

Vienna, 12 April 2021

Austria Center Vienna bags coveted Gold and Silver Stevie® Awards

The Austria Center Vienna claimed a brace of Stevies® at the 2021 German Stevie® Awards: for Spielefest 2019 – which was named best B2C event – and for its rapid testing lanes pilot project, which was singled out in the most valuable company response to the Covid-19 crisis category. The winners will receive their prizes on 20 May at an online awards ceremony.

“We are delighted to have won two international awards at once. It’s a great honour that our first proprietary event – Spielefest 2019 – scooped a Gold Stevie Award at the first time of asking. A huge amount of effort from the whole team and their expertise in hosting events went into it. Particularly since all of our business evaporated due to Covid-19, I am delighted that our internationally trailblazing pilot project has received the recognition it deserves and that our Covid-19 testing lane attracted a Silver Stevie Award,” said Susanne Baumann-Söllner, Managing Director of the Austria Center Vienna. “These two projects could scarcely be more different: I would like to thank my entire team for their extraordinary achievements – both in times of crisis and during normal operations.”

Gold for Spielefest 2019 as best B2C event

The original Wiener Spielefest games festival took place 31 times in all – including an uninterrupted stretch spanning several decades at the Austria Center Vienna. For commercial reasons, the previous organisers decided to discontinue it. But with Spielefest a firmly-established highlight for families and board game aficionados, the Austria Center Vienna was committed to bringing this popular fixture back and putting its own spin on it as a new-look proprietary event. In 2019, Spielefest returned to the Austria Center Vienna after a three-year break. Amongst the features picked up on by the jury were the spaces set aside for trying out the games on offer, particularly for younger age groups, as well as the appealing overall concept. They also praised the way that the event honoured the traditional board gaming experience, while also breathing fresh life into it. “What was particularly impressive was the belief in and commitment to a great idea, and that was what ultimately led to its success,” as one juror put it. “This praise and the award encourages us to continue along the successful path we have chosen,” Baumann-Söllner explained.

Silver for Covid-19 rapid testing lanes as a valuable company reaction

More than a year ago, the coronavirus pandemic turned our lives upside down over night and the international congress and event industry was significantly affected. We used the small window in which large-scale events were permitted to run a pilot project involving the Vienna University of Economics and Business. The first of its kind in Europe, it involved setting up a rapid testing facility that would allow students to attend the traditional opening lecture inside the venue in September. To safeguard the wellbeing of those present, all 2,000 students who attended the lecture were tested for Covid-19 prior to entry as an additional precaution. The resulting interest from event organisers, hotels, hospitals, national and international media,

Page 1 of 2

business and politicians was overwhelming. All of the processes and insights were published on the website as a white paper and adopted by numerous other organisers. The insights gained during the pilot project fed into numerous Covid-19 prevention measures and were used to fine-tune the nation's largest testing facility.

Best practice: bold initiative for the entire industry

The jury praised the rapid and bold initiative which was put in place in response to the pandemic, as well as the value added for organisers and other sectors. "Exceptional circumstances call for exceptional ideas. A great initiative to give this hard-hit industry a chance – and all in a very short space of time," was one juror's verdict. "I would also like to flag up how the insights gained in this area are immediately passed on, so that as many ventures and people can benefit from them quickly," another jury member added. "Besides vaccinations, at the Austria Center Vienna we think rapid testing will have a major part to play – as an admission ticket to help us to return to normality and for future events. We are also proud of our valuable contribution to combating the pandemic through the testing and vaccination lanes we are currently operating at the venue on behalf of the City of Vienna. This allows us to do our bit to bring great events like Spielefest back to the Austria Center Vienna as soon as possible," Baumann-Söllner concluded.

About the Stevie® Awards

Recognising outstanding achievements in over 200 different categories, the German Stevie® Awards are a high-profile business accolade for companies in Europe's German-speaking countries. For the seventh time this year, organisations from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Switzerland were invited to submit nominations detailing their accomplishments and contributions since July 2018. The German Stevie® Awards are one of eight Stevie® programmes, which are among the highest-profile business prizes in the world. Each year more than 12,000 applications are received from more than 70 countries worldwide. A virtual awards ceremony will be hosted on 20 May 2021 to honour the winners of the German Stevie® Awards.

About IAKW-AG

Internationales Amtssitz- und Konferenzzentrum Wien, Aktiengesellschaft (IAKW-AG) is responsible for maintaining the Vienna International Centre (VIC) and operating the Austria Center Vienna. The Austria Center Vienna is Austria's largest conference centre, with 24 halls, 180 meeting rooms, and some 26,000 m² of exhibition space, and is one of the top players on the international conference circuit.

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