



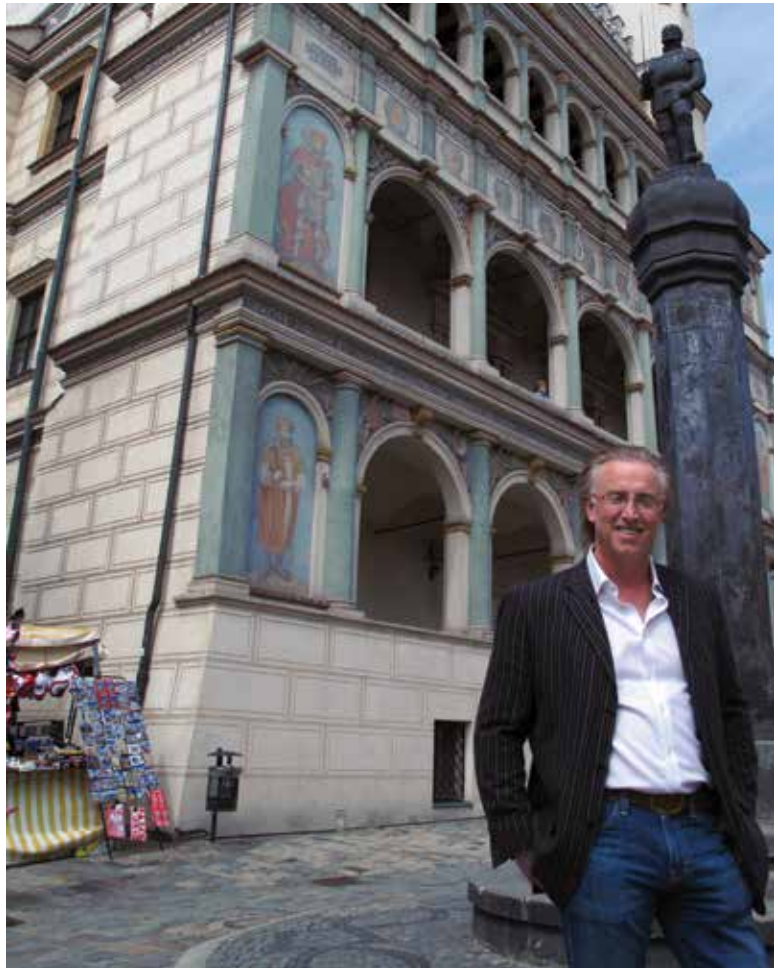
# Poland Rising

NOTES FROM THE ROAD

I recently had the opportunity to visit Poland and meet with molders and suppliers from Eastern Europe and present a seminar on 'Doing it Right the First Time' in rotomolding. The timing was convenient as Matrix polymers held their annual technical conference on the previous day. Based in the UK, Matrix Polymers is focused entirely on rotomo(u)lding and has a local base in Poland to support the growing market in this region. As part of this commitment they offer regular technical seminars to help support and educate molders on key aspects of their process; they also have permanent technical staff available to assist molders with practical molding issues. The theme of their event was very much color and compounding with several informative presentations on the various ways of adding color and the benefits of using compounded material. Matrix clearly recognizes that as the market develops into more technical applications with long-term demands on material properties, the use of compounded materials becomes more critical. There were around 40 people in attendance from Poland and surrounding countries. Nice group.

The event was held at Pozna Technical Institute which is rated as one of the best technical universities in Poland, and is also involved in high-level pan-European research. It has around 21,000 students and is very much part of the fabric of Pozna which is one of the oldest cities in Poland and the fifth largest today. It is one of the largest centers for trade, industry, and technology and is reasonably well connected to the rest of Europe via a local airport. Nice place to visit.

The connection with Pozna Technical Institute is no accident – it is the home to Rotopol, the newly formed Polish rotomolding group. Under the guidance of Prof. Marek Szostak and the assistance of Anna Walorek-Iwanoska of Valor, the group now has 18 members including fifteen Polish molding companies, two foreign



The Pillory Post in Pozna Outside the Town Hall (c. 1560) Used for Public Executions and Punishment – the Original Dates Back to 1532...

molding companies, and one material supplier. While rotomolding accounts for only around 2% of Polish polymer processing volumes, the group sees strong potential for the industry; they also understand the inherent benefits of forming a strong central organization to help support the industry and provide a forum for networking. Rotopol has been quite active of late by organizing meetings and seminars, conducting expert work for rotomolders, offering mechanical testing services, preparing opinions for local

and government authorities and even initiating new material development projects in the bio-polymer field. In the last two years they have also helped to start up a number of new rotomolding companies (2-3 each year). In total, there are around 55-58 molders in Poland of which 5-6 are considered large (several of which are subsidiaries of larger Western European companies), 15-20 are considered mid-size and around 30 are small. It's nice to see a home-grown group such as Rotopol supporting the local industry in their own language and providing access to the international rotomolding scene. I look forward to seeing them grow.

My seminar was given in English, my preferred language, but I don't know how well it translated as Polish seems to be one of the most complicated western languages I have ever seen. I know that half the Polish nation migrated to Ireland and the UK when they joined the European Union but I don't think they will be converting us anytime soon. They have 32 letters instead of 26 of which 31

are consonants, way too many 'z's and a whole list of alternate letters such as 'Ł' which I don't even know how to pronounce. Nothing sounds like it is written and the most common word I heard was 'nie' for no!

The group was good, mostly from Poland, but also from the Czech Republic, Germany, and Austria – the molder from Belarus could not make it unfortunately. The industry is relatively well advanced with modern equipment and strong influences from Western European suppliers and they had requested a higher level discussion covering good practices from a management and operational viewpoint. However, I can't help feeling that a lot of basic processing topics would be worthwhile covering as well at some point – everyone needs a refresher course every now and again! With the level of activity in the region as markets recover and expand I am sure there will be more opportunities. Until then, as they now say in most pubs and hotels in Ireland - powodzenia!

“ **The industry is relatively well advanced with modern equipment and strong influences from Western European suppliers.** ”

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