



## Little-known regulations that will drive more digital printer sales

**Insights from Olaf Lorenz, Head of International Marketing, Konica Minolta Business Solutions Europe**

*Teaser text:* Broader plans of action to tackle deforestation and forest degradation that also includes wood (timber) and paper made from it. What's the relevance to printing and drupa. Read on in this special insight from Konica Minolta.

*Full text:* **One area that we are convinced will become a big talking point in 2024 will be the potential fallout from the Deforestation-free products regulation of the European Union. This is part of a broader plan of actions to tackle deforestation and forest degradation first outlined in the [2019 Commission Communication on Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests](#).**

The regulation was introduced at the end of June 2023 and operators/traders have 18 months to comply. Surprisingly, in view of the fact this will come into force at the end of 2024, this is not a topic that has been looked at extensively so far in all the research we have seen.

Yes, of course, we understand that it could further drive the increased adoption of digital publishing and digital signage. However, our firm belief is that it will also drive more sales of digital equipment and accelerate the digital transformation (DX). That's because of the benefits of digital printing: print on demand, no wastage and no need for high stock levels.

Analyst IDC points out that print vendors' approach to the problem of deforestation is usually a commitment to planting replacement trees, according to the volume of paper used, or pages printed = reforestation. However, the new legislation looks more closely on the forestation situation on a country-by-country basis, for example, protecting old forests. One of its 2024 predictions (*IDC FutureScape: Worldwide Imaging, Printing, and Document Solutions*



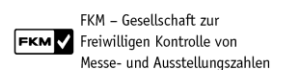
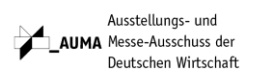
Messe Düsseldorf GmbH  
Postfach 10 10 06  
40001 Düsseldorf  
Messeplatz  
40474 Düsseldorf  
Deutschland

Telefon +49 211 4560 01  
Telefax +49 211 4560 668  
Internet [www.messe-duesseldorf.de](http://www.messe-duesseldorf.de)  
E-Mail [info@messe-duesseldorf.de](mailto:info@messe-duesseldorf.de)

Geschäftsführung:  
Wolfram N. Diener (Vorsitzender)  
Bernhard J. Stempfle  
Erhard Wienkamp  
Vorsitzender des Aufsichtsrats:  
Dr. Stephan Keller

Amtsgericht Düsseldorf HRB 63  
USt-IdNr. DE 119 360 948  
St.Nr. 105/5830/0663

Mitgliedschaften der  
Messe Düsseldorf:



Öffentliche Verkehrsmittel:  
U78, U79: Messe Ost/Stockumer Kirchstr.  
Bus 722: Messe-Center Verwaltung



2024 Predictions) is that, by 2026, 60% of all enterprises will have print-related carbon offsetting goals.

You can find out more information from the European Community website [here](#). The new regulation on deforestation-free products is expected to bring down greenhouse gas emissions and bring down biodiversity loss. It is part of a broader plan of actions to tackle deforestation and forest degradation, and also includes wood (timber) and paper made from it.

The new regulations are yet another example of why the march of digital printing is unstoppable. Everywhere you look, research shows that the technology is the engine of growth as the pendulum continues to swing away from analogue.

How does that translate to the printer visiting drupa? First, we would argue that the new regulations will drive more digital equipment sales. And what better place to showcase our latest groundbreaking advancements in digital printing technology than drupa where we'll be in Hall 8B. With one of the largest stands at the exhibition in Dusseldorf, Germany, from 28 May to 7 June 2024 and spread across six interlinked areas and two floors, we will be unveiling multiple European premieres.

In this special drupa year with digital printing technology in the ascendancy compared to other printing methods, we remain extremely positive for the future – not least because experts Smithers (*Smithers: The Future of Global Print Equipment Markets to 2028, Executive Summary, Page xxiii*) now say that sales of digital print equipment are expected to overtake analogue for the first time in less than three years.

Whereas the digital print transformation accelerated dramatically with the pandemic, it continues to head towards being mainstream for the future. The value is the prize for companies adopting the technology.

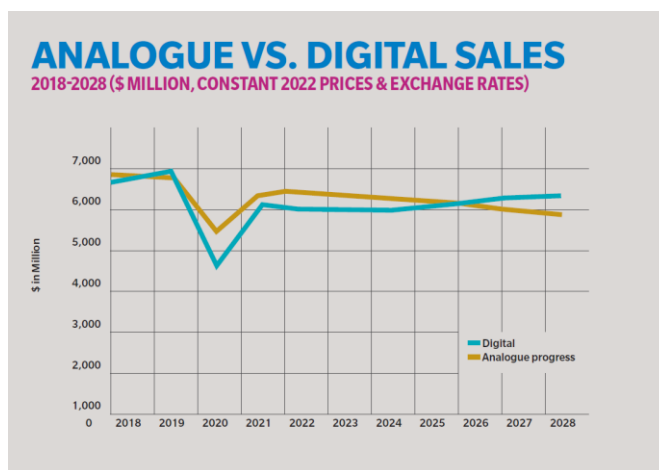
We are convinced that even though experts predict a relatively small drop in overall print equipment sales in the next five years, the advance of digital





printing will continue relentlessly. According to Smithers (*Smithers, The Future of Global Print Equipment Markets to 2028. Introduction, Market overview – printing equipment markets, 2018–28, page 9*), the global market for print equipment - worth \$16.8 billion last year - shows a very small decline to \$16.4 billion by 2028.

Whereas the installed base of analogue equipment is falling (flexo will be the only analogue print process to increase equipment sales over the next five years), the number of digital presses will grow overall, according to Smithers (*Smithers: The Future of Global Print Equipment Markets to 2028, Executive Summary, Page xxiii*). Its analysis of a 10-year period from 2018 shows that digital equipment sales are on track to move ahead of analogue by 2026. Inkjet and toner equipment sales will both increase, with inkjet accounting for the majority of the rise. Smithers points to the improvements in speed and quality, plus buyers demanding more customized and shorter run commissions, as factors that will see more jobs move away from analogue.



Konica Minolta own graph based on Smithers: The Future of Global Print Markets to 2028

And the growth will happen despite uncertainty where a perceived global downturn in overall print production is part of the equation. It is heartening to see that commercial printing, label, packaging and finishing sectors are all benefiting from the continued advances in digital printing.



Digital printing is expanding into most print-for-profit applications and in labels and packaging. According to analysts Smithers (*Smithers: The Future of Global Print Equipment Markets to 2028, Market Overview, Page 10*), the value of digital printing equipment is forecast to grow steadily between 2023 and 2028.

In 2022, digital presses accounted for almost a third of the total value of printing equipment, with a value of \$5.5 billion. By 2028, digital press sales will rise to \$5.9 billion.

Printing presses are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with high levels of automation and enhanced productivity offered by virtually all manufacturers, says Smithers *Smithers: The Future of Global Print Equipment Markets to 2028, Market Overview, Page 23*, adding: “Digital printing is very much favoured with inkjet doing very well comparatively. There are pressures with some end-use sectors seeing a decline irrespective of the decoration process. The two key digital processes can, however, unlock new opportunities due to their ability to print on demand, and this is creating some new markets.”

We see a future where a need for greater automation and for innovative end-to-end ecosystems will continue to be high on the agenda and an essential driver forward for customers, as well as brands and suppliers.

Reducing manual processes and automating production steps on the one hand keeps away frustration and worries for organisations. On the other hand it helps reduce material and waste. With the background of Konica Minolta’s long-term plan towards a sustainable future – the [EcoVision 2050](#) – we are also mindful of our responsibility to save the resources of our planet.

Those changes, in our view, will also help commercial printers focus on complete eco-friendly production workflows as they rethink possibilities in a world of new opportunities. Workflow, software and process automation, together with cloud solutions, are also key efficiency drivers as part of the drive towards the ‘smart factory’. This all contributes towards helping operators





# drupa Thought Leadership



maximise uptime on their presses, resolve faults quicker, and optimise on-press performance.

One significant topic we see growing in importance is “programmatic printing”. This is a process that involves the integration of software, hardware and data to streamline and optimise printing processes. It has the potential to transform the printing industry by providing a measurable element of the marketing mix with a proven ROI. Programmatic printing is already gaining traction as a concept that delivers the emotional impact of individualised print with the immediacy of digital marketing.

Our unflinching commitment to customers and innovation will be demonstrated with our major presence at [drupa](#), the world's leading trade fair for print technologies, in Hall 8B at Messe Düsseldorf in Germany from May 28 to June 7, 2024. At the show we will be taking advantage of the opportunities and demonstrating new forms of creativity to help customers ignite new possibilities. You can find out more about our drupa participation in this [blog post](#).

As European market leader in production printing A3 colour markets, according to Infosource data, for more than a decade, we are proud to have made huge strides in digital printing with both our toner and inkjet technologies, whilst at the same time we also acknowledge the significant challenges that will be faced in the year ahead for our customers, of which there are 15,000 commercial and industrial customers in Europe. We feel certain, however, that issues some face, such as the supply of raw materials, will ease.

In this world of uncertainty where a perceived global downturn in print production is part of the equation, it is especially heartending to see that digital labels, packaging and embellishment are shining brightly. Demand for digitally printed labels and packaging is poised for yet more substantial growth, according to Smithers (*Smithers, The Future of Global Print Markets to 2028. Marke overview, printing equipment markets, 2018-28*), page 19). Similarly, digital printed corrugate saw high demand from the packaging industry.







Manufacturing, retail, transportation, textiles, food and drink, and logistica are all among the important factors that have made the digital production of label become a mainstream technology, with many markets in packaging at the tipping point and ripe for digital production.

With labelling and packaging requirements also becoming more complex as data demands grow and compliance/regulatory environments tighten, the supply chain relies on labelling as a vital source of traceability.

As European market share leader in digital label systems (*Infosource*), we will continue to push the boundaries to help converters and all our customers ignite their printing possibilities. We believe that closer collaborations with customers and partners, ongoing commitments to revolutionising printing technologies will be crucial in the years ahead.

However, we appreciate that world events including supply-and-demand issues, can impact all our customers – including printers, converters, CRDs, corporates, packaging and label.

One thing that many organisations and companies were affected by in the wake of the the pandemic and enforced lockdown was a significant number of experienced employees retiring early. This, of course, added to skilled labour shortages, and there are increasing trends towards working from home.

However, we believe that our customers will look to commit more funding for attractive training programmes, continuous staff development, as well as accommodating a work-life balance. The fact that our products are easy to use for our customers makes the jobs for the talents they are seeking more attractive. And why not look to hire more young talent – and train them yourselves! You can read more about our approach in this blog. See more details [here](#).

Ever-more important in the future will be Industry 5.0 – the emerging phase of industrialisation where humans work alongside advanced technology and artificial intelligence-powered robots to enhance workplace processes. All this





# drupa Thought Leadership



will bring the human-centricity back into Industry 4.0, as well as increased resilience combined with the improved focus on sustainability.

Whatever lies ahead, our commitment remains to deliver the best possible service to all our employees, clients and partners.

