



Gravure – the sustainable print process

Munich, 12 October 2021. The European gravure industry recently met at **ERA's Annual & Packaging and Decorative Gravure Conference** in Thessaloniki, Greece from 21 to 23 September. Despite the ongoing Corona restrictions, over 80 delegates followed ERA's invitation to discuss face to face challenges such as sustainability in packaging printing and alternative plating technologies. Particularly the possibility to meet personally and to exchange views was highly appreciated by the many participating representatives of the gravure industry. "Gravure – the sustainable print process" was the theme of the conference, which "showed an encouraging perspective for gravure's future", ERA Secretary General **James Siever** commented on the outcome of the event.

Thomas Reiner of the Berlin-based international consultancy Berndt+Partner introduced the conference theme in his keynote on "sustainability tsunami is heading towards the packaging industry". He referred to the strategy of the large brand article manufacturers which require from their suppliers recyclable packaging material for their goods with a lower carbon dioxide footprint. Instead of laminate foil, they increasingly demand to use paper as base material for their packaging material. This however could endanger the functionality of the packaging material to protect sensitive filling goods such as foodstuffs, which was discussed by **Stefan Glimm** of Global Alufoil in his "plea for recyclable flexible packaging material".

The press manufacturers' answers to the market's demand for sustainable packaging material were given by Bobst and Uteco, who showed their innovations for increased sustainability in gravure printing. Both **Jonathan Giubilato** of Bobst Italia and **Alessandro Baldo** of Uteco presented among others solutions to use water based inks in packaging gravure which lead to a significant reduction of CO₂ emissions and a further improvement of the sustainability of the gravure process.

That the EU Commission approved the authorization to further use chromium trioxide until 2024 was noted as a success of ERA. **Dr Julian Rotter** of Kaspar Walter gave an update on the authorization process for chromium trioxide, which is still indispensable in cylinder plating to guarantee the hardness of the printing cylinder. To secure the future of galvanic chromium plating beyond 2024, Kaspar Walter meanwhile made an application at the European Chemical Agency which covers printing and embossing cylinder plating.

The conference also discussed several promising alternatives to the traditional cylinder plating: **Flavio Losa** of Rossini, leading manufacturer of sleeves and printing rollers, showed their Ecograv system replacing the copper and the chromium layers of the cylinder with a polymer monolayer which can be electromechanically engraved. Another alternative was

discussed by **Dominik Michalek** of Contitech who presented their Dynasurf project, which foresees an elastomer layer to replace the traditional copper and chromium layers. Dynasurf is an integrated concept including the coating of the cylinder for the printer by Contitech. And finally **Michael Fürholzer** and **Ronny Siegel** presented Kaspar Walter's alternatives: HelioChrome Neo, which replaces chromium trioxide with chromium (III) in the galvanic bath, and HelioPearl, which is an engravable monolayer replacing the copper and chromium layers.

The potential of electrothermal drying to reduce energy consumption and CO₂ emissions was explained by **Dr Kai Baer** of Adphos Digital Printing. This also includes saving of energy costs, which will rise due to the current climate policy of the EU, including rising taxes on carbon dioxide. **Achim Kurreck** of the press manufacturer HC Moog described the possibilities of sheetfed rotogravure which is applied also in combination with offset for special applications such as carton packaging for luxury goods. And the Greek software house Bel Information System contributed to the conference: **Yiannis Katis** presented their Overprint MIS which is a software automation for gravure to increase the efficiency of the production process.

Finally the winners of the **Gravure Award for Sustainable Packaging** were presented during the conference: in the category Printed Products were rewarded with an award the Thessaloniki-based Greek packaging printer **Hatzopoulos**, for mono-material coffee packaging printed exclusively on PP film, and the Vietnamese packaging printer **Thành Phú**, for their dog food pouch printed on a mono-material PE/PE structure. In the category Innovation, **Bobst Italia** received an award for their press enhancements for water-based inks, whereas the Swiss company **Rheonics** was rewarded with an "Emerging Technology" certificate for their new inline viscometer technology.

ERA

Since its foundation in 1956, the European Rotogravure Association (E.R.A.) is the international organisation of the gravure industry with worldwide membership. It currently has some 100 members from the packaging, publication and decorative printing sectors as well as associated industries such as paper and ink makers, printing and finishing equipment manufacturers and the leading cylinder engravers.

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