors with practical guidance on incorporating environmental considerations into event planning and delivery. This commitment is shared by the service partners of LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN, for whom sustainability is also an important consideration in their services and collaboration.

Work is also underway to strengthen environmental reporting and measurement. Messe München is further developing its processes and ESG data management to support sustainability reporting, while defining emission-reduction targets and measures based on the company's 2024 corporate carbon footprint.

The same attention to resources is reflected across Munich's hospitality sector. For Sören Huber of Bayerischer Hof, sustainability is inseparable from longevity. The hotel invests in durable furniture, refurbishing items rather than replacing them, and works with local craftspeople and suppliers.

"The hotel is still family owned, and the owners don't like the idea of buying, throwing out, buying, throwing out," he says. The approach is shaped by an intention to preserve quality for the next generation. Huber also acknowledges the challenges of an older building, where energy use and insulation require continuing attention.

At Holiday Inn Munich – City Centre, General Manager Steffen C. Schmid points to a continuous programme of practical improvements, from upgrading lift motors and building systems to reducing energy and water consumption.

The city follows the same pattern; its tourism strategy focuses on creating value for residents as well as visitors. For congress organisers, Benedikt Brandmeier identifies choices that can be incorporated into the event itself: digital registration and programme materials, seasonal menus, plant-based options, reusable tableware and arrangements for separating waste.

These decisions bring environmental considerations into the planning process, from selecting suppliers to briefing delegates. They also give associations specific measures to discuss with their partners and assess against their own event requirements.

ESC Congress 2026: When a Destination Becomes Part of the Science

Few congresses illustrate the relationship between destination and association as clearly as the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Congress. Returning to Munich for the fifth time, the 2026 edition brought together more than 34,000 healthcare professionals from 170 countries, making it the largest ESC Congress ever organised.

Over four days, from 28 to 31 August 2026, the Bavarian capital became the centre of global cardiovascular medicine, welcoming clinicians, researchers, industry leaders and policy-makers to discuss the latest advances shaping patient care.

The scale alone is impressive. More than 1,300 scientific sessions, major clinical trials, new ESC Clinical Practice Guidelines and over 190 studies published simultaneously in leading medical journals made the congress one of the most influential scientific meetings of the year. The spotlight theme, Artificial Intelligence, explored how AI is supporting diagnosis, imaging, risk prediction and clinical decision-making.

Yet size alone does not explain Munich's selection. As Nata Nambatingué, Congress & Event Director of the European Society of Cardiology, explains: *"Most importantly, Munich meets all our key requirements for hosting ESC Congress: a proven congress venue, strong accessibility, sufficient hotel capacity, reliable city infrastructure and the operational maturity needed for an event of this scale."*

That combination begins at LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN. For ESC Congress 2026, the event occupied the ICM – International Congress Center Messe München, together with six exhibition halls and extensive indoor and outdoor areas that were transformed into lecture theatres, live stages, TV studios, exhibition spaces and networking hubs. The flexibility of the venue allowed scientific sessions, exhibitions and informal interaction to take place within one integrated campus despite the enormous scale of the congress.

"For an event of this size and complexity, ESC needs to operate as the only major event in the venue," Nambatingué explains. That exclusivity allows the association to plan delegate flows, security, signage and exhibition build-up around its own programme. Reliable digital services, audiovisual production and access for loading and dismantling are also essential to delivering the meeting.


ESC Congress at ICM

© ESC - European Society of Cardiology



ESC at Trade Fair Center

© ESC - European Society of Cardiology

Connecting Science with Practice

During the preparation of ESC Congress, LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN, the Munich Convention Bureau, the City of Munich and numerous local partners worked together to support the association well beyond venue logistics.

The German Cardiac Society, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Kardiologie (DGK), the ESC's largest National Cardiac Society partner, also played an important role. Working with ESC committees, it helped shape dedicated local scientific tracks for general cardiologists, nurses, allied professionals and general practitioners. This gave the international programme a direct connection to the needs of the host country's medical community.

The relationship extends beyond the annual congress through shared scientific initiatives and advocacy. In Munich, it provided a practical link between the international association and local professional audiences, with sessions designed around their different responsibilities in patient care.

Turning Shared Ambition into Practice

For ESC Congress 2026, this meant translating a complex scientific programme into a venue concept capable of accommodating clinical education, large-scale exhibitions, media production and informal exchange within one connected event environment.

"What truly sets ESC Congress apart is its strong focus on the delegate experience," says Nambatingué. Scientific content, digital tools, networking and onsite services all contribute to helping participants make the most of the meeting. With many sessions running in parallel, the task is to make a programme of considerable scale accessible to each participant.

City support helped the event function beyond the exhibition grounds. The Convention Bureau coordinated with local partners on transport, accommodation, press services and onsite operations, connecting the congress plan with the services delegates used across Munich.

The congress itself also leaves a legacy that extends well beyond Munich. New clinical guidelines, trial results and scientific publications continue to influence cardiovascular practice long after delegates have returned home. Presentations remain available through an online resource library (ESC 365), with year-round access for ESC Professional Members and Fellows.

"We are proud that every year we create a space where clinicians, researchers and healthcare professionals can connect, exchange ideas and translate science into practice," Nambatingué says.

For Munich, perhaps the strongest endorsement is simpler. International congresses return when organisers trust a destination to deliver consistently. The fact that one of the world's largest medical meetings has chosen Munich five times speaks to the quality of its venues and the working relationships that support its delivery.

ESC CONGRESS 2026 — THE FACTS

When: 28–31 August 2026

Attendance: more than 34,000 healthcare professionals from 170 countries

Scientific programme:

- More than 1,300 scientific sessions
- More than 190 studies published simultaneously
- Three new ESC Clinical Practice Guidelines and the 5th Universal definition of myocardial infarction
- Spotlight theme: Artificial Intelligence

Venue: LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN — ICM – International Congress Center Messe München and six exhibition halls

Building for the Future

Messe München's investment plans operate on two timescales: the decades required to develop exhibition grounds and the shorter cycles in which event programmes and customer expectations change.



Messe München digital signage


ICM Bits and Pretzels

That distinction shapes the company's plans for Munich alongside its expansion overseas. At home, digital signage is one defined infrastructure project, with a venue-wide rollout scheduled for 2027.

Finding the Way

The current pilot comprises around 40 modules, including interactive kiosks and touchscreens in the exhibition halls, LED walls, mobility screens and displays at ticket counters in the West and East Entrances. Following positive user feedback, the expansion will concentrate on entrances and the concourses between halls.

The system will carry wayfinding, event information, self-service functions, branding and digital advertising. A central content management system will allow information to be distributed and updated across the venue in real time.

For visitors, the intended improvements are easier navigation, more relevant information and shorter waiting times. Exhibitors will gain additional visibility, while organisers will have new advertising opportunities. A dedicated operating model will bring content, operations and sales together, making the displays part of the venue's everyday service.

Growth Beyond Munich

Messe München's strategy combines organic growth with targeted acquisitions and partnerships to diversify its portfolio and strengthen its resilience. It adapts leading trade fair brands to regional markets, combining local entrepreneurial freedom with shared quality standards and central brand development. This international presence also strengthens Munich as a trade fair and business destination, attracting exhibitors and visitors while helping companies access new markets.

For the LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN, these developments reinforce the role of Munich as both home base and international meeting point. Long-term investment in the exhibition grounds, digital services that improve the visitor journey and experience gained across global markets all contribute to a venue portfolio designed to evolve with its customers. For congress organisers, the value lies in bringing these capabilities together in one destination: versatile infrastructure, committed teams and direct access to Munich's scientific, economic and innovation communities. That is where the city's proposition becomes tangible, and where congresses connect with knowledge.

LOCATIONS OF MESSE MÜNCHEN

MESSE MÜNCHEN



FIND YOUR STAGE

and start 2027 with your event





