

Closing Press Release

Resounding success of XPONENTIAL Europe 2026: High-calibre summit for autonomous systems draws key players from industry, politics and science to Düsseldorf

For three days XPONENTIAL Europe became the vibrant centre of the European industry for uncrewed systems and robotics. From 24 to 26 March leading figures from the world of industry, politics and science came together to showcase innovations, engage in ground-breaking discussions, and take the next, concrete steps towards application. The response was overwhelming – on both exhibition areas, stages such as the Innovation Theater and at conferences where discussions, encounters and new partnerships made the industry's dynamism immediately apparent.

The high-tech event focused on various application fields of autonomous technologies – from sensors and AI-based software to systems on land, in the air and water and in space travel. The dual-use character of the offering made for the unique mixture of the event. To the tune of 360 exhibitors from 43 countries – twice as many as at the debut in 2025 – showed their colours in Düsseldorf. Already now it is clear: in 2027 the event will be extended to include an additional exhibition hall.

“XPONENTIAL Europe brings together what drives the sector: a multi-disciplinary exchange between industry and policymakers, concrete results and a high innovation density. Especially the dual-use concept provided fresh impetus and mutual inspiration between civilian and security-related applications. This dynamism made the event a unique meeting point,” said Malte Seifert, Director Metals & Autonomous Technologies at Messe Düsseldorf.

This verdict was also confirmed by visitors who rated the quality of the trade fair offering as outstanding. Companies such as Aerial UAS, Airbus, EDAG, INFINTEQ, Vodafone and Rheinmetall exhibited solutions along the entire value chain – from drone applications for



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critical infrastructure to connected communication and autonomous mobility concepts to security-critical technologies and multi-domain systems. Rheinmetall presented a comprehensive portfolio of uncrewed systems for land, air and space while its subsidiary MIRA demonstrated tele-operated mobility live.

A unique feature presented at XPONENTIAL Europe for the first time were BVLOS drone flights over the Rhine – making Düsseldorf's Theodor-Heuss bridge a real-world testing environment for professional UAV inspections. The challenge was organised by UAV DACH (European Unmanned Aviation Association) in cooperation with Airteam and DroneMasters and fused industry expertise with practical know-how and talent promotion on a central stage.

Top marks for conference programme

An accompanying programme featuring prominent keynote speakers from politics, industry and international organisations revealed the strategic relevance of autonomous technologies and was rated as excellent by visitors. The XPONENTIAL Europe Conference was organised by the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI). Appearing on stage were leading political decision-makers, international regulatory authorities and industry representatives including Federal Minister of Transport Patrick Schnieder, the patron of XPONENTIAL Europe 2026, Düsseldorf's Mayor Dr. Stephan Keller and EASA Executive Director Florian Guillermet.

At XPONENTIAL Europe far-reaching political decisions were taken: legislation on the use of commercial drone flights in German airspace is expected to be tabled this year. This was announced by Federal Minister of Transport Patrick Schnieder at the opening of XPONENTIAL Europe 2026 who emphasised the high hopes for more autonomous vehicles on the roads. On the basis of this legislation, airspaces are to be defined in which uncrewed and crewed air transport operate simultaneously. "If everything goes

according to plan and in the way we imagine we will be the first EU member state to have U-Space legislation in place.”

U-Spaces demonstrate how drones can be safely integrated into airspace and traffic flows controlled efficiently. “This helps us to roll out Advanced Air Mobility nationwide,” added Schnieder

A key highlight was the close dovetailing of trade fair and conference, especially through the successful integration of the European Drone Forum into the overall concept. The seamless integration of Europe’s leading expert conference for unmanned aviation into XPONENTIAL Europe was accomplished in cooperation with UAV Dach, thereby creating a unique space where regulatory perspectives, industrial applications and technological innovations came together directly. The discussions set the tone and the impact was felt far beyond the industry.

At the same time, it became clear in Düsseldorf just how relevant the dialogue between security requirements and economic applications really has become. The symposium “Defence meets Wirtschaft” provided key impetus. The German Armed Forces also got involved as XPONENTIAL Europe’s new strategic partner presenting its own programme and engaged in a lively discussion with the trade fair audience.

This year saw a special focus on autonomous systems for maritime applications. By holding the new Autonomous Inland & Short Sea Shipping Conference (AISS) a dedicated conference focus on autonomous shipping was established for the first time. In parallel, the research vessel NOVA demonstrated real-world applications of automated navigation on the Rhine.

Other crowd-pullers included the live demonstrations and highlights on the Innovation Theater stage. Likewise, the XPO+ Launcher with numerous start-ups inspired the high-tech community.

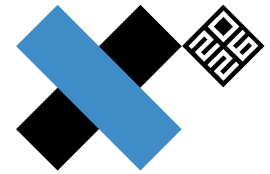
Strong international participation

National pavilions from China, the Czech Republic, Israel, Latvia, Spain, Taiwan, Ukraine and the African continent convinced visitors with outstanding technological innovations. Visitor delegations who also travelled to Düsseldorf from all over the world made XPONENTIAL Europe an event of international stature.

The enthusiastic response from industry, research and politics shows that autonomous technologies have reached a new level of maturity. Many solutions have moved beyond the research stage and are increasingly becoming part of real-world applications – from the inspection of critical infrastructure to industrial robotics to new mobility and security solutions. At the same time, the technology event for autonomy showed just how great the need is for a central European hub that consolidates and accelerates this exchange and gives it international exposure. XPONENTIAL Europe has established itself as the decisive platform for this purpose. The next XPONENTIAL Europe will be held in Düsseldorf from 16 to 18 March 2027.

For more information go to www.xponential-europe.com as well as LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/xponential-europe>





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Exhibitor Testimonials:

“We experienced three amazing days in Düsseldorf. XPONENTIAL Europe is not only the leading European trade fair for Uncrewed Systems and Robotics but has already become one of the world-leading fairs for our industry in its second year now. The dynamism and energy that was palpable at the stands in the exhibition hall and during the live demos and conferences, like our EUROPEAN DRONE FORUM, are exactly what our industry needs,” delights **Dr. Gerald Wissel**, Chairman of the Executive Board at UAV DACH e.V.

“To us XPONENTIAL Europe is a central platform for giving international exposure to current trends in autonomous and tele-operated shipping and for exchanging with partners from research, industry and authorities. At the AISS Conference we selectively bring the autonomous inland and short-sea shipping community together and create a stage for concrete solutions and collaborations. Precisely this international dialogue is decisive to put innovations faster into practice,” said **Dr. Frédéric Kracht** from the Development Centre for Ship Technology and Transport Systems (DST).

“XPONENTIAL Europe showcased the innovation, collaboration, and expertise shaping the future of autonomy and mobility,” said **Michael Robbins**, President & CEO of AUVSI. “Trusted partners from around the world participated in live technology demonstrations, shared insights, and forged connections that will strengthen resilient supply chains and drive the next generation of autonomous systems. We look forward to continuing the conversation and building on this momentum at XPONENTIAL in Detroit this May.”

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Düsseldorf, 27. March 2026



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Düsseldorf

Page 5