

game press release

Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier opens gamescom congress 2026 and visits gamescom

Berlin/Cologne, 27 August 2026 – A premiere at gamescom: for the very first time, a German head of state was a guest at the world's biggest games event. Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier opened gamescom congress 2026 today at the Confex in Cologne with a speech before an audience drawn from the games industry, business, education, culture, politics, academia and the media. He then attended two panel discussions on the role video games play in democracy. The world's leading conference on the potential of games in a digitalised world began today as part of gamescom. On his subsequent tour of gamescom, the Federal President spoke with game developers and members of the community, seeing for himself the positive impact games have on society, democracy and culture.



'The Federal President's visit sends a clear signal from gamescom today about the special social value of games,' says Felix Falk, Managing Director of game – The German Games Industry Association, co-organiser of gamescom and gamescom congress. 'Games, the companies and creatives behind them, and the games community are all a positive force for society and for democracy — as gamescom and gamescom congress demonstrate so impressively. That is a force we should be making far greater use of.'

Gerald Böse, President and Chief Executive Officer of Koelnmesse GmbH: 'We are delighted to welcome Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the Koelnmesse exhibition grounds. His visit is a special honour for us and an extraordinary signal of the social significance of gamescom and the gamescom congress. We are proud that gamescom provides an international platform where industry, politics, academia, media and the community come together to highlight the positive power of games. '

In his opening speech at gamescom congress, the Federal President highlighted the significant social role of video games. Games can help people manage everyday life — as an outlet for stress, as a bridge against loneliness and as training for cognitive skills. At the same time, they convey historical knowledge and civic education, and encourage players to think about values, rules and fair play in how we treat one another. He closed his speech with a call to make greater social use of the positive potential that emerges through play: the sense of connection, the creativity and the energy.



Following his speech, the Federal President attended the congress's two opening panel discussions: 'Games for democracy: what they can and cannot do', with North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister for Media Nathanael Liminski, Managing Director of the Foundation for Digital Games Culture Nandita Wegehaupt, and Managing Director of the German Cultural Council Olaf Zimmermann; and 'Saving the world through play: what games and their communities can achieve', featuring Game Director and Paintbucket Games founder Jörg Friedrich, Professor of Experience and Game Design Prof. Dr Sabiha Ghellal, and creator and PietSmiet founder Peter Smits. Both discussions explored examples of what games can contribute to our democratic society, in keeping with one of this year's gamescom congress theme, 'Playing Field: Democracy'.

The opening of gamescom congress 2026 is available to watch on demand [here](#) (German only).

About gamescom:

gamescom is the world's biggest event for computer and video games. It takes place from 26 to 30 August 2026. For trade visitors, gamescom began on 24 August with the developer conference gamescom dev; for everyone else, it

started on 25 August with the opening show gamescom Opening Night Live. Throughout the year, it is complemented by gamescom latam in São Paulo and gamescom asia x Thailand Game Show in Bangkok. gamescom is jointly organised by Koelnmesse and game – The German Games Industry Association.

About gamescom congress

gamescom congress is the world's leading conference on the potential of computer games in a digitalized world and offers interfaces far beyond the digital and media industry. International speakers present their topics in lectures, seminars and panel discussions. The gamescom congress takes place annually as part of gamescom in Cologne and is organized by Koelnmesse GmbH and game, the association of the German games industry. The gamescom congress is sponsored by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

game – The German Games Industry Association

We are the association of the German games industry. Our members represent the entire video game ecosystem, from development studios and publishers to esports event organisers, educational institutions and other related entities. We are co-organisers of gamescom, the world's biggest event for video games. We are a shareholder in the Entertainment Software Self-Regulation Body (USK), the Foundation for Digital Games Culture, the esports player foundation, game events and the collecting society VHG, as well as co-host of the German Computer Game Awards. Serving as a central point of contact for media, as well as political and social institutions, we provide comprehensive expertise in areas including market development, game culture and media literacy, and address any inquiries or concerns. Together we are making Germany the heart of gaming worldwide. With games, we enrich the lives of all people.

Koelnmesse – Industry trade fairs for the gaming industry:

Koelnmesse is an international leader in staging trade fairs in the gaming and entertainment sector. At its Cologne venue, gamescom presents the world's biggest event for computer and video games and Europe's largest business platform for the games industry. gamescom effectively brings together

passionate fans, trade visitors and exhibitors from all over the world – on site in person or digitally from anywhere. This makes gamescom the B2C, B2B and B2G event for games. Koelnmesse is also expanding its portfolio internationally in a targeted way: in South-East Asia, gamescom asia x Thailand Game Show offers a further effective industry platform for the rapidly growing Asia-Pacific games market, bringing supply and demand together comprehensively. For Brazil and Latin America, gamescom latam is an important event that aims to boost the strong growth in this market.

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