

Press Report

January 2026

Saving material and boosting overall efficiency

WITTMANN equips elasto with central material supply system

With a central material supply system from WITTMANN, elasto has reorganized material handling in injection molding production. The investment is part of a comprehensive modernization package aimed at achieving long-term competitive unit costs at the German site.

elasto ranks among the largest suppliers of promotional items in Europe. From giveaways right up to high-quality household, lifestyle and sports articles, the product portfolio of its shop includes an immense range of different options. Ever since its foundation in 1980, the company with its headquarters located in the German town of Sulzbach-Rosenberg, has seen continuous growth, and this trend continues. A key factor here: close connection between economic and ecologic strategy. "For promotional items made of plastics, major brand owners increasingly turning to European production", emphasizes Marcus Sperber, who manages the family-owned company in the second generation.

"Made in Germany" as a quality seal is an integral part of the sustainability strategy. This strengthens the local economy, but also involves some new challenges. After all, people are not always willing to pay more for "Made in Germany" products. So, efficiency and productivity on the shop floor must be improved continuously to keep unit costs competitive.

12.5 million Euros for new, resource-saving processes

More than 600 from the total range of 1400 articles are manufactured in Germany. Primarily plastics products, for this is what the parent company in Sulzbach-Rosenberg has specialized in. The machinery, presenting itself in a shiny new environment, consists of 18 injection molding machines with clamping forces ranging from 50 to 300 tons as well as a stretch blow molding and a blow molding machine.

Most recently, elasto has invested 12.5 million Euros in a new, resource-saving production and logistics center. A completely new hall was built for the logistics department, and the production was moved into the original hall after it had been vacated and thoroughly refurbished. This hall now offers significantly more space and thus caters to the growing demand for advertising articles made in Germany. "Over the last few years, we had already added some new, larger injection molding machines, which stretched the original hall to the limits of its capacity", reports the Production Manager Markus Rösel. "A constant challenge was the low, gable-shaped ceiling of the hall. All machines had to be positioned in such a way that the robots could operate below the gable top." This restricted flexibility, since the installation of an overhead crane was not possible either. Material supply was stored decentralized in the old hall. The granulate containers stood directly beside the injection molding machines, and the granulate was filled into the hoppers by hand. "Two staff members were fully occupied with refilling granulate", reports Rösel. Simultaneously, valuable human resources were lacking elsewhere, as the shortage of skilled workers has been noticeable for some time now. With the expansion of production, it was therefore necessary to increase automation.

Unlimited choice of colors for batch sizes from 5000 units upwards

The heart of the new production is now a large central material supply system from WITTMANN. "With this central material supply system, we have also provided the structural basis for further growth", Sperber points out. Several large Drymax material dryers are standing on the platform, placed below them are 750-kg containers for the most frequently used materials and colors. Polypropylene makes up the lion's share. Via a closed pipeline system, the granulate is transported to the coupling station and from there to the individual processing machines. Currently, not all of the coupling points are yet in use – here, too, the equipment has been planned for further growth. Characteristic for elasto is its vast range of different colors. "Batch sizes from 5000 units upwards are available in any color", says Sperber.

The coordination of material flows with the machines takes place via bar code labels and hand scanners. The M8 control system of the central material supply system automatically checks whether the particular combination fits and only then releases the material transfer. A risk of confusion, such as existed previously, is thus excluded. "The M8 control system was accepted very well by the whole team", says Rösel. "Fol-

lowing training at WITTMANN, they could all work with it without any problems, although the RFID-controlled granulate supply was a complete novelty for everyone.”

Removal and new start-up accomplished in only two weeks

The WITTMANN subsidiary in Nuremberg with a large training center and application technology center is less than an hour’s drive away. This is an advantage also for servicing. “Whenever we cannot help online, we will come very quickly in person”, emphasizes Wolfgang Prütting, Regional Sales Manager at the WITTMANN Group. “In selecting our suppliers, we have a strong preference for regional partners”, underscores Marcus Sperber. But the decisive incentive for choosing WITTMANN as their supplier of the central material supply system came from visiting a reference customer. “We visited a major manufacturer of electronic components to see how they work with WITTMANN's system. We spoke with staff members on site and saw that their response was very positive”, Rösel reports. Another confirmation that they had made the right choice came to elasto during the installation of the equipment. The schedule was extremely tight. In just two weeks, the injection molding shop was relocated and the new central material supply system was put into operation. Then production, running at full capacity, started up again.

Regrind processing with thorough dedusting

“The central material supply system has substantially improved our processes”, is the conclusion drawn by Markus Rösel. Color changes are now carried out much faster. Residual material is simply sucked back and no longer lands inside a handheld vacuum cleaner. There are no more scattered granulate grains falling on the floor either. “The extremely clean materials handling increases occupational safety, process reliability and material efficiency”, says Rösel.

Dust generation has been completely eliminated, which is due to the closed pipeline system as well as the Feedmax Clean material loaders with their integrated dedusting function. “The Feedmax Clean reaches extremely high extraction rates of up to 80 per cent of all particles below 1 mm in diameter”, explains Prütting. WITTMANN originally developed the Feedmax Clean to meet the increasing requirements of the circular economy and with the aim of being able to use recycled materials safely also for high-quality applications, thanks to thorough dust extraction.

“For products not certified for direct contact with food, we use regrind more and more often”, says Rösel. In part, this is regrind produced in-house from sprue and scrap parts.

As an example, they point to a “Profi 320” tray, made of recycled polystyrene. The round waiter’s tray with a high rim and a slip-resistant inner surface, on which beer advertising is often shown, is one of elasto’s top sellers. It is produced by two-component injection molding with in-mold labeling (IML).

Down-stream finishing of injection molding products is one of elasto’s main specialties. In addition to IML, the available options include screen print, pad print and digital print. Moreover, items such as drinking bottles and cups are engraved with a name, logo, or other motif.

20 per cent more effective

elasto is the first company on the promotional item market to be ISCC Plus certified and thus furnishing evidence of its generating resource-saving materials and manufacturing ecologically valuable products. In addition to recycled materials, polypropylene produced from agricultural and forestry waste has contributed to the successful certification.

A particularly large contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gases comes from the company’s own photovoltaic system. 1560 solar modules are installed on the new logistics center alone. “On a sunny day, we can operate entirely with energy produced in-house”, Sperber emphasizes.

On 5500 square meters, the new logistics hall offers space for 5000 pallet racks and a storage area for 7000 small parts. The latter contains stores of small injection-molded products which are most frequently in demand, and which elasto also sells via online market places. Products ordered are sent fully automatically by mouse click directly to the person responsible in the shipping department. The latter carries out the final finishing step – for example, engraving – and then packages the products for dispatch. “We can only handle such small individual orders efficiently, because we have optimized and automated our processes also in the logistics department”, Sperber points out. The overall flexibility of production at the corporate headquarters has increased substantially – and this, too, pays off in terms of high competitiveness.

What is the proportion of the efficiency gain contributed by the new central material supply system? – This is not quite so easy to calculate, since the total number of optimization measures is very large. “But we have certainly become about 20 per cent more efficient in granulate feeding”, estimates Rösel.

“The central material supply system definitely helps us to produce competitively”, Marcus Sperber confirms. “We now have the necessary efficiency to make products in Germany, which others buy from Asia. “



The new coupling station still leaves room for further growth.



The granulate is transported inside a closed system. Feedmax Clean material loaders are also used. In this way, dust generation is reliably prevented.



Round waiter's trays are well-known products from elasto.



The M8 control system of the central material supply system met with a very positive response from staff members.



The dryer platform provides a view across the material storage area. The space directly under the platform is reserved for containers filled with the most frequently used materials.



The CMS includes Drymax material dryers.



Working together for higher competitiveness: Marcus Sperber and Markus Rösel from elasto, and Wolfgang Prütting from WITTMANN BATTENFELD Germany (from right to left).

Photos: WITTMANN

The WITTMANN Group

The WITTMANN Group is a globally leading manufacturer of injection molding machines, robots and auxiliary equipment for processing a great variety of plasticizable materials – both plastic and non-plastic. The group of companies has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria and consists of two main divisions: WITTMANN BATTENFELD and WITTMANN. Following the principles of environmental protection, conservation of resources and circular economy, the WITTMANN Group engages in state-of-the-art process technology for maximum energy efficiency in injection molding, and in processing standard materials and materials with a high content of recyclates and renewable raw materials. The products of the WITTMANN Group are designed for horizontal and vertical integration into a Smart Factory and can be interlinked to form an intelligent production cell.

The companies of the group jointly operate ten production plants in seven countries, and the additional sales companies at their 35 different locations are present in all major industrial markets around the world.

WITTMANN BATTENFELD pursues the continued strengthening of its market position as a manufacturer of injection molding machines and supplier of comprehensive modern machine technology in modular design. The product range of WITTMANN includes robots and automation systems, material handling systems, dryers, gravimetric and volumetric blenders, granulators, temperature controllers and chillers. The combination of the individual areas under the umbrella of the WITTMANN Group enables perfect integration – to the advantage of injection molding processors with an increasing demand for seamless interlocking of processing machines, automation and auxiliaries.

Press Contact

Susanne Zinckgraf
Head of Strategic Marketing
WITTMANN Tec Group GmbH
Lichtblaustraße 10, A-1220 Wien
Cell phone: +49 151 70663048
susanne.zinckgraf@wittmann-group.com

Company Contacts

WITTMANN Technology GmbH
Lichtblaustraße 10, A-1220 Wien
Tel.: +43 1 250 39-0
info.at@wittmann-group.com

WITTMANN BATTENFELD Deutschland GmbH
Am Tower 2, D-90475 Nürnberg
Tel.: +49 9128 7099-0
info.de@wittmann-group.com

www.wittmann-group.com