



Presse-Information

Press release • Information de presse

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It was a common scene over the past year: At press conferences of associations and companies the current situation was described, faint hopes were expressed, but executives and officials shied away from giving detailed outlooks. And with reason: The dynamic of the economic development was hard to assess, and nobody dared to give a long term forecast after the rapid economic decline caused by the financial crisis.

This has changed, however: At the spring press conferences of large German industry associations, careful optimism has returned. The German Large Industrial Plant Manufacturer's Group (AGAB) says the industry has bottomed out, and perspectives beyond 2010 are favorable. The German Association of the Chemical Industry (VCI) also expects an economic recovery, if only in small steps.

But the initial position has changed remarkably and is not comparable with the situation before 2008. Companies are well advised to adjust to the the new conditions.

Both the plant manufacturers and the chemical industry agree that the most important economic stimulus can be expected from Asia. But not only have the hot spots of growth moved geographically – this trend has existed long before the financial crisis – but the roles within the global economy have also changed.

China's development has a strong impact on this. For some time, China has been an important market for industrial goods, and this is promoted, amongst others, by the current projects triggered by the government's economic stimulus package. But today, there is also a significant consumer market developing in China, where domestic and foreign producers of consumer goods find solvent buyers. Access to this market will be an important success factor for many international companies in the years to come.

And another change of roles is making itself felt as well: The competitive landscape in many industries has changed fundamentally over the past years. Especially east Asian

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manufacturers are entering the global market, including the market for industrial goods. The simple equation of the past, when industrial goods were traded from West to East, while consumer goods were sold from East to West, does no longer apply. The fabric of the global commodity flows has become much more complicated.

What are the implications for the process industries? The worldwide integration is yet increasing – and this is not only true for production, where locations are already spread all over the globe, but also for the markets. Companies will need to evaluate the opportunities opening up in regions of the world that have formerly been regarded mostly as low cost production sites with low local consumption. At the same time, companies will have to redefine their position in a more complex competitive landscape. They will need to focus even more on their core competencies – what does my company do better than anyone else, and in which sectors can we profit from the strengths of a potential partner along the value chain? And where can we find a cooperation partner – even beyond the well-known established players of the past?

In the process industries, most companies have been aware of these questions for quite some time. It is no coincidence that the first AchemAsia in Beijing took place more than 20 years ago at a time when the Chinese rise to a global economic player was just beginning. Since then, ACHEMA and AchemAsia have contributed to intensifying the scientific and technical exchange between different countries and regions.

In 2010, in year 1 after the crisis if you like, we are looking forward to AchemAsia with great expectations. At this most important exhibition congress for the process industries in Asia, we experience firsthand the rapid development of industry and research in China and the rest of Asia. Each time, we identify new opportunities for contacts and new ideas for cooperations and initiatives that create a win-win-situation for both sides. The focal topics have also changed over time: While in the beginning the emphasis was on basic questions of plant engineering and process technology, this time the focus is on sustainability, production efficiency, water technology and the use of renewable resources – issues with which companies worldwide are involved.

The more deeply we are rooted in China through our activities, the more important the exchange on site is becoming for us. That is why I'm really looking forward to four exciting and informative days in Beijing.

Dr. Hans Jürgen Wernicke
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