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OVER 400 OPERATORS AT THE PRINT4ALL CONFERENCE: THE ROADMAP TO PRINT4ALL 2025 CONTINUES

A crucial step towards the event, the Conference brought together the printing community. The market remains robust, driven by various trends: innovation in materials, sustainability, and artificial intelligence.

Milan, July 19, 2024 – Over **400 operators, 26 speakers, 15 industry associations, and 50 foreign delegates from 17 countries**: these are the significant numbers recorded by the **Print4All Conference**, organized on July 11 by **Acimga** and **Argi** in collaboration with **Fiera Milano**, to discuss the state of printing and converting.

PRINT4ALL 2025: A SYSTEMIC EVENT

An essential milestone on the path to **Print4All**, the event that will be held at **Fiera Milano from May 27 to 30, 2025**, the Conference opened with a discussion between **Paolo Pizzocaro**, Fiera Milano Exhibition Director of Print4All, **Daniele Barbui**, President of Acimga, and **Antonio Maiorano**, President of Argi. The three "travel companions" – organizer and promoters who have chosen to share their expertise to bring the event to life – presented the project for the 2025 fair and analyzed the context in which it is developing.

True to its DNA, Print4All 2025 is proposed as an integrated platform of services and networking to support companies in the printing and converting sectors.

In **a world that will never be printless** – from packaging to road signs, from restaurant menus to books, everything "communicates" through print – the fair's task will be to showcase the innovation of a sector that conveys information through visual and tactile emotions thanks to constantly evolving techniques and materials.

The project's three keywords: **Convergence** between printing applications, but also between technologies and new techniques; **Experience** guaranteed by new thematic areas dedicated to specific market segments; and **Networking**, as Print4All represents a unique opportunity to meet synergistic sectors thanks to the involvement of the entire supply chain. An additional value is the renewed participation in **The Innovation Alliance**, the event dedicated to instrumental mechanics that sees Print4All taking place simultaneously with Ipack-Ima, Greenplast, and Intralogistica Italia. With **a single admission ticket**, visitors can discover machines managing various phases of the industrial production process – from sustainable plastic production to packaging, from printing and converting to goods handling – all characterized by a high level of innovation and significant investments in research and development, especially in light of the changes affecting every sector.

Print4All is thus a **systemic project** supported by a significant network of stakeholders who recognize its role and value: the **main Italian industry publishers**, Italian associations across the entire supply chain – **Assocarta, Assografici, ATIF, Comieco, ENIPGCT, Federazione Carta e Grafica, Fespa Italia Association, GIFASP, GIFCO,**

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GIFLEX, GIPEA, TAGA ITALIA, Unione Industriali Grafici Cartotecnici Trasformatori Carta e Affini della Città Metropolitana di Milano – and international organizations such as **ERA** (European Rotogravure Association) and **Global Print** are supporting the event, helping to make it an important platform for training and updates where market news can be discovered and future challenges discussed.

Attentive to market developments, Print4All 2025 will feature **three vertical areas** dedicated to the sectors that represent its most advanced progress and show the greatest potential for growth and development: **Corrugated Experience**, a guided journey among companies in the corrugated cardboard sector, which is showing constant growth trends and is increasingly proactive in transforming secondary packaging into a communication tool; **PrintMat**, dedicated to material innovation and their most creative uses; and **Green Printing**, which will bring together suppliers of disposal, reuse, and recycling services capable of supporting the printing industry in its ecological transition.

**PAPER AND GRAPHICS SUPPLY CHAIN:
A HEALTHY SECTOR WORTH 1.3% OF THE ITALIAN GDP**

In a challenging economic context, the paper and graphics supply chain shows signs of resilience. **Michele Bianchi**, President of the **Federazione Carta e Grafica**, commented on the 2023 results: the Italian sector, with **27.2 billion euros in turnover**, **16,119 companies**, and **160,600 employees**, represents not only an **excellence of the Made in Italy production** but also a **significant share of the national GDP (1.3%)**.

Although the 2023 results show a negative trend (-13.4%) with only the machinery segment in positive (+3.6%), according to Bianchi, this figure should be read in a broader scenario that saw the market go through unprecedented conditions – COVID, material shortages, general slowdown, and destocking – and which despite everything, sees **Italian production stand out among the European and global excellences in all segments**.

The **Italian paper industry is second in Europe** (10.2% market share); **printing and converting machines** are the flagship of the supply chain with Italy being **the third market in the world** (10% market share); the **Italian graphics industry** (14.8% market share) and the **converting industry** (16.9% market share) are both **second in Europe in terms of turnover**. The paper and graphics world is also a major player in the circular economy: paper is the biomaterial par excellence, and the cellulose used is tracked and verified according to reforestation criteria, so much so that **every year forests equivalent to 15,000 soccer fields are replanted**.

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THE PRINTING MARKET

Stefano Portolani, Senior Analyst at Stratego Group, further elaborated on the sector data by presenting the results of the analysis conducted by the Centro Studi Printing (CSP) of Stratego Group on 856 printing companies with revenues exceeding 3 million euros in 2022. These companies, distributed across four macro-sectors (converting, digital printing, offset printing, and pre/post-printing), collectively generated over 16 billion euros in revenues, employing 59,000 employees. In 2023, 284 of the main companies in the sector recorded total revenues of about 6.8 billion euros and employed 21,000 employees. Despite a complex geopolitical scenario – a central theme of the presentation was **the impact of the energy crisis** exacerbated by the war in Ukraine – the concerted efforts of the EU led to a significant reduction in gas prices towards the end of 2022 and stabilization in 2023. There was also greater maturity in the use of renewable energies: 2022 was a record year for solar energy in the EU with the installation of 41 gigawatts of photovoltaic capacity. It is also essential to consider **that the growth from 2021 to 2023 was much higher than usual**. Looking at production, in light of this scenario, therefore, while it is true that 2022 closed with +10.6% and 2023 with -2.6%, these data should be evaluated not as negative in absolute terms but **as a readjustment after enormous growth**.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL SCENARIO

What's new on the technology front? Technology evangelist **Pat McGrew** offered his vision.

Sustainability is now a central theme, both for producers who increasingly offer solutions and for printers interested in clear and reliable guidelines.

Digital transformation is underway: automation solutions are increasing, including integrated robots, Collaborative Robots, and Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs). **Artificial intelligence has permeated every product**, and **technological integration is growing**. Machines combine higher speed, reduced footprint, and lower energy consumption.

Workflow efficiency becomes crucial. Industry trends show greater attention to data collection and analysis, with data-driven integrations to create ultra-efficient workflows that reduce waste of time and energy, and more refined finishes.

Given this, **what can we expect to see at Print4All 2025?** A printing market that, thanks to investments in innovation and the ability to adapt to current challenges such as energy costs and raw material shortages, is healthy and constantly evolving. With a focus on sustainability, automation, and digitalization.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: WHERE ARE WE?

Andrea Camisani, CTO of Camozzi Automation, delved into the **impact of artificial intelligence in industrial automation**.

Industrial automation has revolutionized production processes by improving efficiency, precision, and safety. However, the growing amount of data generated by industrial sensors and machines presents significant challenges in terms of storage, processing, and analysis. The variety and speed of data require versatile and efficient processing techniques.

AI, and specifically machine learning algorithms, can analyze large amounts of data in real-time, identify patterns and anomalies, and optimize operational processes.

It is a fundamental tool for **predictive maintenance, anomaly detection, quality control, and process optimization**, maximizing efficiency and minimizing waste.

AI can provide an undeniable advantage but poses a series of challenges: sufficient computing power, data management, and security. However, future trends show significant progress with more powerful and energy-efficient devices, optimized AI models, and improved integration with 5G networks.

AI can revolutionize industrial data management and greatly improve operational efficiency and maintenance. Understanding and adopting these innovations will be crucial to addressing future industry challenges. There is no turning back: it is estimated **that by 2050, 25% of energy could be absorbed by Artificial Intelligence**.

CREATIVES, BRAND OWNERS AND PRINTERS IN DISCUSSION

The afternoon of the Print4All Conference saw a series of **technical workshops** highlighting the most innovative solutions for printers and converters, and **round tables** featuring major users of machines and materials: brand owners, creative agencies, and printers. Significant trends and specific sector needs emerged from the discussions.

An emerging trend is the search for **diversification**. It is not just about selling a product but conveying an emotion starting with the packaging: the consumer must perceive the product as conveying a **precise brand identity**.

There is a parallel **return to simplicity**: customers no longer want to "shout their superiority" over competitors but authentically tell who they are, focusing on recognizability and identity.

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Customers continue to **seek the unexpected**. Not so much the "wow effect" which seems partly outdated, but something simple and at the same time surprising that can impact the final target. The desk phone holder by AISM and the disc with recorded vineyard noises by Tommasi Family Estates are two examples of original creativity that demonstrated how innovative solutions can emerge from collaboration between creatives and brand owners. Brands continue to raise their expectations, often finding reliable and creative partners in agencies and printers.

Printers, for their part, continue to invest in new machines to offer innovative ideas to clients. This investment translates into a series.

Increasing attention is being given to Corrugated Cardboard. Traditionally perceived as a simple commodity, today it becomes a means of communication.

In the food sector, consumer habits are driving changes in packaging: lighter and single-materials that facilitate disposal are preferred, sometimes reducing graphics to ensure better readability of ingredients.

Well-designed packaging requires a holistic approach, starting from the design phase: converting companies are increasingly positioning themselves as consultants, offering tailored solutions to meet customer needs.

Sustainability continues to be a mandatory direction. Today, everything is technically feasible, the only limit remains the budget, because environmental sustainability must always be balanced with economic sustainability.

Finally, companies are no longer working on long-term planning: on-demand production is replacing warehousing, with increased use of lasers and 2D and 3D embellishments.

SAVE THE DATE FOR MAY 2025

The Print4All Conference was an opportunity to analyze the economic and technological landscape, rediscover the value of collaboration between brands, creatives, and printers, as well as gather feedback and insights that will be reflected in the content offering of Print4All 2025.

The appointment for the printing community is with **Print4All 2025, at Fiera Milano from May 27 to 30.**

For more info about the event, visit <https://www.print4all.it/>