



Essen, May 6, 2026

METPACK Innovation Awards 2026:

## **Bronze, Silver and Gold for the future of metal packaging**

**International jury honors technical excellence**

The winners of the METPACK Innovation Awards 2026 have been announced: Gold goes to MW LAK Solutions Srl, Silver to Koenig & Bauer MetalPrint GmbH and Bronze to Sun Chemical Group GmbH. The three companies were honored on the second day of the trade fair at the "Talk in a Can" presentation area in Hall 2. With the awards, METPACK recognizes outstanding technical innovations in the international metal packaging industry. The world's leading trade fair will continue at Messe Essen until May 8.

A total of 26 entries from 22 exhibitors from China, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States were submitted for Bronze, Silver and Gold. An international jury of experts evaluated the innovations according to criteria such as degree of innovation, sustainability, cost reduction and quality improvement.

Chairman of the Jury Gianluca Ciccolini summarized: "The decision was anything but easy for the jury this year. It was a truly neck-and-neck race, with many strong entries that impressively demonstrate how innovative and future-oriented the metal packaging industry is. The winning solutions are outstanding examples of the technical excellence and innovative strength of our industry."

### **Gold: MW LAK Solutions Srl – UV-LED External White Basecoat**

MW LAK Solutions Srl receives Gold for its UV-LED External White Basecoat for metal packaging. The innovation replaces conventionally heat-dried external white basecoat systems with a UV-LED-curable coating system. With a very high solids content, the coating cures almost instantly under LED radiation. This significantly reduces VOC emissions, energy consumption and the carbon footprint. At the same time, coating consumption and film weight are reduced, while the required floor space, maintenance effort and downtime are minimized. The technology



MESSE ESSEN GmbH

Messeplatz 1  
45131 Essen | Germany

Presse-Kontakt | Press Contact  
Luise Halfmann  
Fon +49 201 7244-898  
luise.halfmann@messe-essen.de

Presse-Fotoservice |  
Press Photo Service

support@messe-essen-  
mediacenter.de

www.messe-essen.de  
www.metpack.de

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therefore supports more efficient and sustainable external coating for metal packaging.

### **Silver: Koenig & Bauer MetalPrint GmbH – Closed-Loop Inline Coating Thickness Control**

Koenig & Bauer MetalPrint GmbH receives Silver for its Closed-Loop Inline Coating Thickness Control system, the first fully automatic inline control system for metal sheet coating. The system measures the coating layer thickness directly after the coating machine in real time and transmits the data to the machine control system. Deviations from the setpoint are automatically detected and corrected by readjusting the coating gap. This keeps the target application weight stable throughout the production run, while reducing coating consumption, waste and manual intervention. The solution increases process stability, shortens make-ready and setup times, and enables more resource-efficient production – both for new machines and as an upgrade for existing MetalCoat installations.

### **Bronze: Sun Chemical Group GmbH – AI-Powered Color Matching and Direct-to-Can Digital Proofing**

Bronze goes to Sun Chemical Group GmbH for an AI-powered color matching and Direct-to-Can digital proofing solution developed in partnership with CMA Imaging. At the heart of the solution is an objective, serialized color target that clearly defines the desired brand color for metal decoration. Instead of evaluating colors subjectively over multiple rounds using physical samples, the brand, prepress partner, can maker and ink supplier work from a shared, measurable color reference. The AI supports more precise matching of color, opacity and film weight and enables a first-time-right approach in the proofing and approval process. As a result, color rematching, rejected samples, sample shipments, approval delays and unnecessary ink consumption can be reduced.

Further information: [www.metpack.de](http://www.metpack.de)