

European Carton Excellence Award



Meet the team



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Introducing the...

ECEA 2026



Hosted by Pro Carton and the European Carton Makers Association (ECMA), the European Carton Excellence Award (ECEA) challenges partners from across the supply chain to showcase their most innovative cartonboard packaging designs. Every year packaging designs for some of the most prestigious companies and challenger brands are awarded.

Demonstrating excellence, the ECEA recognises and celebrates outstanding achievements in packaging that blend functionality with aesthetic appeal. Each year partners from across the continent showcase their ingenuity, pushing the boundaries of what cartonboard and folding cartons can achieve.

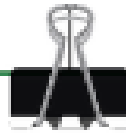
Join us in honouring the best in the industry, where each entry is a testament to the dynamic and evolving world of sustainable packaging solutions.

2025 in numbers

- > 111 entries
- > 16 countries
- > 7,600 public votes
- > 6.6M media reach

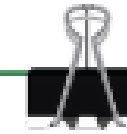


Benefits for all stakeholders



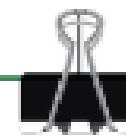
Brand owners

Demonstrate to consumers just how committed you are to using sustainable forms of packaging. An ECEA award is the perfect recognition for your drive to lead in sustainability.



Mills & Converters

Highlight recent innovation and set yourselves apart from the competition. Demonstrate your creativity and manufacturing standards to brand owners looking for the best in sustainable packaging.



Designers

If you have played a key role in the development of a unique cartonboard packaging concept, then the ECEA is a great way to showcase your design ingenuity, internally and externally.



Why enter in 2026?



Valuable exposure

Simply being nominated or shortlisted for an award presents an opportunity to use this for publicity purposes



Market position

There are high levels of media interest & engagement around the awards, with the potential to boost your company's market position & exposure



More sales & customers

Winning or being nominated for the awards is a strong indicator of trustworthiness among prospective customers & stakeholders



Boost customer retention

Entering & winning awards demonstrates to customers that your business is at the top of its game, thus improving customer retention



Increased credibility

An award nomination acts as a third-party endorsement for your business. A win gives a stamp of authority and credibility within your industry sector and can be a sign of quality for potential customers



Employee motivation

Awards are a fantastic way to recognise the hard work of your employees and boost staff morale. Knowing they have contributed to winning an award can be a great motivator



Create attention

The Awards Gala is a great opportunity to put your business in front of influential and noteworthy people who may be key players within your industry, sector or region



Attract talent

Winning validates your hiring stature among new recruits. By pitching yourself as the best, you can attract the talent you need. Because who doesn't want to work for an award winning company?

6 Award categories

- Beverages (Alcohol, JNSD, Water...)
- Confectionery (Cookies, Chocolate, Candies)
- Pharma & Healthcare (Medicine, Supplements, Laboratory, Medical Devices)
- Ambient Foods (Ambient Distribution, Fruits, Vegetables, PET Food)
- Beauty & Cosmetics (Creams, Perfumes, Personal Care)
- General Packaging (Tobacco, Laundry, Household, Sports, Toys...)



New for ECEA 2026

The Art of Cartonboard Award

To mark 30 years of excellence, ECEA introduces a special anniversary award celebrating the technical mastery, versatility and creative potential of cartonboard.

For this milestone edition, we're opening a dedicated platform where mills and converters can showcase what's possible **beyond commercial constraints** highlighting innovation, **craftsmanship** and the **future of fibre-based packaging**.

This special award celebrates three decades of packaging innovation by pushing boundaries and inspiring the next generation of cartonboard solutions.

Objectives

- ✓ Demonstrate the versatility of different board grades
- ✓ Structural and engineering creativity
- ✓ Advanced printing, finishing, and embellishment
- ✓ Collaboration across the value chain
- ✓ New ideas that may inspire future commercial applications

Eligibility

- ✓ Commercial launch not required
- ✓ Sample packs, demonstrators, and concept innovations welcome
- ✓ Joint submissions from mills, converters, or partners encouraged



Special awards

Sustainability

This category recognises solutions that show a commitment to environmental responsibility.

Entries should highlight the replacement of less sustainable materials, high recycled content, or innovative design for reduced material usage.

Awards given to both virgin and recycled fibre entries.

Innovation

The Innovation Award celebrates groundbreaking advancements in cartonboard packaging.

Entries should showcase novel concepts, technologies, or designs that push the boundaries of what's possible.

Awards given to both virgin and recycled fibre entries.

Public Award

This category celebrates the carton that resonates most with the public during the summer voting period.

All shortlisted entries are automatically entered into the Public Award unless the entrant chooses to opt-out.

The Public Vote will open from mid-July.



Carton of the Year

The ultimate accolade and the industry's highest honour

The **Carton of the Year** represents the very best of the best - the crème de la crème of cartonboard packaging.

Selected from the six category winners, this prestigious award recognises the single most outstanding entry across the competition, celebrating exceptional design, technical performance, functionality and sustainability in one complete solution. Every entry is automatically considered for this distinguished title, underscoring the scale and significance of the achievement.

As the most prestigious recognition in cartonboard packaging, the European Carton Excellence Award honours and rewards the pinnacle of ecological packaging design and Carton of the Year stands above them all.



Material rules

Cartonboard manufacturer

All entries must be manufactured on cartonboard produced by a member of Pro Carton or ECMA. See website for more details.

Cartonboard converter

All entries must have been printed and converted by a direct or indirect ECMA or Pro Carton member, or by a member of a European national association.

Cartonboard requirements

All entries must be produced predominantly from cartonboard or cartonboard laminated to microflute (with a depth of 1.5mm or less) or risk being disqualified.



Pro Carton members



2026 Rules



Do's

All entries must have been produced and manufactured for sale between 2023-2026.

Due to the needs and processes of the awards, six samples are required to be sent with each entry. This is not essential for perishable goods. Entrants may only request the return of samples in exceptional cases and will be responsible for any costs incurred.

All text entered on the form must be accurate and free of typos as it will be used across all awards materials and communications.



Dont's

Rigid boxes or similar made by covering board (usually grey board) with paper or similar material will not be accepted. Entries made from any material other than cartonboard will be disqualified.

Entries incorrectly categorised or with incorrect information may be disqualified.

Entries will only be accepted with the brand owner approval.



How to enter

It's easy to enter the ECEA 2026 by using the online entry form on our website. Here are the simple steps:

1

Gain approvals

It is the entrant's responsibility to gain all stakeholders' approvals prior to entry and confirm the board type with the manufacturer.

2

Complete the entry form

Ensure you submit your entry form by the deadline in May 2026. Filling in all relevant fields with accurate, detailed information will boost your chances of being shortlisted. The cost is €250 per entry.

3

Sending your designs

You must send six samples to judging by no later than the end of May 2026. One sample must include the product it comes with.



Judging process

An esteemed panel of packaging experts determine the shortlist by assessing each entry against rigorous criteria, including cost-efficiency, innovation, convenience, design and production techniques displayed. See the 2025 judging panel here:



SATKAR GIDDA

Independent Packaging Consultant



SANJEEV DAS

Global Packaging Director, Unilever



SUSANNE LIPPITSCH

Freelance designer in structural
packaging design and packaging
design teacher



LOTTE KREKELS

Packaging Manager, Carrefour

2026 judging panel TBC



2026 timeline

MAY

ENTRIES CLOSE

The final entry date is 15 May. No deadline extensions are offered.

MAY

SEND DESIGNS

All payments must be completed and packs must arrive at the given address for judging no later than 30 May.

JUL

PUBLIC VOTE

All shortlisted entries are automatically entered into the public vote. The voting period will close on 24 August.

SEP

AWARDS GALA

All shortlisted companies are invited to celebrate with us at the ceremony in Rome, Italy on 17 September.



In the media

LEBENSMITTEL
TECHNIK

GOLD AWARDS FÜR VERPACKUNGSDESIGNS

Diverse Verpackungsdesigns aus Metsä Board-Karton wurden bei den diesjährigen European Carton Excellence Awards mit Gold ausgezeichnet. Die Verleihung erfolgte durch Pro Carton und die European Carton Makers Association.



ECEA 2024 winning cartonboard creations unveiled in Berlin

The highly anticipated 2024 winners of the annual European Carton Excellence Award (ECEA), hosted by Pro Carton and the European Carton Makers Association, were announced last night (19 September 2024) during the Awards Gala, held at the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Germany. The ECEA – the premier award for sustainable packaging – annually highlights the latest innovative cartonboard and folding carton designs.

At the head of the Awards Gala, all winners and a top 27 shortlist for the Public Vote were determined by a panel of industry experts and professionals, representative of the entire cartonboard value chain, including Satkar Giddar (Marketing and Branding Consultant), Sanjeev Das (Unilever), and Lotte Krekels (Carrefour).

packaging journal

Die besten Kartonverpackungen

Am 19. September 2024 wurden im Rahmen einer festlichen Gala im Jüdischen Museum Berlin die Gewinner des European Carton Excellence Award 2024 bekanntgegeben. Wir zeigen Ihnen alle Verpackungen, die von der Jury ausgezeichnet wurden.

Der prestigeträchtige Preis, der von Pro Carton und der European Carton Makers Association verliehen wird, gilt als die wichtigste Auszeichnung für nachhaltige Verpackungen in Europa. Jährlich werden damit herausragende Innovationen im Bereich Karton- und Faltkartendesign geehrt.

Die Jury, bestehend aus führenden Branchenexperten wie Satkar Giddar, Sanjeev Das (Unilever) und Lotte Krekels (Carrefour), hatte bereits im Vorfeld die 27 Top-Kandidaten für die Public Vote sowie sämtliche Gewinner ausgewählt. Die Preisverleihung würdigt dabei nicht nur die Kreativität und Funktionalität der Designs, sondern auch deren Beitrag zu mehr Nachhaltigkeit in der Verpackungsindustrie.

Faserbasierte Verpackungen

Dem Karton gehört die Zukunft

Karton in seiner schönsten Form

Der European Carton Excellence Award (ECEA) ist ein prestigeträchtiger Wettbewerb für innovative Kartonverpackungen. Er zeigt eindrucksvoll, wie vielseitig und kreativ das Packungsmaterial eingesetzt werden kann. Veranstaltet wird der ECEA von Pro Carton und der European Carton Makers Association (ECMA). Einreicher des ECEA kommen aus der gesamten Lieferkette. Eine renommierte Jury aus Verpackungsexperten bewertet die Arbeiten nach strengen Kriterien wie Grafik- und Strukturdesign, Produktionstechniken, Kosteneffizienz, Ökologie, Nachhaltigkeit, Innovation und Komfort. 2024 galt es, rund 100 Einreichungen zu bewerten.

Pro Carton arbeitet seit vielen Jahren auch sehr erfolgreich mit Universitäten in Europa zusammen. 2024 wurden mehr als 850 Arbeiten von mehr als 160 führenden Designhochschulen aus 25 Ländern für den Pro Carton Young Designers Award eingereicht. Der Verband ist hierbei jedes Jahr mit mehr als 2.000 Studenten in Kontakt und bildet auf diese Weise einen wachsenden Pool junger Design-Talente.

FOOD PROCESSING

BEVERAGE & PACKAGING PROCESS AND PACKAGING



Cartonboard:
Trusted by consumers
across Europe

9 in 10 Europeans trust that cartonboard is recycled – that's more than glass, metal and flexible plastics



European Carton Excellence Award 2024

Introducing the innovations
that keep cartonboard ahead
of the rest



Explore this year's
winners in detail

Recyclable.
Renewable.
Choose Carton.



PROCESSES AND PACKAGING TECHNOLOGY

Cartonboard's impressive design capabilities on display

The winners of the annual European Carton Excellence Award (ECEA), hosted by Pro Carton and the European Carton Makers Association, were announced on 19 September during a glamorous ceremony in Berlin, Germany.

This year's Food & Drink category received exceptional entries in both the virgin and recycled cartonboard categories.

The sleek and minimalist packaging for Macmyra 001 – a Swedish malt whisky – exemplifies understated elegance earning it the Food and Drink Packaging – Virgin Fibre award. Designed by Nordic Carton, using Holmen Board and Paper cartonboard, the packaging's refined, Nordic-inspired style emphasises simplicity and functionality.

It features intricate die-cut patterns that elevate the product's shelf appeal.

More than 300 voters recognised the exceptional design and functionality of the Plada Victoria Creations packaging in the Public Award. Created using Metsä Board cartonboard, the visually appealing design and easy-to-open features enhance the unboxing experience.



This design is fully recyclable and customisable, presenting enhanced branding opportunities. It also offers a stronger, more durable solution to protect the product during supply chain transportation.

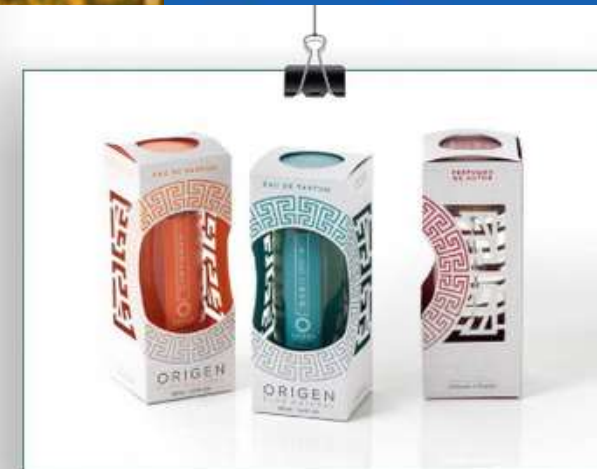


With almost 250 delegates in attendance, this was one of the best attended European Carton Makers Association events in quite some time. The ECMA Congress 2024 had a packed agenda, with plenty of time to network with other members, as well as see useful tables.

Top exhibition stands from the key sponsors of the event. After a warm welcome from Michael Kellner, Parliamentary Secretary of State for Germany, the event kicked off with a superb presentation by Andrea Bolino from Oxford Economics with his vision on where the European economy is heading.



REVISTA
IDE



Winner

Carton of the Year

Origen Flor Natural
by Hinojosa Packaging Galería Gráfica

Carton converter
Hinojosa Packaging Galería Gráfica

Brand owner
Laboratorios Flor Natural Parfums

Structural designer
Jose Javier Usieto Alejandro

Cartonboard manufacturer
Stora Enso

Elegant origins

The intricate die-cut patterns on this case enhance the overall aesthetic of the cartonboard packaging design, creating a visually striking and captivating look. The complementary patterns contribute to the shelf appeal of the product, making it stand out.

The sleek and modern design, created by Hinojosa Packaging Galería Gráfica using Stora Enso cartonboard, also adds a touch of sophistication to the product. The packaging provides a secure and protective environment for the glass-bottled perfume, ensuring its freshness and longevity. This attention to detail not only protects the product, it enhances the overall consumer experience.



neue verpackung

Das Entscheidermagazin für Verpackungsprozesse

01-02/2025
January/February 2025, D 5281
www.steuer-verpackung.de
78. Jahrgang

Markt
Was war, was
kommt? Wir haben
die Branchenver-
bände befragt 20

Digitalisierung
Die Zukunft des
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Kreation: Die Ver-
packungsdesign-
Trends 2025 44

Start-up
Mehrweg: Wie
Sykell 1,2 Mio. Ein-
wegverpackungen
ersetzt hat 58



FASERBASIERTE VERPACKUNGEN
Karton gehört
die Zukunft S. 26



Recognising Excellence



Need assistance?

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