



PRO CARTON
PACKAGING FOR
A BETTER WORLD

2026 PRO CARTON YOUNG DESIGNERS AWARD

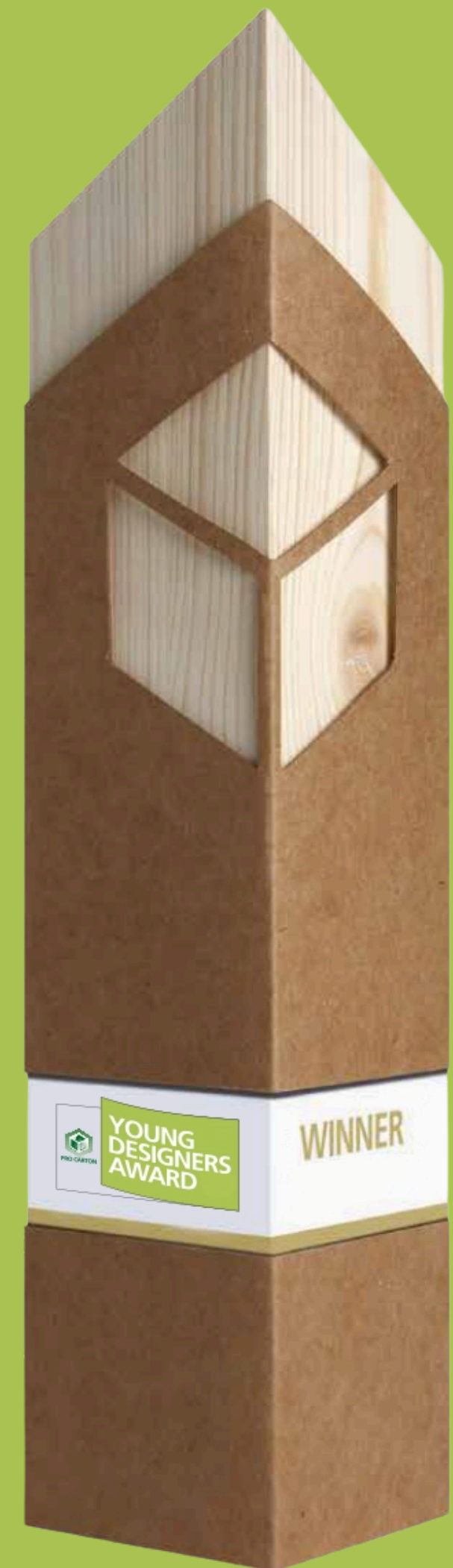
ABOUT THE AWARD

The Pro Carton Young Designers Award is **Europe's leading annual talent competition** for aspiring packaging design.

Focusing exclusively on cartonboard, the award plays an important role in promoting sustainable packaging and innovation amongst students across Europe. The design competition is free to enter and open to all students enrolled at a European school or university.

The Pro Carton Young Designers Award is set to reveal exceptional ideas, whilst allowing Pro Carton to attract the next generation into our industry by showing them the benefits of cartonboard and rewarding their creative thinking. Entering the awards is the perfect platform to network directly with industry experts and kick-start graduate job opportunities.

For the purpose of the award, Pro Carton has partnered with Metsä and MM Board & Paper to supply cartonboard sheets for practical design work, free of charge. This process runs in cycles from October to April.



WHAT IS PRO CARTON?

Pro Carton is the European Association of Carton and Cartonboard manufacturers, representing members operating 50+ board machines across more than 40 mills in 15 European countries, as well as the carton converting industry.

Its purpose is to promote folding cartons and cartonboard to brand owners, the trade, designers, media and policymakers as an economically and ecologically balanced packaging solution that is renewable, biodegradable and a leader in circularity.

Alongside the European Carton Makers Association (ECMA), Pro Carton organises one of Europe's most prestigious sustainable packaging awards; the European Carton Excellence Award (ECEA), the Pro Carton Young Designers Award (PCYDA) and the Pro Carton Student Video Award (PCSVA).

These celebrate innovation and sustainable design, attracting thousands of students, universities and industry professionals each year.





PRO CARTON

PACKAGING FOR
A BETTER WORLD


BILLERUD


Fiskeby

 **FOLBB**
virgin fiber cartonboard *made personal*

 **Graphic
Packaging**
INTERNATIONAL

**HOLMEN
IGGESUND**

 **Kartonsan**


LA ROCHETTE CARTONBOARD
PAPETERIE TECHNIQUE EN SAVOIE


BOARD + PAPER

 **MEL**
CARTONBOARD MAKERS

 **Metsä**

 **PANKABOARD**


RdM

 **Smurfit
Kappa**


storaenso

WEIG
driven by care

 **WestRock**

WHAT IS CARTONBOARD?

Folding cartons are small to medium-sized boxes made of cartonboard. They are used to package a wide range of products, from food – such as cereals, frozen and chilled foods, confectionery, baked goods, tea, coffee and other dry foods – to pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and more.

Many different types of cartonboard are produced, all of which can be manufactured in different weights (grammages) and thicknesses.

Cartonboard is renewable, recyclable and biodegradable. It is a truly sustainable packaging material and a perfect example of the circular economy.



Sustainable forest management

More than 90% sourced from EU forests
European forests are growing by approximately 2%/year
Forest-based sector absorbs >20% of Europe's GHG emissions

Cartonboard and folding carton production

European value creation
24% CO2 reduction cradle-to-grave 2018-21
Efficient use of resources
90% of water returned to the environment after purification
Recirculation of water
62% of renewable energy in operation, and growing
Demonstrating 'zero-waste' production

Brand owners

Design for recycling
Packaging the most important touch point
Co-development
Centre of excellence
Pledge 2025

Retailers

Important partner for collection
Pull effect on innovation
Differentiation through sustainable packaging
Increasing share of private label

Collection & recycling

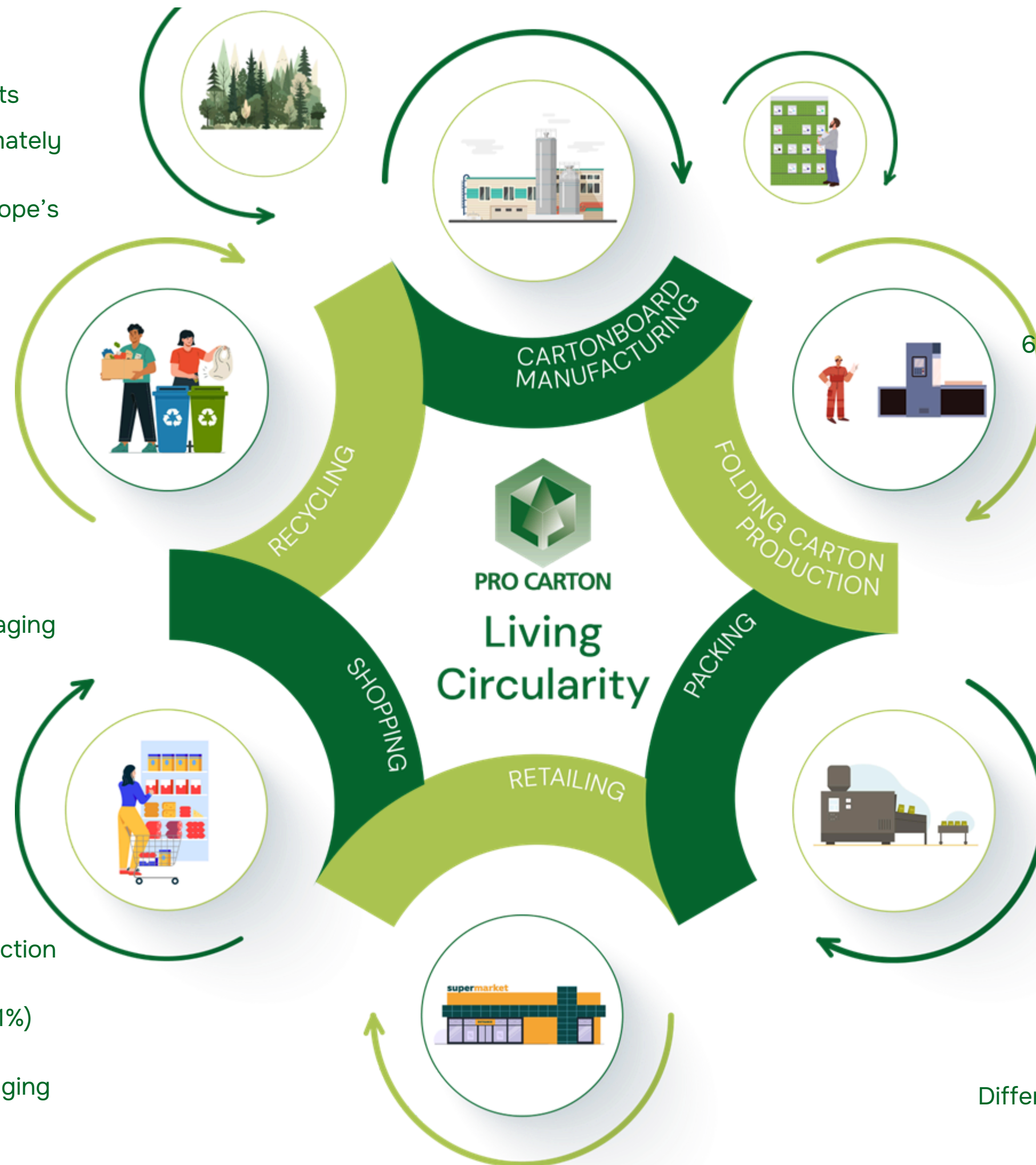
82% recycling rate
Target of 90% by 2030

Cartonboard fibres are resilient

More than 75% of Europe's fibre-based packaging comes from recycled paper/board
Over 54m tonnes recycled in 2022

Consumers

High level of trust and confidence in collection and recycling systems
Recyclability (85%) and renewability (81%) most relevant packaging features
Increasing demand for sustainable packaging solutions



MEET THE TEAM



Winfried Mühling
Pro Carton



Jo Hillier
Storm Communications



Olivia Evans-McCaffery
Storm Communications



Katie May
Storm Communications



Kat Long
Storm Communications

ENTRY CATEGORIES



**Creative Cartonboard
Packaging: Food and Drink**



**Creative Cartonboard
Packaging: All Other**



Sustainability



**PLUS!
Public Award**

THE BRIEF



Creative Cartonboard Packaging, Food & Drink

This category recognises creative cartonboard packaging solutions for food and beverage products. Entries should demonstrate how cartonboard can be used as a sustainable, recyclable packaging material while delivering strong visual and functional design. Look to your everyday food and drink packaging for inspiration, and consider how design can enhance both sustainability and consumer appeal.



Creative Cartonboard Packaging, All Other

The All Other category focuses on creative cartonboard packaging for non-food products. Entries should explore how cartonboard can be used as a sustainable alternative to packaging materials, addressing practical challenges or improving existing solutions. Inspiration can be found by observing packaging in daily life and identifying areas where design, usability or sustainability could be improved.



Sustainability

This category highlights innovative ideas that use cartonboard to reduce or replace plastic or other less sustainable materials. Entries should focus on environmental impact, material efficiency and responsible design choices. Consider current sustainability challenges in packaging and how cartonboard could offer a more environmentally friendly solution.

Entries are automatically entered into the **Public Vote**, allowing the public to vote for their favourite designs and determine the recipient of the Public Award.

08

MAY

15

MAY

15

JULY

17

SEP

ENTRY DEADLINE

The online entry form will close at midnight CET.

INITIAL SHORTLIST

Selected entrants will be asked to submit their designs physically to the judges.

PUBLIC VOTE OPENS

The public vote remains open throughout the summer. The entry with the most votes will receive the 2026 Public Award.

AWARDS GALA

Winners and finalists will celebrate their achievements with us at the awards ceremony in the stunning city of Rome, Italy.

Please note, these dates are subject to change

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO SUBMIT?



Entry name: Give your design a short, appealing and **memorable** name.



Entry description: Promote your design in **no more than 150 words**. It's essential to clearly capture your design concept, highlight key features and explain how it promotes sustainability or replaces existing solutions.



Why should this win? Use this section to tell the judges **why your design deserves the award**. Highlight what makes it innovative, impactful and unique, and explain how it addresses sustainability, solves a problem or stands out in its category.



Supporting media: Upload up to five photos of your design (landscape and/or portrait), along with any technical drawings or concepts. You may also include video material; please ensure videos are shared **via Google Drive** with public access enabled.

Note: Submit photos and/or videos of your design by **Friday 8 May**.

Only shortlisted entrants will be invited to send their physical designs for in-person judging. **Do not send designs unless notified.**

Late arrivals may be disqualified.

RULES & REQUIREMENTS



Creations must be made mainly of cartonboard over 200 g/m².



Submissions must be three-dimensional and to scale.



You must include images of your cartonboard concept, including any **sketches and technical drawings**, along with a brief description of your design and its key features.



Students are welcome to enter either individually or **in groups of up to four**. Only one team member needs to submit the design online on behalf of the group.



Your design must be an **original concept** and not derived from or copied from any existing work.



Entries made from any material other than cartonboard will be disqualified.



All information submitted, including entry details, names and university affiliations, must be **accurate and free of errors**. Entries containing incorrect or misleading information may be disqualified.



Have fun with your designs!
If you have any questions or need support, feel free to reach out.

JUDGING PANEL

Our judging panel features industry leaders from across Europe, including top retailers and packaging designers. All entries are first reviewed online, so your photos, videos and supporting media are key. Shortlisted designs are then assessed in person for functionality, creativity and sustainability, with winners, finalists and Public Vote entries chosen.



Satkar Gidda
Consultant



Sanjeev Das
Unilever



Lotte Krekels
Carrefour



Heidi Vanspauwen
Van Genechten Packaging



RECOGNITION

All top entries will be showcased across Pro Carton's social media channels, which reach over 25,000 followers. Winning designs will also be featured in marketing materials and press releases distributed to key trade media, giving your work industry-wide visibility

CELEBRATION

Winners and finalists, along with their teachers, will be invited on a fully funded trip to attend the prestigious awards gala in Rome, Italy, 17th September 2026.

INDUSTRY TRAINING

Winners will be offered a unique training opportunity with industry leaders to explore the production process of cartonboard and connect with key professionals in the sector. Each winner will also receive a one-of-a-kind handmade frame and trophy to celebrate their achievement.

OPPORTUNITY

Whatever the outcome, entering the PCYDA is a standout addition to your CV. It demonstrates your dedication, creativity, and skill in sustainable packaging design - exactly what employers in the industry are looking for.

2025 VICTORY

5 winners



Creative Cartonboard
Packaging
Food & Drink



Creative Cartonboard
Packaging
All other



Sustainability Award



Public Award



Judges Award



Finalist



Finalist



Finalist

3 finalists

IN THE MEDIA

Opakowanie.pl

established 1987
PACKAGING
SCOTLAND



Padon Period Pads by Jule Schelleter, Meret Fischmann, Birte Müller and Bahareh Hosseinzadeh Alamdari – Münster School of Design



Fold'n'Hold by Ece Naz Taş, Zeynep Cantürk and Serra Kağıtçı – Middle East Technical University

THE winners of the European Carton Excellence Award (ECEA) 2025 have been announced at a ceremony in Istanbul, Turkey.

Hosted by Pro Carton and the European Carton Makers Association, trophy winners spanned four special recognition awards, seven new end-user focused categories, and platinum and gold entries.

EUWID VERPACKUNG

European Carton Excellence Award recognizes innovative folding carton designs

INTERNATIONAL
infopack
Envases responsables para una economía circular

Istanbul awards Europe's best young packaging designers

ARTES GRÁFICAS
alabrent
/ cartiflex

AGENTIA NAȚIONALĂ DE PRESĂ
AGERPRES
Actualizează lumea.

Cluj: UAD won the Jury Prize at the European Packaging Design Awards Gala

Interempresas

The Pro Cartoon Student Video Award 2025 celebrates excellence in storytelling

European Carton Excellence Award 2025 winners unveiled in Istanbul

22 SEPTEMBER 2025

PACKAGING
EUROPE

Carton excellence celebrated at annual awards gala



Video Award: Packaging tells an emotional story

PACKAGING
WORLD.

Young talent in focus: Pro Carton Young Designers Award

Cardboard of the Year: Cosmetic Advent wreath made of cardboard

packaging
journal



Innovation Award Winner: Leffe Beer Multinack



Sustainability Award Winner: Claber Lancia Pro 8535



Public Award winner: Neuhaus Easter Filled Figures

SUSTAINABLE
PACKAGING
NEWS

Europe's top young packaging designers honoured in Istanbul



ENVASPRÉS

Istanbul awards Europe's best young packaging designers

PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 7, 2025



NEWS PACKAGING
DESIGN, PACKAGING & MERCHANDISING

Winners of the European Carton Excellence Award 2025

PRO CARTON
EUROPEAN
CARTON
EXCELLENCE
AWARD 2025
WINNER
CARTON OF THE YEAR



NEWS PACKAGING
DESIGN, PACKAGING & MERCHANDISING

PRESSE BOX®

Packaging design with a message: "Padon Period Pads" wins the FFI/Pro Carton Young Designers Award 2025

Paper
Market.eu





YOUNG
DESIGNERS
AWARD '26

TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

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