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## Way2K 2025

# "Efficiency is the driver of the plastics industry"

## Interview on the way to K 2025 with Jörg Stech, Chairman of the Management Board at KraussMaffei Technologies

### Mr. Stech, what are today's plastics industry drivers?

Profitability and efficiency continue to be the main drivers of the plastics industry. When customers manufacture plastic parts, they usually do so in large quantities. Customers' technological demands are increasing, led by the motto: faster, more powerful and, above all, more efficient. For us as a manufacturer, this means developing technologies and processes that are better, more efficient and therefore more economical than those of our competitors. Other drivers are the new applications and products on the market. Let's take cars for example: in vehicles with combustion engines, many components in the engine compartment are made of metal so that the generated heat can be dissipated. With electric cars, new requirements arise due to their different design; on the one hand, it affects the material that the components are made of while on the other hand, completely new components are required. For example, it is possible to manufacture some components for electric motors from plastic, as there is no longer any functional need for heat dissipation. The components themselves also fulfil other functions nowadays. Whereas in the past, they used to be mechanically necessary, today they are sometimes purely design elements. The plastics industry is also being driven by new regulations. The EU has set itself the target that at least 25 percent of plastic parts in new cars should consist of recycled plastic by 2030 for example. It is our task to find solutions that are able to fulfil this target.

### Can you provide an example?

Let's take a look at the automotive industry again: if a bonnet no longer needs to be produced of metal for functional reasons, then it can also be made of plastic, meaning KraussMaffei produces it economically using injection moulding technology. And not only that – it can even be painted directly in the injection moulding machine using our ColorForm process. This makes separate painting systems and transport routes obsolete. Production is becoming more efficient, and the entire industry is gradually changing, resulting in new

opportunities. Even if the conditions on the global competitive market have changed and become more difficult, this opens up opportunities for German machine manufacturers, especially for us in injection moulding technology, to develop new technologies in line with new customer requirements.

### **What role does innovation play in your organisation?**

Without innovation, Europe will find itself struggling to compete in the global marketplace. It is a fact that we are more expensive than our competitors in the Far East, for example, because we have higher production costs, as well as personnel and energy overheads, and logistics costs for national and international sourcing are also an essential factor. That is why we are clearly focusing on the development of innovations and new technologies. Our aim is to offer the customer a product that goes far beyond that of a standard injection moulding machine. In the production of injection moulded parts for example, one issue is reducing energy requirements, which enables savings. However, we also use technologies that lead to a reduction in the material usage rate, or that allow other materials to be used, such as recycled material. These are all technologies that we need to develop further.

### **How is this achieved?**

Innovation does not always mean a new invention - rather, we see the potential in small innovative steps, for example by way of consistent further development of existing processes. In doing so, we deal with various questions: How can the fibre content be increased? How can we influence key parameters of the injection moulding process? Is it possible to injection mould a component at lower temperatures? To sum it up, these factors have a huge impact. Expertise and direct exchange with the customer are our competitive advantage, as they cannot simply be purchased as a sample solution on the world market. The demand-oriented production of injection moulding machines, including the development of customer-specific applications, goes far beyond standard injection moulding machine construction. Thanks to cooperative collaboration and development, we are able to generate the highest possible added value for our customers. We benefit from the fact that we can draw on the entire KraussMaffei know-how of our various technologies, from injection moulding and reaction process machinery to additive manufacturing, automation and extrusion.

### **What role will skilled workers and suitable new recruits play?**

Of course, we need top talents with specific knowledge for our tasks. No matter what position we need to fill, we have to attract the specialists to KraussMaffei. Unfortunately, we often aren't able to find these specialists locally. But we benefit from the attractiveness of Munich as a location in general and from our new plant in Parsdorf. Investments in the new factory and office buildings, machines, and our technical centre have increased KraussMaffei's appeal on the labour market, but also among the core team on site. It has created conditions that enable our colleagues to work well and generate new solutions. Every individual counts, because innovation comes from everyone – from sales staff to machine operators. We also attach great importance to education in the sense of further and advanced training. With the development of our LearningPods, learning cabins that can be set up anywhere, employees can learn specific procedures or acquire relevant

knowledge by means of short video clips. The LearningPods are particularly suitable for employees who either do not have a fixed computer workstation or work in production. This product is so attractive that it is also sold to other companies where employee training is equally important.

### **Where does Europe currently stand in terms of sustainability?**

The EU is currently the driving force behind sustainability. This is a good thing, because if Europe did not drive sustainability forward, the world as a whole would be much less concerned with it. KraussMaffei is therefore intensively searching for more sustainable solutions to ensure that later generations have a decent future. It is essential that the rules that lead to resource preservation and a better use of plastic apply equally to everyone, regardless of which industry or country they affect. If European regulations lead to a situation where only European manufacturers are at a disadvantage, this will further penalise and weaken Europe's economic situation, something that is not acceptable. We need systems that will ensure fair competition for all.

**Video Statement by Jörg Stech:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znSW1mXhxDY>

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### **Industry interviews on the way to the K:**

It is impossible to imagine a world without plastic. And plastics are indispensable for mastering our future challenges. The plastics industry develops solutions so that a growing world population can live safely and prosperously. This important role as an enabler is expressed in the motto of K 2025: The Power of Plastics! Green - Smart - Responsible. Green, because plastics help to combat climate change and conserve resources. Smart, because digitalization helps to increase efficiency. Responsible, because the focus is on people. To get in the mood for the industry meeting in October 2025, the VDMA is giving representatives of the plastics machinery industry and of all other stakeholders in the sector a chance to have their say in a series of interviews.

### **VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery**

More than 200 companies are members of the trade association, covering over 90 per cent of industry's production in Germany. Ten per cent of our member companies come from Austria, Switzerland and France. The German member companies account for a turnover of 7 billion euros in core machine construction and 10 billion euros including peripheral technology. In terms of value, one in four plastics machines manufactured worldwide comes from Germany; the export rate is 70 per cent. Chairman of the trade association is Ulrich Reifenhäuser, Managing Partner of Reifenhäuser GmbH & Co KG.