

Press release | 3rd August 2026

ILM EDITION #164

MOVING FORWARD INSTEAD OF WAITING.

THE ILM IS BECOMING A MEETING PLACE FOR AN INDUSTRY UNDERGOING CHANGE

An industry cannot talk its way out of a crisis. It must face up to it. That is precisely the mindset with which ILM is launching its 164th edition.

Rising costs, geopolitical instability, consumer reluctance and a retail sector that needs to reinvent itself: the challenges facing the leather goods, bags and luggage industry are very real – and they won't simply vanish into thin air just because the trade fair opens its doors.

That makes the atmosphere in which the ILM is entering the final stretch, just a few weeks before the trade fair begins, all the more remarkable. Rather than crisis rhetoric, the preparations are characterised by confidence, a spirit of innovation and personal interaction.

From 29 to 31 August 2026, Offenbach will once again become the international meeting place for brands, retailers and industry decision-makers from all over the world. Not because everything has suddenly become easier, but because face-to-face interaction is more important than ever, particularly in difficult times.

"We cannot change the economic circumstances. But we can decide how we deal with them," says Arnd Hinrich Kappe, CEO of Messe Offenbach. "That is precisely why our industry needs spaces where people can come together, exchange ideas and shape the future together. That is exactly what ILM stands for."

This trend is already evident even before the fair begins. Visitor registrations underscore the high level of international demand; numerous brands have confirmed their participation, whilst other well-known companies are working on their return to Offenbach. The ILM is thus once again asserting its role as one of the world's most important meeting places for leather goods, luggage, bags and accessories.

MORE VISIBILITY FOR PRODUCTS. MORE APPRECIATION FOR RETAILERS.

This sense of optimism is also reflected in the innovations at this year's trade fair. After several years, the ILM Award is making a comeback, but with a fundamentally revised concept. Instead of categorising products into numerous categories, the award will now focus on one crucial question: Which product is most relevant to the market? The focus is therefore no longer on whether a product belongs to a specific segment, but on whether it genuinely drives the retail sector forward and wins over end consumers.

The winners will be selected by an independent panel of judges consisting of industry expert Karolina Landowski, retail expert Tobias Kurz and industry specialist Ralf Maurer, who will assess the entries solely on the basis of criteria such as innovation, market relevance and potential for the retail sector. The three most outstanding products will be honoured on Saturday evening at the ILM After-Work Party.

For the first time, the Product Award is being complemented by a Retail Award, which focuses specifically on the retail sector. Around 300 exhibitors were asked in advance to nominate their five most important retail partners. Based on this vote, three awards will be presented to retailers who, in the brands' view, have demonstrated outstanding commitment, reliability and a spirit of partnership.

"Innovation doesn't stop at the product," says Kappe. "It always arises where brands and retailers work together successfully. That's why it was important to us, for the first time, to recognise those who bring trends and ideas to the shop floor every day."

A PLATFORM FOR ENCOUNTERS.

Personal encounters run like a common thread through the entire trade fair – including on stage. TV presenter Frauke Ludowig returns to the ILM alongside her daughter, Nele Ludowig. In a personal on-stage conversation, moderated by Cheryll Mühlen, the pair will discuss their connection to the fashion world, joint projects and a behind-the-scenes look at their work together. The appearance will be complemented by a joint tour through the trade fair and the ILM Award ceremony on Saturday evening. In this way, the ILM is deliberately bridging the gap between industry expertise, media reach and direct exchange.

Formats outside the exhibition hall are also continuing to gain in importance. Following its successful debut, the Hidden Highlight is entering its second round, bringing together selected retailers and exhibitors in an exclusive setting. At the same time, over 10 content creators and media professionals are providing additional visibility far beyond the traditional trade media through their diverse perspectives.

OUTDOOR IS GAINING IN IMPORTANCE.

At the same time, ILM is consistently developing its key focus areas. In collaboration with the Travel Goods Association (TGA), the trade fair is placing particular emphasis on strengthening the luggage, outdoor and functional accessories sectors. This international partnership brings additional brands and fresh impulses to Offenbach and underlines the growing importance of this segment within the international specialist retail sector.

The outdoor sector in particular is becoming a key driver of sales for many retailers. At the same time, there are now only a few platforms across Europe where the full spectrum of this market can be experienced in one place. Through its partnership with the Travel Goods Association (TGA), ILM is systematically expanding this area and strengthening its position as an international platform for travel, outdoor and lifestyle products. This gives retailers the opportunity to gain a comprehensive overview of a segment that is becoming increasingly important for many product ranges.

IF YOU WANT TO SHAPE THE FUTURE, YOU NEED TO TALK TO EACH OTHER - PREFERABLY IN PERSON.

The biggest change at the moment is not to be seen in the collections, but in the industry's attitude.

Whilst in recent years uncertainty and crises have dominated discussions in many quarters, Arnd Hinrich Kappe now finds himself in an industry that increasingly views change as an opportunity to shape the future.

"Two years ago, at many events, I mainly sensed frustration. Today, people are talking about solutions again. Of course, the economic situation hasn't gotten any easier. But the attitude has changed. It's no longer just about all the difficulties. It's about how we can

ILM

EDITION #164

shape the future once more. It is precisely this energy that I want to bring to life in Offenbach at the end of August,” explains Arnd Hinrich Kappe. “Anyone who wants to know where our industry is heading should not just read the reports, but come to Offenbach themselves. This is where the discussions, contacts and ideas emerge that extend far beyond the three days of the trade fair. If you want to shape the future, you have to talk to one another.”

More than ever, the ILM sees itself as a platform for international business, personal exchange and new formats – and thus as a meeting place for an industry that is once again looking to the future.

ILM Edition #164 will take place in Offenbach from 29 to 31 August 2026.

Full details can be found at www.ilm-offenbach.de.