

## Statement

02.03.2023, Nuremberg

### **Statement by Olaf Sauer, President Verband der Hersteller von Jagd-, Sportwaffen und Munition (JSM, German Firearms and Ammunition Manufacturers Association), for the opening of IWA OutdoorClassics 2023**

Check against delivery!

As President of the German Firearms and Ammunition Manufacturers Association (Verband der Hersteller von Jagd-, Sportwaffen und Munition, JSM), I am pleased to have this opportunity to say a few words to mark the opening of IWA OutdoorClassics 2023.

For the past few years, the Covid-19 pandemic has kept us all in suspense. We have all had to adapt to new challenges and learn to live with lockdowns and the need to wear masks. That is why we are all happy that a measure of normality and ease has now been restored in our lives. This has been tempered, however, by the war of aggression that Russia has been waging against Ukraine for almost exactly one year. In addition to the suffering of the people affected by the war, we have also had to take stock of the economic repercussions this war has for us. And that has meant ongoing additional challenges.

The German hunting and sports weapons industry has also had to face these challenges. The lockdowns in response to Covid-19 meant that many sports weapons associations were unable to open their shooting ranges, and opportunities for hunting were also limited, which unfortunately had an impact on our product sales.

**Ideelle Träger**  
**Honorary Sponsors**  
VDB Verband Deutscher  
Büchsenmacher und  
Waffenfachhändler e.V., Marburg

JSM Verband der Hersteller  
von Jagd-, Sportwaffen  
und Munition, Ratingen

**Veranstalter**  
**Organizer**  
NürnbergMesse GmbH  
Messezentrum  
90471 Nürnberg  
Germany  
T +49 9 11 86 06-0  
F +49 9 11 86 06-82 28  
iwa@nuernbergmesse.de  
www.iwa.info

Follow us on



**Vorsitzender des Aufsichtsrates**  
**Chairman of the Supervisory Board**  
Marcus König  
Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Nürnberg  
Lord Mayor of the City of Nuremberg

**Geschäftsführer**  
**CEOs**  
Prof. Dr. Roland Fleck  
Peter Ottmann

**Registergericht**  
**Registration Number**  
HRB 761 Nürnberg

Moreover, raw material shortages, rising energy costs and reduced purchasing power are just a few of the problems we currently have to deal with. Other challenges include high staff turnover and a shortage of skilled labour. In some cases, there have also been huge delays in obtaining permits to export to third countries, or for transportation to other EU member states, which has resulted in a lot of dissatisfaction among foreign customers. After all, official approvals have to be obtained in advance in order to export or ship hunting and sporting weapons.

Our sector has had to face all these challenges. Following the decline in production value for hunting and sporting weapons during the Covid-19 years, we are now slowly returning to pre-Covid production values again. Especially now that our export share has risen to around 80 to 85 percent, we can look to the future with a little more hope.

Countries with a long tradition of hunting and shooting sports, such as the USA, appreciate the high quality, precision and safety of German-made products.

SAFETY is a top priority in the manufacture of hunting and sporting weapons in Germany, whether they are hand-crafted or industrial.

That means every firearm produced in Germany must undergo an official test firing in order to ensure its functional and operational safety before it can be sold. As a consequence, hunting and sporting weapons can be sold only if they carry an official test firing stamp. That gives hunters and marksmen an assurance that their firearms are safe to use. Unfortunately, our member companies are increasingly observing capacity shortages at the test firing authorities currently operating in Germany. And if there are delays in the test firing arrangements, that has huge economic repercussions for our member companies, since they are no longer able to plan their production or sales

processes. We therefore hope that all the German states that are home to the five current test firing authorities can ensure that these authorities have the appropriate personnel and infrastructure resources to be able to continue performing firing tests with minimum delay.

In addition, since the manufacture of, and trading in, hunting and sporting weapons were included in the National Weapons Register (NWR), these are recorded at every stage from manufacture through to destruction, which enables every individual firearm to be traced at an official level. To do this, the manufacturer must label every individual firearm with its name or brand, the country of manufacture, the designation of the ammunition and a sequential serial number, which means the firearm can be clearly attributed. These details must then be communicated to the National Weapons Register to ensure it records the entire lifecycle of the firearm, which can then be accessed by police officers if required, for example.

Here, too, unfortunately, we observe that some of the competent authorities are not always familiar with the new NWR obligations, which can sometimes lead to a lot of time-consuming enquiries. We therefore very much welcome the fact that IWA will also provide a learning opportunity for representatives of the authorities in this area. Indeed, in addition to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the constantly recurring requests for the German Weapons Act to be tightened up also create concerns for our sector. This is in spite of the fact that the Coalition Agreement calls first of all for an evaluation of the most recent changes in firearms legislation, which has not yet been performed. All marksmen, hunters, collectors, dealers and manufacturers have made a clear commitment to ensuring that extremists, criminals or persons who are mentally ill do not have access to weapons.

This is, however, already achievable under the existing firearms legislation. We believe there is no need for the Weapons Act to be tightened further, which would impact only on law-abiding marksmen and hunters. Instead, the existing provisions of the law must actually be applied first.

We would also consider it more practical – and the industry professionals also share this view – to concentrate more on the question of illegal weapon ownership.

There is another issue that is posing a problem for our sector. This is the possibility of a ban on lead in sports ammunition. In response to an enquiry from the European Commission, the European Chemicals Agency ECHA has spoken in favour of a ban on lead bullets in firing ranges, with just a few exceptions.

This would impact on shooting sports as a whole, all Olympic disciplines such as the following in particular:

- ▶ Air rifle and air pistol
- ▶ Small-bore rifle and small-bore pistol
- ▶ And the popular Winter Olympics biathlon.

Sadly, discussions to date have not considered the fact that shooting ranges have been recovering almost all the lead from bullets for many years. The recycling rate is constantly increasing. In addition, the most widespread disciplines in shooting sports are often practised in closed ranges.

Shooting sports depend on precision more than any others. That encouraged us to test whether there are any differences in precision between lead-based and non-lead-based sports ammunition. The appropriate tests were

performed in collaboration with the test firing authority in Ulm. The results show that the material-dependent scatter with the use of non-lead-based ammunition in air rifles and small-bore rifles is greater than the marksmen's own level of precision. That means that ammunition or bullets that do not contain lead worsen both performance and results to such an extent that shooting as a precision sport would be reduced to a lottery. There is also the problem that the shooting ranges available in Germany are generally not designed for lead-free ammunition on safety grounds. Every shooting range in Germany must undergo a comprehensive approval process. Most current permits either prohibit or do not mention the use of lead-free ammunition. A change to the existing permits regarding the type of ammunition would incur substantial structural and financial consequences. Banning lead from shooting sports would thus have serious implications. We would therefore welcome it if shooting sports could remain exempt from any ban on lead, and if financial resources could be made available for developing and testing alternative materials for sports ammunition as well as for converting the shooting ranges. On that note, I wish everyone a successful IWA OutdoorClassics 2023.