

A brilliant start!

Premiere of the Barefoot European Shoe Fair in Offenbach impresses exhibitors and visitors

Offenbach attracts visitors: The premiere of the Barefoot European Shoe Fair was a great success. Exhibitors and visitors alike were thoroughly impressed by the new trade fair. The variety of products, the informative supporting programme and the friendly, lively atmosphere made for a perfect start.

More than 70 exhibitors representing around 80 brands were present at the first barefoot shoe fair, organised by Messe Offenbach in cooperation with the Federal Association of the German Footwear and Leather Goods Industry (HDS/L). The portfolio ranged from women's, men's and children's shoes to trekking and safety shoes. „It was a sensational start“, sums up Arnd Hinrich Kappe, Managing Director of Messe Offenbach. „We really struck a chord with this fair!“ Visitors from 41 countries came to the Barefoot European Shoe Fair from 31 July to 3 August. Not only retailers, but also suppliers, service providers and, at the weekend, end consumers. „The atmosphere was great every day“, says HDS/L Chairman Carl-August Seibel, delighted with the positive response. „We are seeing an open-minded clientele here, grateful for new philosophies that are also conveyed by the trade fair itself“, explains Dirk Pfeffer, who was represented in Offenbach with the brand Blusun. In addition to the new collections, the event scored points with numerous scientific presentations and informative panel discussions, which were appreciated by the inquisitive Barefoot Community.

The first two days of the fair were reserved for trade visitors, while on Saturday and Sunday, end consumers were also able to attend the event. This was a novelty in the German shoe fair landscape, which was obviously well received. „The public days were very popular. Particularly valuable was the direct dialogue between manufacturers and end consumers, which provided important impetus for the further development of products“, said Roman Degenhardt, co-initiator of the trade fair and represented as a specialist retailer with Zehenspiel in Offenbach.

It became very clear in Offenbach that barefoot shoes have long since left the niche market of eco-enthusiasts. „In the wake of the “longevity” movement, people are looking for anything that makes them healthier, more fulfilled and helps them live longer. This includes health-promoting shoes, and it starts with young people“, says Michael Hanus from Groundies, explaining the hype surrounding barefoot shoes. Torben Schütz, deputy managing



director of HDS/L, sees a lot of potential in this segment: „Barefoot shoes are more than just a trend. They are here to stay!“

The date for the next Barefoot European Shoe Fair has already been set: the next fair will take place from 23 to 26 July 2026 in Offenbach.

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