

PRESS RELEASE

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50th Jubilee: Negative award “Plagiarius” successfully draws attention to brazen innovation theft Product and brand piracy – a massive threat to the economy, the environment, and consumers!

Product and brand piracy is a lucrative billion-dollar business with a wide range of beneficiaries: from un-imaginative competitors to low-cost suppliers and platform operators from third countries to global criminal networks. They undermine legal trade and flood the European market with cheap goods and counterfeits that are often untested, misdeclared, and non-compliant with EU standards. To protect industry and consumers, European business and trade associations are calling on politicians to enforce existing laws immediately and consistently. This includes greater liability and prevention on the part of platform operators, higher penalties for violations, and a legally established stay-down requirement for removed counterfeits. Customs and market surveillance authorities need more staff and state-of-the-art IT for more effective controls. Since the success of cheap products is also based on acceptance and high demand, education remains essential. Without demand, there is no business.

Plagiarius: Against brazen innovation theft - For fair competition and creative diversity

On February 6, 2026, the Plagiarius campaign awarded its dreaded negative prize “Plagiarius” for the 50th time to manufacturers and retailers of particularly brazen plagiarisms and counterfeits. The award ceremony took place during a press conference at the Frankfurt consumer goods fair “Ambiente”. Before the annually changing jury selects the winners, all nominees are given the opportunity to comment. The “Plagiarius” award does not indicate whether an imitated product is legally permitted or illegal. Aktion Plagiarius cannot administer justice. However, it is entitled to express the opinion that crude 1:1 imitations that deliberately resemble an original product in a deceptive manner are reckless and morally reprehensible.

Protection of intellectual property / Appreciation for creative achievements and innovations

The aim of the Plagiarius campaign was and is to raise awareness of the value of intellectual property and to strengthen the innovative power of companies and creative minds. To this end, it brings the unscrupulous business practices of counterfeiters to the attention of the public and sensitises industry, politics, and consumers to the problem in a practical way. Based on the plagiarism cases of affected companies, the association sheds light on the damage, risks, and background as well as various facets of product and brand piracy. The trophy of the negative award is a black dwarf with a golden nose. The latter symbolises the immense profits that unimaginative counterfeiters literally earn at the expense of the creative sector and industry.

50th Plagiarius Award: Pioneering work with passion - out of respect for every original

With the “Plagiarius”, pioneer Professor Rido Busse (†2021) launched an initiative that is more relevant than ever in times of globalisation, digitalisation, social media, and AI. As an industrial designer, Busse recognised early on that promoting and protecting creative ideas and know-how is essential for the prosperity and competitiveness of an economy. With foresight and determination, he consistently encouraged designers, inventors, and entrepreneurs to protect their intellectual property by registering industrial property rights (trademarks, patents, designs) and to hold imitators accountable. A welcome record: in 2025, the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) received 327,735 new applications for EU trademarks and EU designs - the highest annual number of applications since the beginning in 1996. There has been a significant increase in applications from the People's Republic of China.

Successful deterrence through publicity

Through constant press and public relations work, practical exhibitions and lectures - as well as high media presence and reach - the Plagiarius campaign has contributed significantly to raising public awareness. Its successes include improved design protection, the criminalisation of trade in counterfeit goods, and increased awareness and registration of industrial property rights, including on international markets. In addition, the high profile of the “Plagiarius” has regularly demonstrated its deterrent effect: The fear of public embarrassment has led many plagiarists to seek an agreement with the original manufacturer and, for example, to remove remaining stock from the market, sign a cease-and-desist declaration, or disclose suppliers.

Plagiarism Museum in Solingen - Here, everything is indeed “just stolen”

The Plagiarism Museum's unique exhibition displays more than 350 Plagiarism award winners, with the original and the plagiarised version in direct comparison. Guided tours provide facts and background information, dispel clichés, and encourage visitors to rethink and reconsider: Don't uncritically believe (dupe) influencers and dubious suppliers. No junk, but good value for money. In addition to classic consumer and household items, the plagiarisms from 1977 to the present day also include furniture, tools, sanitary products, toys, and even dangerous, non-functioning pressure gauges, car rims, chainsaws, and emergency respirators. We will be presenting the 2026 award winners from February 13, 2026.

Innovations are not created by “copy-paste” - but through courage and hard work

Whether it is attractive product design or innovative technical solutions, film, music, fashion, or art - every development from the initial idea to the market-ready product is a time-consuming process. In addition to creativity, technical knowledge, and high standards for quality and durability, every original also requires courage, as creatives and brand manufacturers make advance financial investments. This risk must be worthwhile.

This year's **laudator, Dr. Hans-Jürgen Völz**, Federal Managing Director of Economics at Der Mittelstand. BVMW e.V., emphasized in his speech: "Innovations are practically the only hard currency with which German SMEs can still compete globally. Anyone who appropriates intellectual property without authorisation not only undermines the economic success of innovative companies, but also systematically damages the willingness to invest in Germany as a business location. Plagiarism documents the audacity of these thefts in a refreshing way in the public eye."

Brand and consumer protection: Customs removes infringing products from circulation

In 2024, more than 112 million counterfeit items with an estimated value of around Euro 3.8 billion were seized at the EU's external borders and within the EU internal market, according to the European Commission and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). The EUIPO and OECD estimated the international trade in counterfeit goods for 2021 at an alarming USD 467 billion, which corresponds to 2.3% of world trade. And these are only the proven seizures by customs and police authorities. The estimated number of unreported cases is significantly higher. Customs regularly seizes infringing counterfeit goods, including clothing, accessories, sporting goods, consumer electronics, toys, perfumes, cosmetics, cigarettes, and even medicines.

Too good to be true: Counterfeits and cheap goods come at a high price

These short-lived, sometimes dangerously substandard imitations are manufactured with a great deal of criminal energy and without regard for applicable safety and environmental standards. Particularly precarious: the ethically questionable conditions in the factories. Recent studies by EUIPO and OECD reveal that, in addition to the enormous economic damage they cause, counterfeits are closely linked to the exploitation of workers, including forced labour and dangerous child labour. (Online) retailers who sell such goods, as well as consumers who knowingly purchase counterfeit goods, directly support these inhumane manufacturing conditions. Without demand, there would be no business.

For companies, the situation is exacerbated by the fact that counterfeiters are becoming increasingly professional and digital and are globally networked. Detecting and deleting counterfeits on the internet using AI usually works well. However, identifying those responsible and uncovering the complex structures behind the networks of production and distribution, which are based on the division of labour, is difficult, time-consuming, and costly.

A dangerous fallacy: Identical appearance does NOT mean identical quality and safety

Consumers often fall victim to the illusion that if the original and the counterfeit look the same, they are also of the same quality, functionality, and safety. This is by no means the case. To maximise profits, counterfeiters usually use the cheapest materials and omit quality controls. The ugly side of a supposed bargain is revealed in, among other things, short service life, dangerous (fire) hazards in electronics, poor functionality, risk of injury, or alarmingly high levels of harmful substances. A currently popular scam is “fake shops”, completely counterfeit online shops. The operators collect money and data without delivering any goods. Tips: “[verbraucherzentrale.de/fakeshopfinder](https://www.verbraucherzentrale.de/fakeshopfinder).”

Distortion of competition and consumer safety

Fair competition stimulates business and regulates markets. Currently, however, retailers and platform operators from third countries are flooding the European market with mostly untested and non-EU-compliant cheap goods. These include plagiarisms and counterfeits. According to the EU Commission, around 4.6 billion parcels with low goods value arrived in the EU from third countries in 2024, i.e. more than 12 million parcels per day. That was twice as many as in 2023 and about three times as many as in 2022. Among those

profiting from this are cheap direct-to-consumer platforms such as Temu, Shein, Alibaba & Co. Random checks by customs and market surveillance authorities regularly reveal blatant product defects and violations of labeling requirements. So far, without consequences. These distortions of competition must be eliminated.

Urgent action is needed: Promises must be followed by action. Now.

The laws are in place. However, without consistent implementation and enforcement, they have no deterrent effect or bring about any improvement. The clearly noticeable consequences of these distortions of competition are currently being borne by European manufacturers, retailers, and consumers.

European economic and trade associations are urging politicians to immediately and consistently enforce the Digital Services Act (DSA) and European standards regarding product safety, environmental protection, and consumer protection against platforms and retailers from third countries.

The most urgent demands include (1) significantly better staffing and digital equipment for customs and market surveillance authorities to enable **more controls and sanctions** (2) **greater liability** on the part of retailers and platform operators, i.e., stricter requirements for the appointment of a legally prescribed representative in the EU, and (3) a legally established **“stay-down requirement”** - once infringing goods have been deleted, they must not be allowed to be re-uploaded.

Politicians are sending out two initial small positive signals: From July 2026, a flat customs duty of Euro 3 per e-commerce parcel with a value of less than Euro 150 will be introduced in the EU as an interim solution to eliminate the competitive advantage of the previous duty-free limit for retailers from third countries in the short term. From 2028, with the establishment of the EU customs data platform, regular customs duties will also apply here. At the same time, negotiations are underway on an EU processing fee for e-commerce parcels. This is intended to offset the high costs of monitoring the sharp increase in parcel traffic.

The Award Winners 2026 of the Negative Award “Plagiarius”

The jury met on December 12 and 13, 2025 and awarded three main prizes, 2 new special awards, and 5 “distinctions” that are equal in rank.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - 1. Prize

Bottle Set for Newborns “Philips Avent Natural Response”

Left Originals: Koninklijke Philips N.V., Eindhoven, The Netherlands
Right Counterfeits: Dongyang Onibebi Plastic Products Factory, Zhejiang, PR China
Seized: During raid actions in Latin America, Nigeria, Southeast Asia
Distribution: via Social Media (e.g. Facebook) and online platforms

AVENT (original) vs. AVEAT (counterfeit). Safety is the top priority, especially when it comes to products for newborns. Philips AVENT bottles are made of BPA-free plastic and are odourless and tasteless. The set is ideal for a smooth transition between breastfeeding and bottle feeding. The misleading AVEAT counterfeits were manufactured in China and sold online, via social media and locally in Latin America, Nigeria and Southeast Asia. According to the packaging, they are also BPA-free. The extremely low price - one fifth of the original - and photos from the counterfeiters' “factories” raise doubts about the quality and suitability of the plastic, especially for baby products. Hygienic conditions? More than questionable! Quality and safety controls? Non-existent! Following a raid and seizure at Onibebi, a court ordered the company to cease and desist and to pay damages. Philips consistently holds counterfeiters accountable - also to protect (the youngest) consumers.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - 2. Prize

Basin Mixer “AXOR MyEdition”

Left Original: Hansgrohe SE, Schiltach, Germany

Right Counterfeit: Chinese counterfeiting network - 3 people in custody, Kaiping / Guangdong, PR China

Distribution: via various online shops, e.g. on taobao.com

Nowadays, counterfeiters operate professionally. Production is divided up among different parties. Their business is illegal. Tracking down such complex criminal networks costs brand manufacturers a lot of money. After months of research, and in cooperation with the local Kaiping PSB Public Security Bureau, Hansgrohe was able to break up a large Chinese counterfeiting network in a raid. In addition to Hansgrohe's protected designs, the internationally renowned brands “hansgrohe” and “AXOR”, which are also registered in China, were copied. The counterfeits were advertised online, including on taobao.com, with original photos and offered at ridiculously low prices. The materials and workmanship of the counterfeits are correspondingly inferior. A major success: Three key figures in the network were arrested and are currently being prosecuted. The long-established company Hansgrohe SE stands for timeless, durable design and pioneering, innovative and sustainable technologies. With its design brand “AXOR”, Hansgrohe SE inspires architects and bathroom designers alike.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - 3. Prize

Stapelliege Klassik (Design: Rolf Heide, 1966)

Above Original: Müller Möbelwerkstätten GmbH, Bockhorn, Germany

(Exclusive worldwide right to manufacture, distribute and market the Stapelliege)

Below Plagiarism: Distribution: La Redoute S.A.S., Roubaix, France

The STAPELLIEGE - a design classic by Rolf Heide from 1966 - not only impresses with its timeless design and high flexibility but also scores for its intelligent construction and easy assembly and disassembly. Whether as a sofa, a stacked children's bed, a double bed or a flexible guest bed: It is a space-saving all-rounder. Müller Möbelwerkstätten has the exclusive worldwide right to manufacture and distribute it. The cheap imitation by La Redoute costs a fifth of the price of the original frame, including the ‘slatted frame’, which consists of simple boards that are too far apart. Customers reject the imitation as “cheaply made, poorly crafted and unstable”. The overall aesthetic impression of both stack beds is identical: The knock-off has adopted all the distinctive formal and functional design features of the original, in particular the sweeping curves of the side panels, which enable the bed to be stacked. This makes the poor fit of the knock-off all the more alarming.

2 Special Prizes and 5 Distinctions (equal in rank) were awarded

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - Special Award “Plagiarisms-Tsunami”

Cutlery Sets “KLIKK” and “KLIKK POCKET”

In front Originals: koziol »ideas for friends GmbH, Erbach, Germany

Plagiarisms (in wave): Distribution: Via alibaba.com

Operator: ALIBABA.com Singapore E-Commerce Private Limited, Singapore

Retail: Countless Chinese manufacturers and trade companies

Like a tsunami wave, cheap knock-offs are flooding the successful cutlery sets “KLIKK” and “KLIKK Pocket” from Koziol. The original cutlery sets are compact, robust and manufactured by Koziol in Erbach / Odenwald. The material is dishwasher-safe, food-safe and 100% recyclable. Since its market launch, the cutlery sets have been copied countless times and uncounted imitators and online retailers have been warned. Particularly unreasonable: The platform operator Alibaba.com: After being notified of EU-wide design protection, infringing offers are removed, but they are not actively and automatically prevented by AI. Despite weekly “notice and take-down” of countless plagiarisms by Koziol, retailers are allowed to repeatedly list the same plagiarisms with the same advertising texts and photos without any problems. This shows the lack of interest and of willingness to engage in prevention on the part of Alibaba. The unstable, cheap knockoffs are 80 to 95% below the original price. Whether they comply with European regulations in terms of materials and safety is highly questionable.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - **Special Award “Fake-Shop”**

Website “www.germens.shop”

Left Original-Shop: GERMENS artfashion Markeking GmbH, Chemnitz, Germany

Right Fake-Shop: www.jeffkelleher.shop / www.noemibishop.shop

Operator: Unable to be determined - Shops deleted after months of operation

A “fake shop” is a completely counterfeit online shop. The operators lure customers with cheap offers, collect money, but do not deliver any goods. Consumers are increasingly falling victim to this scam. The shops are professionally designed and look deceptively real. Recently affected: The GERMENS shop. GERMENS shirts are known for their high-quality fabrics and unusual designs created by artists. From July to November 2025, two fake shops pretended to be “GERMENS”. Logo, texts and product photos were copied. The products were offered at dumping prices below the manufacturing costs. There was no legal notice, and the cancellation policy was illegal. Typically, there is often a selection of payment methods, but at the end of the order, only payment in advance is possible. Quality seals must be linked to the seal operator. At “verbraucherzentrale.de/fakeshopfinder”, consumers can check suspicious shops - and there are tips on how to recognise fake shops.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - **Distinction**

(Light-) Switch Range “Busch-balance SI”

Above Originals: ABB AG - Busch-Jaeger, Luedenscheid, Germany

Below Plagiarisms: Handelshaus Klein GmbH, Trostberg, Germany

The “resemblance” to the Busch-Jaeger original is clearly intentional. Not only are the design and technical details of the “Busch-balance SI” series almost identical, but the imitation is also advertised with “The BBwhite switch range, matching Busch-Jäger Balance Si [sic] in Alpine White RAL9010, offers a cost-effective option”. Busch-Jaeger is taking legal action against this. Furthermore, Handelshaus Klein emphasizes in its description of its imitation that “the convex surface allows for *unique* design accents.” In fact, at least the well-known original manufacturers all have their own unique designs. And anyone looking for a suitable switch range will quickly realise how diverse the selection is and how different the ambience that switches can give to a room can be.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - **Distinction**

Replacement Razor Blades “Philips OneBlade”

Left Original: Koninklijke Philips N.V., Eindhoven, The Netherlands

Right Plagiarism: KionCare, Zhejiang, PR China

Distribution: Worldwide via TEMU (and others)

Just like toothbrush heads or printer cartridges, replacement razor blades have to be bought every few weeks. They always seem too expensive. This makes such products a target for counterfeiters. A report by the European Anti-Fraud Office shows that quality and safety come at a price: In 2024, over 900,000 counterfeit razor blades that did not meet EU safety standards and therefore posed a risk of injury were seized in the EU alone. Customer reviews of the KionCare plagiarisms are also devastating: “Useless, blunt, cause skin irritation, tear hair, incompatible”. The suppliers of such counterfeits often have neither an imprint nor information on cancellation conditions, etc. Philips protects all its products through registered trademarks, designs and patents, regularly conducts on-site raids and holds (online) counterfeiters worldwide accountable.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 – Distinction

Champagne Glasses “CHEERS” (with print)

Above Originals: koziol »ideas for friends GmbH, Erbach, Germany

Below Plagiarisms: Distribution: NORMA Lebensmittelfilialbetrieb Stiftung & Co. KG, Nuremberg, Germany
Manufacture: Spain

Broken glass does not always bring good luck. For outdoor events, in clubs, on the beach or on a boat, a stylish but more durable glass is preferable. The “CHEERS” champagne glasses from Koziol, made from thermoplastic, are such all-rounders: Extremely durable and virtually unbreakable, 100% recyclable - and the high-quality material insulates 4x better than glass. This also convinced NORMA in 2021. These five printed Koziol champagne glasses were successfully sold for weeks. A renewed offer in 2023 was rejected on the grounds that “the price was not suitable”. An offer in 2025 was not even answered. Instead, there was a surprise: From 8 December 2025, NORMA offered five visually very similar imitations from Spain with exactly the same slogans - for less than a third of the original price: Euro 3.99 for two champagne glasses instead of Euro 6.95 for one champagne glass. However, these were now unstable, made of the cheapest plastic and non-recyclable.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - Distinction

Cookie Former “F450”

Left Original: Niederrheinische Formenfabrik Janssen GmbH, Krefeld, Germany

Right Plagiarism: TMAK GIDA MAKINELERI A.S., Istanbul, Turkey

Blatant theft of technology and design, the latter poorly concealed by a sheet metal cover. The multi-award-winning cookie former “F450” consists of numerous individual technical components whose functionality, structure and geometry were developed individually by Janssen and are protected by design rights and patents. The Turkish manufacturer TMAK has unabashedly copied more than 25 of these individual technical components, making them visually identical. And although the plagiarised product is still more expensive than the original despite a 24.61% discount, it showed serious shortcomings and functional failures during a live presentation at iba 2025 (international bakery exhibition). More appearance than substance. Appearance can be copied - know-how and experience cannot. Founded in 1872, Janssen successfully combines traditional craftsmanship with modern production: The result are innovative, powerful and durable cookie formers “made in Germany”.

PLAGIARIUS 2026 - Distinction

Thermochromic rollerball pen “PILOT FriXion Ball” (with erasable ink)

Left Original: PILOT Corporation, Tokyo, Japan

Right Counterfeit: Distribution: Alix Industrial Co., Ltd., Shanghai, PR China

“PILOT FriXion” pens are the original when it comes to erasable rollerball pens, fineliners and highlighters. The innovative FriXion series was developed by renowned Japanese writing instrument manufacturer PILOT Corporation. The pens, which are available in many colours, use unique thermosensitive ink that changes with temperature. Each FriXion pen has an eraser ball that generates heat through friction, such that the ink becomes transparent and mistakes can be easily erased. The best-selling series is protected worldwide by registered trademarks (FriXion), designs and patents. The Alix company is a repeat offender. Pens that infringe PILOT-designs were confiscated at trade fairs in 2020. In the current case, not only the design but also the word and figurative mark “FriXion” was copied - Alix is presenting itself as an authorised dealer, so to speak. The cheaply made counterfeit was confiscated at the “Ambiente 2025” trade fair.

The Jury of the Plagiarius-Competition 2026:

Each year the jury is put together individually with specialists from diverse industries. The following persons formed this years' jury:

Zoë Brehmer

Director Trademarks and Operations / Global Intellectual Property,
KARL STORZ SE & Co. KG, Tuttlingen, Germany

Ute Drescher

Editor in Chief konstruktionspraxis / elektrotechnikAUTOMATISIERUNG
Vogel Communications Group GmbH & Co. KG, Wuerzburg, Germany

Dietmar Kellner

Senior Manager Intellectual Property, ZF Friedrichshafen AG, Friedrichshafen, Germany

Dr. Ralf Kotitschke

German Patent Attorney / European Patent Attorney, Partner, Maiwald GmbH, Munich, Germany

Michael Reuter

Entrepreneur / former Managing Director at diverse premium consumer goods manufacturers

Nadine Vicentini

Managing Director bayern design, Nuremberg, Germany

Dr. Achim Wohnhaas

Managing Director NewTec GmbH, Pfaffenhofen, Germany

Legal Advice:

Dr. Alik Busse

Certified IP-Lawyer / Partner at Maiwald GmbH, Intellectual Property Law Firm, Munich, Germany

The **award ceremony of "Plagiarius 2026"** took place during the Consumer Goods Trade Fair "Ambiente" at the Frankfurt Fair on Friday, **06 February, 2026, 12:00 h (noon)**.

The **"laudatory speech"** on the prize winners was made by **Dr. Hans-Jürgen Völz**, Federal Managing Director of Economics at Der Mittelstand. BVMW e.V.

The Plagiarius prize winners will be presented at the **Special Show "Plagiarius"** from February 06 - 10, 2026 at **"Galleria 0", D02**, Frankfurt Trade Fair.

The prize winners 2026 will be presented in the Museum Plagiarius from February 13, 2026.

Contact / Download

Download Text and Photos:



www.plagiarius.com:

- Press Release (“**Press**”)
- Press Photos (“**Competition**”)



Zip-file with all data:

www.plagiarius.de/preistraeger-2026

Content (ZIP-File) - each German and English

Press Release 2026

Photos of the prize winners 2026

Captions for press photos 2026

Photo: Plagiarius Trophy

Copyright photos: Aktion Plagiarius e.V. (www.plagiarius.com)

Exceptions:

Cookie Former: Niederrheinische Formenfabrik Janssen GmbH

Tsunami-Prize: Plagiarisms photographed individually, “wave” generated with AI (Google Gemini 2.5)

All photos show:

Left or above:	Original(s)
Right or below:	Plagiarism(s) / Counterfeit(s)

Reprint: free // **Blocking Period: February 06, 2026, 1:30 p.m.**

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