

Focus on the automotive industry

Interview with Michael Barz, managing director of the Dipsol Europe GmbH, Düsseldorf

By the foundation of the Dipsol Europe GmbH in July 2016 a new company entered the market that provides Europe's coating industry with products around the cathodic corrosion resistance. These products were developed by the Japanese parent company, which is gathering experiences in this field for over 60 years. But they are produced locally in Germany. The focus is on the suppliers of the automotive industry but mechanical engineering, aerospace, electronic engineering and other industry sectors are also among the clientele.

Heinz Käisinger: *Mr. Barz, your Japanese parent company operates for over 60 years on this market and has branch offices in numerous countries. What led to the foundation of the Dipsol Europe GmbH? And why now?*

Michael Barz: In recent years, Dipsol gained the position as the market leader in the field of functional electroplating in Japan. We also developed strongly in other Asian markets as well as in the American market. The automotive industry is calling more and more for a global



Unser Interviewpartner Michael Barz leitet die Dipsol Europe GmbH

For the medium term, we have planned to build up sales offices in the most important European markets and thereby to establish Dipsol in Europe.

Please tell us more about your Japanese parent company. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What kind of support do you expect from it for your work in Germany/Europe?

Our parent company is a family-owned corporation which is managed in the third generation of the Igarashi family.

availability of products which are listed in clearances or specifications.

When the distribution of the products via trade partners in Europe in the past was not as successful as hoped, Dipsol Chemicals Japan decided to invest in an own sales and service center in Düsseldorf.

From today's view, the date of our foundation in July last year was very convenient since there were a lot of changes in the big specialist companies.

Does „Europe“ in your company name mean, that you will serve not only the German market but also the European market – or at least certain parts of it?

Our ambition is to serve the entire European market. Although, at this time, our focus is on the German-speaking region as well as its neighboring countries.

Due to this, strategic decisions can be quickly and consistently realized according to the markets' demands. Also, all Dipsol Chemicals Japan products has been testes at selected partners, without any exception. The Japanese perfectionism as well as the sense of honor forbid spreading of „semi-developed“ systems into the market. All systems we have tested at our customers are applicable for the German market without any restrictions. Our Japanese specialists will attend the first setup of a electrolytical processes at our customer. We have only experienced some constraints regarding the communication with the specialists of the different system groups since English is not used as much in Japan as it is in Europe. But we have hired 3 Japanese speaking employees in the different departments to overcome these constrains.

At your opening ceremony, you have focused a lot on the automotive industry. Three presentations addressed the American, Asian and European automotive markets and introduced them to the audience. Am I right in assuming that you primarily serve the automotive industry?

Our customers do indeed supply primarily the automotive industry, which is why we pay great attention on the increasing requirements for the development of new systems. But our products are also used in other fields, as e.g. in the general mechanical engineering, aerospace or electronic engineering.

Please outline your product portfolio for our readers.

Essentially, our product range can be summarized as „cathodic corrosion resistance“. Aside from the pretreatment products, zinc and zinc alloy systems as well as passivation systems and posttreatment products for the configuration of tribological properties or the increase of the corrosion resistance are ranked among them. We also offer products for chemical nickel plating with mid and high

integration rate of phosphorous.

The chancellor regretted, that we will not have 1 million electric cars registered in Germany by 2020 but nonetheless the automobility will change (eg. E-cars and fuel cells). This also asks for innovative solutions regarding the coating. What are your answers to this?

Good question! Although we have dealt with this question for some time now, from our point of view, there are still no definitive solutions regarding the coating. Since coating systems are already existing for current e-cars, we believe that a close cooperation with these system suppliers is an important aspect for our industry to be able to actively contribute to finding solutions for changing coating requirements.

There will be changes in the automobile manufacture even beyond the “new mobility”. In which direction do you think the trend will develop to – especially in the field of the coating industry.

An important aspect could be for example the combination of high corrosion resistance with low electrical resistance for coatings.



Mitarbeiter der japanischen Muttergesellschaft und der Dipsol Europe GmbH. In der Mitte hinter dem Tresen: Sashiko Igarashi, Vorstandsvorsitzende der Dipsol Chemicals Co. Ltd., Tokio. Daneben: Michael Barz, der die Dipsol Europe GmbH leitet. Vor ihm steht Vertriebsleiter Patrick Rio. Martin Beckmann und Uwe Lankswert (hinten, ganz links) sind für Service und Technik verantwortlich (Fotos: Dipsol Europe GmbH)

Also, there will be new material combinations regarding the weight optimization which will involve new challenges regarding the contact corrosion. But the requirement for the visual appearance in terms of gloss, color and even coatings will remain within the focus of the design departments.

The market for chemical products for the coating industry is already very crowded. What will be your course of action? An offensive strategy or a niche policy? Or maybe something completely different?

We want to be the specialist on the field of functional electroplating. Focusing on the core business as well as a high propensity to invest in research and development are the prerequisites to achieve our goal.

We are able to maintain a functioning and mutually beneficial business-relationship with our customers due to the service center in Düsseldorf with the extraordinarily well-equipped lab, pilot line and experienced staff. Therefore, we focus on a partner-like and intensive cooperation without bureaucratic hurdles which occur in big companies.

What are your strategic aims, what have you planned for the years coming?

This and next year, we are concentrating on placing our systems in this market with focus on the target customers. Our mid-term objective is to expand on the European market with new branches and distributors based on our experiences we have made by then. Our parent company has already committed to further investments so that our market position in the field of functional electroplating will be strengthened.

What can you tell us about your team?

Our parent company was willing to build a team with year-long experiences and knowledges for Dipsol Europe. With Patrick Rio (sales), Uwe Lankswiert (technique) and Martin Beckmann (service) a very experienced team in the field of

electro plating was participating from the beginning in the establishment of our German branch. Since then three more Japanese speaking employees (Hiroki Nishikawa: laboratory, Ms. Maglini Paramasivam: back office and Ms. Markéta Pravdová: key account) joined our team. I would like to add that although I am the director of the branch I am also willing to take on tasks of my employees if it is necessary like my colleagues.



Das Auditorium bei der Eröffnungsveranstaltung

Just now, you have showed us the impressive pilot plant and the laboratory. So, what are you able to do with these facilities for the costumers?

As I already mentioned, the laboratory and the pilot plant are exceptionally large-scale in relation to the size of the company. Besides the analyses of our products for the customers, we also perform quality checks of the raw materials and the end products. With the pilot plant we are able to plate different types of sample parts and develop solutions for specific requests in cooperation with our customers.

How will you ensure that you will draw the potential costumers' attention?

We will represent our company at the ZVO-Surface Days in Berlin in September. Therefore, we will make two presentations about tin-zinc alloy and low-hydrogen-embrittlement zinc-nickel systems for the aerospace issues as a substitute for cadmium surfaces.

Thank you very much for this interview!

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Dipsol Europe GmbH

Merowingerplatz 1a
D-40225 Düsseldorf

+49 (0) 211 157 60 92-0
info@dipsol.eu

WWW.DIPSOL.EU