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Guest Editorial: 17th International Drying Symposium (IDS2010)

The 17th International Drying Symposium (IDS2010) took place in Magdeburg, a historic city in Germany, from October 3 to 6, 2010. With more than 400 participants from 48 countries, IDS2010 was the largest ever event of the series, which was initiated by Professor Arun S. Mujumdar in 1978 in Montreal. The 17th International Drying Symposium comprised 7 keynote lectures, 140 oral presentations, and 226 posters—exposed over the entire duration of the event. Many elements of good IDS tradition have been continued in Magdeburg, such as the welcome reception, opening ceremony, cultural event, the conference dinner with award ceremony, meetings of the IDS advisory panel and of the European Working Party on Drying, an open forum discussion, and a closing ceremony. Interested participants could visit the laboratories of the Chair of Thermal Process Engineering at the Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, or join sightseeing tours. The scientific content has been documented in one CD-ROM and three (thick and heavy) volumes of book proceedings, after peer review of every submitted contribution.

Since many of the mentioned activities are—as already mentioned—good IDS tradition, the question about specific aspects and merits of IDS2010 may arise. The answer to this question is, from our point of view, quite clear, and it is the participation from industry. With a share of more than 30% of the participants, industry was widely present, lively and active in Magdeburg—including vendors and users of dryers, as well as producers of equipment for the measurement of properties related to drying and particle technology. Only the very first event of the series in 1978 had a higher percentage of participants from industry. With this index declining seriously and disturbingly over the years, the very clear reversal of the trend was certainly a big success of IDS2010. Numerous industrial companies joined a very interesting and well visited exhibition that accompanied IDS2010. Several companies have provided
additional support as conference or award sponsors, and in the organization committee. The possibility of so-called technical contributions (meaning oral presentation without the obligation of manuscript submission for the proceedings) was opened to people from industry in Magdeburg, and it was also used, with 20 out of a total 140 oral presentations belonging to this category. Moreover, one session was dedicated to a big joint project that the University of Magdeburg is pursuing together with several companies and other facilities from our region. This so-called WIGRATEC project is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), aiming at new developments in wet granulation, which does not work without drying.

About 20 persons from the Chair of Thermal Process Engineering, Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, have assisted in IDS2010; here, three of them: MSc Maryam Dadkhah, Dr. Ptamea Ihlow, Dipl.-Ing. Velislava Edreva.

Our experience from IDS2010 shows that direct contacts, activities such as the exhibition or thematically dedicated sessions, and offers such as the technical contribution track can enhance the participation from industry in scientific conferences. However, and irrespective of efforts, calls, contacts or incentives, very few people, either from industry or from academia, would join any conference on an old and cold topic. But people are joining the IDS series with increasing numbers of total participants and, after the discussed turn in 2010, also with increasing industrial share. Since drying is really not new, it may be empirically concluded that it is—still or even increasingly—"hot".

One reason drying is a hot topic is the simple fact that every initially wet material which is used in solid form has to be dried—either to avoid damage during further processing and storage, or to create functional properties. This comprises raw materials, commodities and high-value specialties from foods to pharmaceuticals, from minerals to detergents, and from polymers to paper. Consequently, the market for dried materials is huge.

Additionally, this large market is increasingly demanding. The main challenge—and opportunity—of modern drying technology is that efficient processing must be combined with the creation, or at least preservation, of product quality. Efficient processing means low cost, especially the reduction of energy consumption and the environmental footprint. On the other hand, the product quality of solids is not just a matter of ingredients, but also of morphology, structure and texture, so that structures that correlate with superior application properties must emerge, or at least be protected, during drying.
Consequently, innovation and progress in drying are driven in many ways, such as by:

- Use of modern computational methods which enable transitions from the molecular to the pore, particle, and particle system scale;
- Application of new experimental techniques for monitoring, control, and product characterization;
- Invention of new or product-tailored adaptation of existing equipment;
- Openness to interdisciplinary approaches in relation to, among others, food and pharmaceutical technology, life and material sciences, applied mechanics, and advanced computing.

All these aspects explain the persisting and growing interest in drying that made the 17th International Drying Symposium a successful event, rich in discussions and debates, rich in new ideas and contacts, and certainly rich in scientific contributions. The creativity of motivated and skilled people in interaction with each other during a conference can, luckily, not be stored on paper or in bits. On the other hand, their scientific results can and should be documented in the best possible way. This is not completely fulfilled by proceedings, so that one more good tradition of the IDS series consists in publishing selected contributions in archival journals, after extension by the authors and the full journal reviewing procedure.

In this frame, we have tried to reflect the scientific content of IDS2010 in three journal issues—one issue of Chemical Engineering Technology, which has already appeared, and two issues of Drying Technology. The first part published as issue 13 earlier in this volume and this issue is the second part. We hope that the special issues will provide interesting reading, some new insights and ideas, a broad overview of where modern drying technology is, and perhaps even an anticipative glimpse at its future movement.

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