

Press release | 26th May 2026

ILM EDITION #164

AWARDS, CREATOR, LIVE EXPERIENCES.

THE LEATHER GOODS INDUSTRY COMES TOGETHER AGAIN FOR EDITION #164

ILM is heading into edition #164 – and with it, an industry that is once again looking confidently to the future.

From 29 to 31 August 2026, Offenbach will once again become the international hub for leather goods, luggage, bags and accessories. With new formats, a greater focus on experiences and a significantly more practical supporting programme, the trade fair is placing greater emphasis on exchange, visibility and specific added value for the retail sector.

A highlight of the upcoming edition is the new ILM Award, which will be presented on the evening of the first day of the fair during the after-work party. The award will recognise both outstanding products and innovative retail concepts. Unlike in previous years, ILM has deliberately moved away from traditional categories such as 'Basic' or 'Fashion'. Instead, a transparent evaluation model focuses on innovation, relevance and quality. The winners will be decided by a select jury of industry experts and retailers. All nominated products will also be presented in a special area during the trade fair.

“With the ILM Award, we deliberately set out to create a format that is more in touch with the reality of today’s market,” explains CEO Arnd Hinrich Kappe. “The boundaries between fashion, function and lifestyle have long since become blurred. What matters is no longer the category a product falls into, but its relevance – to retailers, to the spirit of the times and, ultimately, to the end customer.”

BETWEEN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

The programme is also evolving. In 2026, the focus will be even more strongly on specific product categories and market-relevant topics. Specialist presentations on bags, luggage, rucksacks and school bags will provide retailers with practical insights – ranging from

material innovations to developments in product design and functionality.

“Today, the retail sector no longer needs a mere flood of information, but rather context,” says Arnd Hinrich Kappe. “That is precisely where our programme comes in: with topics that make developments understandable whilst simultaneously creating concrete perspectives for the point of sale.”

The programme is complemented by talks on trends and the future from industry experts such as Karolina Landowski and Martin Wuttke. At the same time, ILM is continuing to expand its international focus. Thanks to its cooperation with the Travel Goods Association (TGA), the outdoor and backpack sector in particular is continuing to grow. This segment, in particular, remains stable and is becoming an important driver of sales for many retailers.

PROMINENT GLOW FOR OFFENBACH

Prominent support is also set to return to the ILM stage in 2026: TV presenter Frauke Ludowig will be attending the fair alongside her daughter, Nele Ludowig. In doing so, ILM is deliberately focusing on a combination of industry expertise, media presence and genuine approachability.

Plans include a personal on-stage interview as part of the programme, joint tours of the fair, and direct encounters with exhibitors and visitors on site. The mother-daughter duo will not only accompany the fair but also actively share their impressions of the ILM with the wider public and provide their communities with insights into brands, products and industry trends. It is precisely this direct link between a traditional media personality, digital reach and the real-life trade fair experience that is intended to generate additional attention for the event.

On the evening of the first day of the fair, Frauke Ludowig will also host the presentation of the new ILM Awards and, together with the jury, will present the winners with their prizes.

MORE VISIBLE AND MORE ACCESSIBLE

Another new addition is the increased integration of content creators. Around ten creators will be reporting freely on brands, products and trends throughout the fair, bringing their communities directly to ILM. For exhibitors, this opens up additional visibility far beyond traditional industry channels.

At the same time, the so-called Hidden Event is entering its second round. This exclusive networking format for selected retailers and exhibitors was successfully launched at the last ILM and is now set to expand significantly.

ENDING THE EVENING TOGETHER

On Saturday evening, the trade fair will once again serve as the industry's networking hub. In 2026, the after-work party will feature an enhanced live programme with musical acts and a relaxed atmosphere – deliberately designed to be modern, open and approachable.

To Arnd Hinrich Kappe, what stands out above all is a noticeable shift within the industry itself: "At the last ILM, I had the feeling for the first time that the tone of the discussions had changed. Less looking back, less crisis mode – instead, more discussion about how we can shape the future together."

And that is precisely what makes the trade fair so significant today: "ILM is now one of the last events worldwide where the industry still meets in person in this way," emphasises Messe Offenbach's CEO. "Anyone who wants to understand where markets, consumer trends and product worlds are heading should spend at least a day here. Because that is exactly where the ideas, discussions and connections that will shape the future of the industry are born."

The next edition of ILM will take place in Offenbach am Main from 29 to 31 August 2026.