



# PAINTING A GREENER FUTURE

Headquartered in Milan, Geico SpA is a global leader in the planning and construction of turnkey automated car painting systems. COO Mr Daryush Arabnia spoke to Barbara Rossi about recent investments channelled into developing completely environmentally-friendly solutions.

“IN 2011, we forged an alliance with Taikisha, the Japanese giant specialising in the construction of car painting systems. Geico Taikisha is a general contractor that designs, develops, installs and starts up automated car painting systems. For this reason, I would say that we offer systems rather than products,” Mr Arabnia told Industry Europe. “An automated car painting system mainly comprises six elements: pre-treatment and cataphoresis, ovens, painting booths, sealing decks, conveyors, and quality control areas. In terms of both management and investments, an automated car painting system is the biggest and most expensive element within a car production chain.”

The company, whose roots date back 50 years, is a strong believer in passion and innovation. In fact, its continuous striving towards innovation and development is at the basis of the Pardis Project that Geico is implementing with its team of engineers, and which it hopes to complete by 16 June 2020 for Energy Independence Day when the first self-sufficient energy plant will be opened. Pardis has been chosen as the name of this project because in Farsi it means ‘paradise’. On 10 May 2013 Geico opened the Pardis Innovation Centre, a research and development centre that is almost double the size of its predecessor.

It extends over 3600m<sup>2</sup>, houses more than 20 functioning prototypes representing various technological solutions and uses technology from renewable sources in keeping with the self-sufficiency principle.

In recent years Geico Taikisha has made a lot of investments in innovation, focusing on two main projects: the previously mentioned Energy Independence Day and Smart Paintshop. As explained, the former is a project aimed at developing the first self-sufficient energy plant with zero emissions. The latter comprises a range of solutions derived from Industry 4.0 in order to offer more flexible and efficient plants. The Smart Paintshop is based on four pillars: Smart Design, Integrated IoT System, Smart Plant Management and Smart Energy Management.

Smart Design makes the system development process faster, with guaranteed quality. The integrated IoT System is composed of a series of ‘machine learning’ solutions, thanks to which the plant can automatically adapt to the various production needs in addition to performing a continuous data collection and analysis process (big data analysis). The Smart Plant Management systems allow for continuous communication between the plant and the operator. This offers added benefits in terms of preventative maintenance and a safer work





environment. Smart Energy Management is an energy management system which is able to precisely determine the amount of energy necessary for production, thus avoiding any wastage.

### Global presence

In 28 countries with a network comprising over 52 offices and seven manufacturing units, and an annual turnover of \$1.8 billion. They currently have a joint market presence of over 5000 employees, more than 1000 of whom are engineers and painting industry specialists.

The company serves the global automotive market and can count all the major automotive manufacturers among its clients. Because of its already existing global presence, its scope for expanding into new geographical markets is limited and future development will be mainly focused on organic growth. "We operate in a very niche sector," Mr Arabnia explained, "and we prefer to create strategic partnerships rather than carrying out actual acquisitions. Nevertheless, we are always keeping a close eye on the market to evaluate any potential acquisition opportunity. Furthermore, Geico Taikisha

invests a lot in training to improve the skills of the already existing staff or to offer job opportunities to young talented people." Valuing human resources and taking care of the well-being of its employees is also central to the company.

Suppliers are also very important to the company's success and the relationship it has established with them is based on a deep level of trust. "We consider our suppliers to be true business partners who – having knowledge of our needs – have become an integral part of our team, ensuring the high standards we demand at all times."

### The car of the future

"We believe the automotive market will witness some drastic changes and that the car will be transformed from a simple means of transport into a new means of communication. To follow suit, we will also have to change, following a broader path. We will no longer be simply limited to supplying painting systems. We will need to become true business partners, not only for our clients but also for end consumers." □

