

Elematic, 37801 Akaa, Finland

Norwegian Voss is riding the new wave of hollow-core demand

After some challenging years of recession, the demand for precast technology is again on the rise in the Nordic countries. Voss Cementfabrikk AS realized there was a business potential for local precast products in western Norway and started their top modern production of hollow-core with Elematic technology last year.

■ Tuija Aro, Finland ■

In the Norwegian city of Voss, known for its winter activities, Voss Cementfabrikk AS has been producing a wide range of precast concrete products since 1956. The company has been built over the years by four generations of the Bjørke family. Their portfolio includes reinforced concrete elements, beams, and poles – everything their customers have required. According to Production Manager Stian Hjeltestad, the company's strength is that they are a highly versatile manufacturer. Production consists of both reinforced and pre-stressed concrete elements, ready-mix concrete as well as sand and gravel, and they operate a shop with local goods, tools, and equipment.

Elematic partnership

In 2011, Voss conducted a market survey regarding the possibilities for hollow-core slabs and discovered that there was presently a great demand for these products. There existed only one precast production competitor in Bergen, so the prospects were good on the market in western Norway. Having done extensive research on the suppliers of hollow-core production machinery, the company decided to invest in Elematic's ultra-modern production system for hollow-core elements. Designing and delivering complete plants, machinery and equipment for all precast

needs, Elematic is present in more than one hundred countries worldwide and has gathered valuable experience of varying production environments during their six decades in the business.

Hjeltestad says the choice of business partner was quite natural. "We were familiar with Elematic's reputation as an experienced supplier of precast machinery. We wanted equipment from a strong manufacturer that could deliver reliable machinery that produces top quality end products and is easy to maintenance. Elematic's help desk function was also considered important, as was the opportunity to receive the latest know-how and expertise of the area in the future as well."

Tero Kivimäki is Export Manager for Scandinavia at Elematic: "It is important for us that Voss chose to cooperate with Elematic. Our strong presence here makes us a trustworthy partner in the future as well. Overall, the other Nordic countries have followed suit and the demand for precast technology is well on the rise after some challenging years."

The value of sharing knowledge

In Norway, precast concrete producers visit each other's factories and Voss also received valuable assistance with its hollow-core approvals from fellow producers. "This is a special and very interesting means of cooperation amongst competitors, to share knowledge and experience",

says Kivimäki. "The starting up of production is a huge project, with many different stages, both administrative as well as technical."

Says Hjeltestad: "Elematic has been very professional throughout the process of assembling the factory and starting up the production. We have had with us technicians who have assisted us in problem situations that have occurred and these were all solved in a highly efficient manner."

Smart decisions for long-term success

According to Kivimäki, Elematic continuously develops the company's after sales and customer service activities. The goal is to provide increasingly better service to customers in the future with even shorter response times. Especially the monitoring methods for wear and spare parts have been improved to ensure the timely and sufficient availability of parts, so that customers can feel secure that their production will stay up and running smoothly at all times.

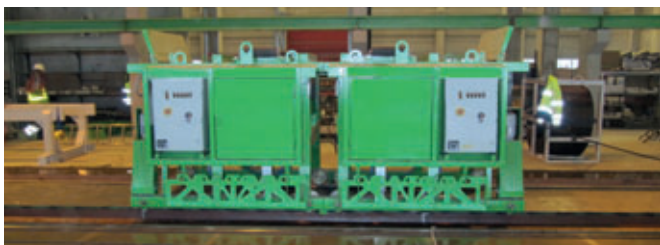
"Already now, customers benefit greatly from the know-how and expertise of our maintenance and service department personnel", Kivimäki explains. "They have extensive experience and solid views of managing production in different environments all over the world and can help customers make smart decisions that have positive long-term effects on business success."



Extruder E9 at Voss's hollow-core plant



Extruder in operation



Preparer and Drilling machine

In the Nordic countries, our customers are already widely accustomed to using our after sales services and we have received much positive feedback, which encourages us to further continue developing these functions."

Hollow-core capacity sold for the year ahead

Hjellestad sees the future as very positive. "We are at this time producing 1700 square meters of hollow-core a week, and approximately 150 tonnes of other precast products. At the heart of our fully equipped, extensively automated factory from Elematic is the Extruder E9. The future is looking very good at the moment, as we have sold almost our entire hollow-core capacity for one year ahead, and have several months worth of orders for our other precast products as well. I am glad to say that it seems precast has finally achieved its well-deserved reputation of being an outstanding choice of building material in today's energy efficient and environment focused society."



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