

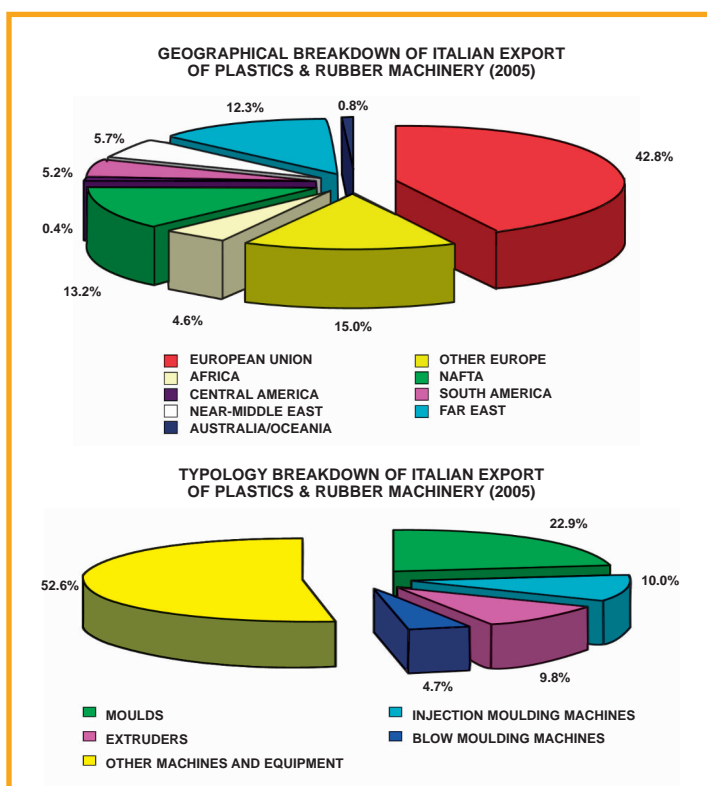
ITALIAN IMPORT-EXPORT OF PLASTICS AND RUBBER MACHINERY (JANUARY-AUGUST- 000 EURO)	IMPORT		EXPORT	
	2005	2006	2005	2006
CALENDERS AND LAMINATORS	78	155	24,596	34,831
FLEXOGRAPHIC PRINTERS	9,946	14,961	84,261	74,606
PLANTS FOR MONO AND MULTIFILAMENTS	4,846	1,395	38,303	42,701
INJECTION MOULDING MACHINES	35,217	47,526	135,024	151,801
EXTRUDERS	24,284	21,968	141,758	132,068
BLOW MOULDING MACHINES	8,912	19,545	59,161	68,261
THERMOFORMING MACHINES	5,514	12,739	22,480	23,195
PRESSES FOR TYRES AND INNER TUBES	3,761	4,345	13,605	13,650
PRESSES	13,418	10,087	21,361	21,489
MACHINES FOR MOULDING OR FORMING (OTHER)	6,309	5,940	57,690	60,418
MACHINES FOR REACTIVE RESINS	721	580	18,244	18,726
MACHINES FOR FOAMED PRODUCTS	1,460	2,760	11,369	16,314
EQUIPMENT FOR SIZE REDUCTION	1,561	3,504	23,573	15,372
MIXERS	605	2,533	10,192	18,103
CUTTING, SPLITTING AND PEELING MACHINES	2,984	2,276	3,678	4,196
OTHER MACHINES	27,006	15,363	210,772	188,018
PARTS AND COMPONENTS	68,343	68,631	205,345	204,260
MOULDS	136,527	140,034	360,377	353,581
TOTAL	351,491	374,341	1,441,790	1,441,591

mentioned first place of Germany, the rundown of the other major destinations for Italian exports (the so-called Top 10) is as follows. In order of importance, the principal expanding markets are China, where sales went up from less than 95 to just over 101 million euro, France (from 82 to 88), Poland (41; 64), Turkey (50; 55). Russia (or rather the CIS) remains stable at 90 million, while there have instead been downturns or significant declines, again listed in order of magnitude, for the United States, with Italian exports down from nearly 115 to 95 million, Spain (from 87 to 79), the United Kingdom (59; 52) and Mexico (45; 43).

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ITALIAN INDUSTRY FOR PLASTICS & RUBBER MACHINERY (MILLION EURO)	2003	2004	2005	2006 (ESTIMATE)
PRODUCTION	3,750	3,870	3,700	3,700
EXPORT	2,192	2,274	2,145	2,150
IMPORT	597	634	552	600
DOMESTIC MARKET	2,156	2,230	2,107	2,150
TRADE BALANCE	1,594	1,641	1,593	1,550

Competitive moulding



The injection moulding and mouldmaking industry with 1.5 million employed people and an annual turnover of EUR 150 billion mainly based on medium-sized enterprises (SME) is one of the key industries in Europe. Although the European plastics industry is the worldwide technology leader it is facing significant threats from low-wage countries due to high costs and long development times. One of the key factors to succeed in competition with low-wage countries of other areas is the endeavour to produce complex and highly functional parts in a fast and cost effective way. Especially the development of these parts has to be based on technological know-how and a systematic approach. The trial and error method which is still widely used nowadays will not keep the European injection moulding industry at its leading position.

Pro4Plast is a collective research project supported by the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) of the European Commission. Collective research is a scheme where RTD performers undertake scientific and technological research activities on behalf of Industrial Association Groups (IAG) in order to expand the knowledge base of large communities of SMEs and thus improve their general standard of competitiveness. Pro4Plast was launched in September 2006 and will work on the subjects described below for 36 months. The aim of the Pro4Plast project is to provide the European plastics injection moulding and mouldmaking industry with this systematic approach suitable to develop and produce complex, highly functional parts at low costs and with short time-to-market.

- To achieve these strategic goals and to sustainably strengthen the SME competitiveness, a consortium of 28 partners will develop new technologies, which imply
- a product development guidance system (PDGS) in order to ensure a systematic approach
 - an enhanced injection moulding simulation software (multi component and insert-moulding) and an in-house viscosity measurement system both applicable by SMEs and a new training
 - implementation model for European SMEs including certification.

Using the newly developed approach and technologies it will be possible to reduce the production costs by 30% and the time-to-market by 50%. A top-class team of 8 leading scientific institutes (RTD) will assure the achievement of these ambitious project targets. The 11 SMEs from the mould making and plastics processing industry will prove usefulness and practicability of the new technologies in their everyday work. Nine leading European Industrial Association Groups (IAG) will guarantee that the European plastics industry will get access to the new technologies.

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