



Press Release

Brussels, 5 February 2026

Winner of the 10th Edition of the European Paper Recycling Awards announced

The Awarding Ceremony of the 10th Edition of the European Paper Recycling Awards took place on 4 February at the European Parliament Brussels and was hosted by MEP Jeannette Baljeu.

Every two years, the European Paper Recycling Council (EPRC) distinguishes European projects, initiatives or campaigns that change the way Europeans recycle. Projects that support society, industry, and public institutions in reaching ever higher paper recycling rates. The ceremony awards the winners who have presented excellent and game-changing projects in innovative technologies, R&D, information & education.

The latest report by the EPRC shows that **the paper value chain is still on track to reach a 76% paper recycling rate by 2030**. Already outperforming every other material on recycling and setting the standard for the rest of the world.

Today, paper products in Europe achieve an overall recycling rate of 75.1%, while **paper-based packaging reaches an impressive 87%**.

Paper recycling is a 'made in Europe' industry, as collection, sorting and recycling takes place more than ever locally. This is **the result of extensive investments by the industry over the years, valued several billion euros**.

Dr. Elisabeth Schwaiger, Mondi's Head of Innovation for Flexible Packaging, accepted this year's Award **recognising Mondi's work in delivering a range of functional paper packaging with specific barriers that are easy to process for recyclers**. This an important element in increasing the recyclability of paper from the design stage and with practical industrial applications: prototypes were tested in Mondi's own Recycling lab, applying the Capi testing method for conventional recycling mills, a recognised industry standard.

Quotes

"The Circular Economy Act should raise the floor across Europe while being careful not to disrupt an already well-working process. If the EU wants circularity at scale it has to make it easier."

Jeannette Baljeu – Member of the European Parliament

"Our European paper recycling system is successful not by chance, but by design. Decades of collaboration across the value chain — from paper manufacturers and recyclers to collectors, municipalities, and brand owners — have created a system that works. And it also works because the right policies are in place. The paper recycling system that delivers real environmental benefits, economic value, and industrial resilience."

Valeria Salvadori - Chair EPRC (European Paper Recycling Council)

"I'm proud to accept this award on behalf of Mondi and our teams who are committed to making packaging sustainable by design. Our recyclable FunctionalBarrier Papers show how innovation and rigorous, science-led testing can deliver real circular solutions."

Elisabeth Schwaiger – Head of Innovation, Mondi Flexible Packaging

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Note to editor:

*The **European Paper Recycling Council (EPRC)** was set up as an industry self-initiative in November 2000 to monitor progress towards meeting the paper recycling targets set out in the 2000 European Declaration on Paper Recycling. Since then the commitments in the Declaration are renewed every five years. In 2021 the EPRC committed to meeting and maintaining both a voluntary recycling rate target of 76% in the EU27 plus Switzerland and Norway by 2030 as well as qualitative targets in areas such as waste prevention, ecodesign and research and development. In 2022, Members of the EPRC are ACE, CEPI, CITPA, EMFA, ETS, FEPE, INGEDE and INTERGRAF. Supporters are Afera, EuPIA, FINAT, FEICA, IRLA and RadTECH Europe. The environment (DG Environment) and industry (DG Grow) departments of the European Commission are permanent observers to the EPRC.*