

# GACKI: "ALL INDUSTRIAL costs are rising"

by Andrea Serri

**Ferdynand Gacki, President of the Polish Ceramic Union, warns of instability in the energy market and sharp increases in labour, raw material and transport costs**

**Interview with Ferdynand Gacki, President of the Polish Ceramic Union.**

The Polish Ceramic Union represents the country's leading manufacturers in an industry with a total annual output of around 130 million m<sup>2</sup> of tiles, the third highest in Europe. The industry employs over 5,000 people directly and around 60,000 including allied sectors. The Polish Ceramic Union is affiliated with the European Ceramic Tile Manufacturers' Federation (CET) and the European Ceramic Industry Association (Cerame-Unie), both based in Brussels. In Poland, it is a member of the LEWIATAN Confederation.

**What is the current economic situation in the Polish ceramic tile industry?**

In 2024, ceramic tile manufacturers in Poland produced 77 million m<sup>2</sup> of tiles, a 2.5% decrease compared to 2023. Preliminary data for the first three months of 2025 show that production rose to 22.8 million m<sup>2</sup>, a remarkable 26.9% increase compared to the same period in 2024.

Polish companies exported 44.6 million m<sup>2</sup> of ceramic tiles in

2024, up 4% on the previous year. Germany was the largest buyer with 11.4 million m<sup>2</sup>, followed by Slovakia (3.9 million m<sup>2</sup>), Hungary (3.6 million m<sup>2</sup>), the Czech Republic (3.4 million m<sup>2</sup>), Ukraine (2.6 million m<sup>2</sup>), Romania (2.5 million m<sup>2</sup>) and Lithuania (2.3 million m<sup>2</sup>). After several years of decline, imports to Poland once again recorded strong growth in 2024. Foreign suppliers sold 28.4 million m<sup>2</sup> of tiles on the Polish market, a sharp 20.1% increase compared to 2023. Over 90% of these imports came from just four countries: India, Spain, Ukraine and Italy. India is the largest foreign supplier, having expanded its presence in Poland rapidly since 2014. While Polish producers saw a further 10% decline in domestic sales in 2024, importers increased their volumes by 20.1% to 28.4 million m<sup>2</sup>.

**What are the biggest challenges facing the Polish ceramic tile industry?**

Our core business of ceramic tile production is an energy-intensive sector that continues to face very high gas and electricity prices in 2025. We are seeing considerable volatility in energy markets as well as numerous other factors that may lead to further price increases in the near future. Moreover, the costs of raw materials, transport, packaging and wages have risen significantly. The cost of manufacturing ceramic products in 2025 is already more than 51% higher than in 2021.



Imports of low-cost products from India, Turkey and Ukraine also continue to rise in the absence of effective measures to protect against unfair competition. The imposition of low anti-dumping duties has failed to stem this growth. It is important to emphasise that EU producers comply with a wide range of standards not required in many Asian countries such as India, including quality certifications, fair working conditions, wages and environmental regulations. Furthermore, India benefits from preferential prices for its energy supplies from Russia.

**What are your requests and expectations of the Polish Government?**

We expect the Polish Government to actively support and align with the European Commission in protecting the EU's internal market against unfair competition from ceramic tile importers. This includes proposing amendments to the European Commission's Guidelines on State Aid measures in the context of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) beyond 2021.

We also call for support for the ceramics industry in consultations on the IED 2.0 Directive (Directive 2024/1785) to ensure that the parameters adopted in the final document are both realistic and achievable, as well as backing for the introduction of a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) for ceramic tiles imported from non-EU countries.

**How are domestic ceramic tile distribution channels changing?**

Distribution companies continue to face significant obstacles to strong sales growth, primarily due to the economic slowdown, weakness in the construction market and high tile prices. Another factor holding back sales is the "supply gap" in new housing: the sharp fall in construction starts in 2022 led to lower tile sales in 2024 and is likely to affect results again in 2025. However, sentiment has improved with slightly more positive data from the renovation market, where the propensity to renovate has returned to 2021 levels. The gradual revival of new construction activity since autumn 2023 should drive demand for ceramic tiles for new buildings, although this effect will likely not materialise until mid-2025. The first half of 2025 may see a further decline. CAB expects sales of ceramic tiles for new buildings to begin to grow in the second half of the year, with overall 2025 sales rising by approximately 3-5%.

A faster recovery is expected in the renovation segment, which accounts for the majority of tile sales in Poland. Falling inflation has boosted investor confidence, and ceramic tile sales in 2025 are forecast to grow by 3-5% to reach 62-65 million m<sup>2</sup>. In 2026, the pace of growth is expected to accelerate to around 6-8%, with total sales reaching 66-70 million m<sup>2</sup>. Next year sales may return to the already weak levels of 2022, still several percentage points lower than in 2021.

**What is the role and importance of architects?**

Architects are playing an increasingly important role in design. Their work often requires close collaboration with other professionals such as engineers, interior designers, urban planners and representatives of various construction trades. Architects design a wide range of buildings, from residential and office projects to public buildings such as schools, hospitals and cultural centres.

The architect's role is therefore far more complex than is often portrayed. Creativity is only one of the many pillars supporting the profession. In a world where aesthetics meets technology and sustainability, architects are not only artists but also technical experts shaping the future of our cities and living spaces. Their choices can make a significant contribution to protecting the environment, for example by using sustainable materials and optimising energy efficiency. For this reason, collaboration with architects is essential to share comprehensive knowledge on the use of ceramic tiles as cladding for interior and exterior walls and floors in public buildings. Cooperation between tile manufacturers and architects should become a permanent aspect of the industry's distribution strategy, serving as a source of information on new ceramic tile designs and their use in newly planned or renovated buildings.

aserri@confindustriaeramica.it



Ferdynand Gacki