



Print Matters 2026: building a more resilient print industry

[Print Matters 2026](#) brought printing industry leaders, national associations, suppliers and experts together in Budapest to examine how the sector can remain competitive amid rapid technological, economic and regulatory change.

Co-organised by Intergraf and the Nordic Printing Association (NOPA), and supported by Federation of Hungarian Printers and Papermakers, the conference focused on four closely connected areas: business transformation, the economic outlook, sustainability and security. Across the programme, one message stood out: resilience is becoming just as important to competitiveness as innovation.

Artificial intelligence and agentic commerce offered a glimpse of how customer behaviour and purchasing decisions could evolve, while discussions on hyper-personalisation highlighted new opportunities for print to deliver more relevant and engaging communication. Automation and robotics were also presented as practical tools for increasing productivity and responding to persistent labour and skills shortages.

The economic sessions placed these developments within a wider international context, examining trends in the global print and paper markets, shifting demand and the pressures affecting supply chains. For printing companies, the challenge is not simply to adopt new technology,

but to identify where investment can create real business value.

Sustainability discussions reflected a shift to implementation. EU legislation, carbon calculation, reporting requirements and supply-chain transparency are becoming part of everyday business relationships. Customers increasingly expect reliable environmental information, and closer cooperation between printers and suppliers essential.

The conference also addressed the risks facing companies in an increasingly uncertain environment. Business continuity, crisis preparedness featured prominently. A real-life account of recovery after a major fire offered a particularly powerful reminder that resilience must be built before a crisis occurs through clear guidelines, emergency planning, insurance and alternative production arrangements.

The discussions in Budapest showed that the future of print will depend on the industry's ability to combine innovation with practical investment, reliable environmental performance and stronger risk management. **The next Print Matters conference will take place on 4 June 2027 in Tallinn, Estonia.**

Children are reading more again, but how they read matters

According to latest data from the UK and Germany, children’s reading engagement has increased for the first time in five years, offering a welcome sign after a prolonged period of decline. However, overall reading levels remain low, inequalities are widening, and new research suggests that the format in which children read may influence how well they understand information.

First increase in reading enjoyment in five years

The National Literacy Trust surveyed more than 125,000 children and young people across the UK in early 2026. Among children aged 8–18, 36.1% said they enjoyed reading in their free time, compared with 32.7% in 2025. The proportion reading every day also increased, rising from 18.7% to 20.3%.

These modest improvements suggest that efforts by schools, libraries, families and literacy organisations may be beginning to have an effect.

Nevertheless, the wider picture remains concerning. Reading engagement is still far below the levels recorded a decade ago. Only around one in three children and young people now say they enjoy reading in their free time, while only approximately one in five read every day.

Disadvantaged children risk being left behind

The gap between disadvantaged children and their peers has widened, with children receiving free school meals less likely to enjoy reading or read daily. This highlights the continuing importance of access to books, libraries, supportive adults and opportunities to read for pleasure.

Children are also more likely to engage with reading when the material reflects their interests and when they receive encouragement from parents, teachers or other trusted adults. Novels are only one route into reading: comics, graphic novels, manga, magazines and non-fiction can all help children develop lasting reading habits.

Print powers purpose

The results are clear - printed materials elicit **20%** higher response rates than digital.

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Children understand less when reading on screens

As attention turns to how children can be encouraged to read more frequently, new research has examined whether they understand texts differently when reading in print or on a screen.

A peer-reviewed study involving 120 German pupils in grades 4–6 compared their understanding of informational texts presented digitally and in print. The researchers found that comprehension was lower when children read on screens.

This difference remained even after vocabulary and word-recognition skills were taken into account. Children with greater exposure to printed materials also tended to achieve stronger comprehension results.

The findings point to what researchers describe as a “screen inferiority effect”, in which readers understand or retain less information when reading digitally than when reading on paper. This may be particularly relevant for educational texts that require sustained attention and the ability to connect ideas across different sections.

The study does not suggest that children cannot learn from digital materials. Screens can provide flexibility, accessibility and interactive learning opportunities. However, transferring a text from paper to a screen should not automatically be considered an equivalent replacement.

Analogue reading delivers more consistent benefits

A separate six-month study involving 249 German primary-school pupils compared an analogue reading programme with a digitally delivered programme and a control group.

The analogue programme produced small but positive improvements in reading competence. Results from the digital intervention were less consistent and varied more noticeably between pupils and schools.

The researchers stressed that format alone does not determine success. Teaching quality, school resources, language background, parental education and the way a programme is implemented can all have a significant influence on children’s progress. However, the study also found that high levels of digital-media use at home were associated with weaker reading competence.

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Stories that leave lasting impressions

Printed books are a better medium to read and learn

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Intergraf clarifies PPWR requirements with practical guidance and templates

INTERGRAF GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON THE PACKAGING AND PACKAGING WASTE REGULATION.

VERSION 2
(JUNE 2024)



The EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation applies from 12 August 2026 and will introduce harmonised requirements across the EU covering packaging design, recyclability, labelling, substances of concern and producer responsibility.

Industry is still seeking legal certainty in areas requiring implementing acts, technical standards and further Commission guidance. Particular attention is being given to the new limits on PFAS in food-contact packaging, including their scope, testing methods, documentation and concentration thresholds.

To support the transition, Intergraf has developed practical PPWR guidance for its members, covering both printed packaging suppliers and printing companies using packaging materials in their operations. Intergraf is also preparing template documents that members will be able to use with customers.

New EU study highlights what makes packaging recycling systems effective

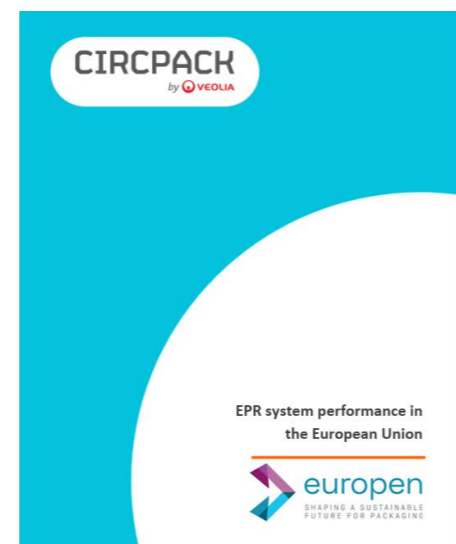
A new EU-wide study by EUROPEN and CIRCPACK finds that packaging recycling performance depends more on system design, governance and transparency than on the level of fees paid by producers.

The study assesses Extended Producer Responsibility systems across all 27 EU Member States. Under EPR, companies placing packaging on the market contribute financially or operationally to its collection, sorting and recycling. In 2023, the EU generated 79.7 million tonnes of packaging waste, while national recycling rates ranged from 79.7% in Belgium to 37.3% in Romania.

The findings show that both monopoly and competitive EPR systems can perform well when responsibilities are clearly defined, fee revenues are traceable

and detailed data is available. Countries with highly transparent reporting systems recycled an average of 69.6% of packaging, compared with 56.2% in countries with low transparency.

Higher producer fees alone do not guarantee better results. Revenues must be reinvested effectively in collection, sorting and recycling infrastructure, while eco-modulated fees should encourage companies to design packaging that is easier to recycle.



Get the latest insights on Europe's print market – order the 2026 Economic Report

Intergraf's 2026 Economic Report, The Evolution of the European Graphic Industry, is now available to order. Published annually, the report provides comprehensive economic information on the state, structure and development of the European graphic industry. It examines historical trends, compares national markets and presents key data on the sector's performance.

The report covers the production of printed products and trade with major international partners, while also examining developments in sectors closely connected to the graphic industry, including paper, printing inks, publishing, printing machinery, energy, postal services and advertising.

Readers will find detailed information on the global and European economic situation, the performance of European manufacturing, employment and labour costs, production values, imports from China, and trade with the United States and European partners. The report also includes data on VAT rates and wider socio-economic developments, as well as dedicated market reports and national insights from 16 European countries.

The 2026 edition features contributions from Intergraf members on selected developments in their national markets. It also includes a European print market review and forecasts to 2030, prepared by Intergraf's research partner, Smithers.

The report offers companies, associations and industry stakeholders a valuable resource for understanding current market conditions and anticipating the trends that will shape the European graphic industry in the years ahead.

The report is available free of charge to Intergraf members and for purchase by non-members. Request your copy using the relevant Members' or Non-Members' order form. Order the report [here](#).





European Parliament committee calls for stronger protection of trusted media

The European Parliament's Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield has adopted [proposals](#) to strengthen the EU's response to foreign interference, hybrid threats and disinformation. The recommendations call for greater platform accountability, stronger protection for free and independent media, and improved visibility for verified news sources. The full Parliament is expected to vote on the report in September 2026.

Access to reliable information, media pluralism and sustainable journalism is essential to democratic resilience. Greater transparency around AI-generated content and stronger enforcement of digital rules can help create a healthier information environment.

Strengthening Europe's democracy therefore requires a strong and sustainable media ecosystem in which print and trusted professional journalism continue to play a central role.

Print plays an important role by supporting focused reading, deeper understanding and independent opinion-forming. It is also highly inclusive, providing access to information without requiring digital skills, devices or connectivity.

EVENTS

- [Intergraf Currency+Identity 2026 conference](#), 14-16 October 2026, Copenhagen, Denmark
- [WAN-IFRA's World Printers Summit and DistriPress Congress](#), 4-7 October 2026, Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The event is a joint meeting point for newspaper printers, publishers, distributors, circulation specialists across the global press supply chain.

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