
EPDA NEWSLETTER

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EPDA Joins IAPD

On May 10, 1998, the European Plastics Distributors Association (EPDA) voted to join the International Association of Plastics Distributors (IAPD). This is the first plastics distributor organization to be accepted into IAPD's new membership category "association member." Together, the two groups hope to set standards, direct future policy and increase communication between the memberships. On October 31, 1997, the IAPD membership voted to amend their bylaws to allow other plastics distributor organizations into the association in an effort to develop alliances with plastics distributor organizations around the world.

In his address to the EPDA membership, EPDA Chairman Jurgen Kruger, Arthur Kruger Kunststoffe, Hamburg, Germany, said, "We can learn very much from each other through this partnership."

"This is a significant event in the plastics distribution world," remarked IAPD President James Conway, ACI Plastics, Inc., St. Louis, MO, at the EPDA annual meeting in Dublin, Ireland. "We have taken the first step in becoming a global organization working together to further the plastics distribution industry."



Review of Manufacturers Meeting

This meeting, held on May 10, was well attended by both manufacturers and distributors, and opened with a discussion on why the major players in the industry were not members of the association. It was felt that one of the reasons these companies were not in EPDA was they could not see any benefits to be gained by joining. Because of the recent changes within EPDA and the new partnership with the IAPD, the association will actively promote its many benefits and actively encourage them to join.

Full consideration was then given to the potential growth in Eastern Europe markets which will become evident over the next few years, and EPDA should concentrate on promotion in this area.

It was agreed that in order to attract new members, it is essential to market and promote the association properly. Consideration was given to methods to attract more members, the criteria for membership, the code of ethics and a marketing strategy. As a consequent, it became clear that the aims and objectives of the EPDA needed to be more clearly defined. Therefore, Joe Turley and Peter Ferris were elected to prepare the criteria for membership and the code of ethics, and Frans Blok and Franz Lubbers were elected to deal with recruitment areas to be targeted and the marketing strategy.

It was noted from IAPD that its criteria for membership was that a company needed to have been trading for one year, to have the confirmation of three manufacturers that the company was a bona-fide distributor, and it was necessary for them to be sponsored by another member.

The duration of the EPDA annual meeting was discussed, and it was agreed that this should be extended. Therefore, next year's program will include two full days for the business to take place.

The format of the meeting was also considered, and upon a proposal from the secretary, it was decided that the association would adopt a similar format to the British Plastics Stockholders Association to enable the different sectors of the industry to concentrate on relevant issues to them. Each group would appoint a chairman who would report to the main meeting. Consequently, Frans Blok was elected to chair the group dealing with Pipes, Valves and Fittings, and Franz Lubbers and Willy Bolscher were elected to chair the group focusing on Sheet, Rod and Tube.

Finally, there was a feeling that the association title was misleading and perhaps a change should be considered in due course.

The manufacturers will have an opportunity to meet again at the K '98 Show in October.

Highlights of Standards Meeting

Maurizio Adreani, Adreani Spa, chaired the Standards meeting on May 10, 1998. It was the desire of the group to discuss how the EPDA and IAPD could work together to establish international standards.

Jim Conway, IAPD President, reviewed the history of the IAPD Standards Committee that was established to standardize tolerances for the plastics distribution industry. He explained how the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) controls the entire process, but accepts input from the IAPD. The IAPD Standards Task Force has been successful with the approval of standards for nylon, acetal, polycarbonate, PEEK, PVC/CPVC and polyester. The Task Force members are currently working on tolerances for UHMW-PE, PEI, PAI and PVDF.

The EPDA members concurred that the existing ISO and DIN standards are prevalent throughout Europe, but that each country may have its own requirements. The consensus was that the individual country standards would eventually turn to the ISO. It was suggested that this group first look at the existing standards on the European platform. Members remarked that the measurement issue creates a difficult barrier to international standards, as the European market uses the metric system while the United States companies continue to use the imperial system.

It was decided that a list could be developed of those products which should have standard tolerances. One member suggested that this information be collected from manufacturer members.

Other members commented that there should be a standard ethical code for service. IAPD Executive Director Deborah Hamlin explained that the association could easily adopt a code of ethics for EPDA, but that a code was difficult to enforce. Some members wanted to be able to purchase sheet in different dimensions than are currently available. Jan Courtens, DSM EPP, replied that manufacturers would be willing to do that if a sizable market requested this new size.

Adreani summarized the discussion by identifying four goals of this Standards Committee: 1) gain a better understanding of the existing standards; 2) determine whether the EPDA/IAPD has the power to influence new or existing standards; 3) determine if there is a market to drive specific sheet sizes, and

4) consider a code of ethics for EPDA members.

The committee members in attendance were encouraged to send Jos Vanoirbeek, ERIKS nv, any information they had on the existing standards prior to the K '98 Show. Staff was asked to arrange space for a small meeting during the show.

Deborah Hamlin offered to share this group's comments with the IAPD Standards Task Force at its May meeting.

1998 IAPD Annual Convention

The 42nd IAPD Annual Convention will be held October 14-18, 1998, at the Hyatt Regency in San Diego, CA. The convention theme is "Charting Your Course" and will provide ways to adapt your business to the trends of the future. Contact IAPD at (913) 345-1005 to receive a registration packet.

K '98 Show

Members of the EPDA and IAPD will hold a joint meeting during the K '98 show in Dusseldorf, Germany. Meeting space has been secured on the show site for Tuesday, October 27, 1998, beginning at 3:00 p.m. IAPD members will be touring the Metzeler Plastics plant during the morning and walking the fair in the afternoon. Watch for more details in future issues of the *EPDA Newsletter*.

1999 EPDA Annual Meeting

The 1999 EPDA Annual Meeting will be held in Greece over the weekend of May 8 and 9. Lida Arageorgis of Arageorgis, LN, will assist staff in the site selection and program planning. Mark the dates on your calendar today. Details will be distributed when the schedule is set.

Directory Verification Forms

Please be sure to return the directory verification forms that were faxed to you from IAPD. Your company listings will be compiled and printed in a supplement to the current IAPD directory. Please be sure to include your e-mail and web site addresses. IAPD will provide a "hot link" from its home page to yours in the on-line membership directory.

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The EPDA Newsletter is made possible through joint efforts of the European Plastics Distributors Association and the International Association of Plastics Distributors. Let us know what you would like to see in future issues by calling the EPDA office at 1234 752248 or IAPD at (913) 345-1005.