



# Kids time fair

## A Look Inside Central and Eastern Europe's Largest Toy Fair

**Text: Lena Hedö, Lek & Babyrevyn, Reyne Rice contributing editor for multiple international publications and Daniele Caroli, editor in chief of Il Giornale dell'Infanzia.**

Kids Time 2017, was held in Kielce, Poland, from Feb. 23 to 25. The eighth annual international fair featured toys and products for babies and children, and recorded double-digit growth in key measurements, including more than 7,000 professional trade visitors and 474 exhibitors.

The event organizers filled a total of seven exhibit halls, covering 16,292 square meters and had a wait list of nearly 100 manufacturers. Next year, the show organizers plan to add an eighth temporary hall to accommodate more curated exhibitors.

### Why a Central and Eastern European Trade Show Matters

Export markets for international brands can reach into the Polish market and the 17 other countri-

es that exhibit at this fair, including Belgium, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK, and the U.S.

Buyers from more than 33 countries attended the fair, including buyers from Russia, China, and South Korea. Some exhibitors still sell exclusively to the Polish market, while many others have strategic goals to expand their exports into other markets, including the North American and Western European markets.

Poland's annual birth rate is approximately 400,000, making it a thriving market for children's products. The Polish government instituted a program to encourage families to have more children. They provide a monthly stipend of 500 zloty for the



*Katarzyna Wawer of Smily Play stated that all of the company's products offer good quality, play value, and parental guidelines for a reasonable price.*

second child in the family and provide additional funding for additional children. Wages in Poland were 4065 zloty/ month last year in average, so this stipend is a significant amount for Polish families.



Paulina Lalak-Mazurkiewics and Andrzej Dolny, Trefl.

The original intent was for families to spend that money on the children. In the policy's first year, the assumption is that families have spent the money on other, more basic, needs. Toy and babystores have not yet seen an increase in sales, but the toy trade is optimistic that in the future some of these funds will be used for buying toys and other products for kids.

### Kids Time Trade Show Happenings

The Kids Time trade show program included workshops, trend presentations, and more. Some highlights from this year included, Reyne Rice, global trend hunter and Ceo of ToyTrends, from New York, provided the keynote speech on trends across toys, games, and kids' technology and Dr. Maria Costa, director of children, education, and the leisure market, from the AIJU Institute in Valencia, Spain, presented the latest worldwide retailer trends.

### Speaking with Kids Time Exhibitors

Smily Play is a family-run manufacturer and distributor that has been in the market for more than 30 years. Stanislaw Wawer began the company as a toy manufacturer during the period when Poland was still run by Russia. Introductory products included baby pacifiers, card games, and basic role-play items, all manufactured in Poland. In the early 2000s, the company began producing its own branded items, under the umbrella brand name Smily Play, with a target age range of birth to 4 years. Smily Play is now also a distributor for

other manufacturers, such as Mattel and Hasbro.

As one of the largest distributors and manufacturers in Poland of toys for small children, Smily Play has chosen to concentrate its sales only on the specialty market, which is appreciated by its retailer base. It also exports to some European markets.

**Trefl is a privately** held company, and the third largest manufacturer in Poland, following Mattel and Hasbro. Founded in 1985, the company began with puzzle and game manufacturing in two different locations within Poland. Now, they sell their products in over 50 countries, and distribute key international brands, such as PlayMonster, Siku, and VTech in Poland. Trefl also has key relationships with major licensing partners such as Disney, Nickelodeon, Warner Bros., Mattel, and Hasbro.

– Having the production in Poland is our strength, especially for Europe, so we can quickly deliver in-season goods," stated Director, Andrzej Dolny, Trefl.

**Fun for Everyone** is a new product line that the company is especially proud of. The company spent two years developing the line, and the range includes 50 products that were created for all kids, but is especially helpful for children who have sight or hearing disabilities. The puzzle pieces include tactile clues, such as stars, horizontal lines, and other textures with raised surfaces that can be felt with the fingertips. TREFL worked very close-

ly with organizations focused on children with disabilities for child testing. The line will only be sold in Poland in 2017, but is expected to expand into international markets.

Board game sales in Poland grew 30 percent each year for the past three years, and is mainly attributed to family and social party games. For example, 2016 annual sales of Trefl's 5-Second Rule game sold more than 300,000 pieces in Poland to a population of 38 million people. The company has more than 400 puzzle designs, and is pleased



Whisbear new 2017 Holiday line features a soft sloth character.

with the continued growth in the established categories of games and puzzles.

**Whisbear is a newer Polish** manufacturer that has garnered multiple awards from the UK, Germany, and within Poland. Its distribution has expanded to 16 countries. The company's Whisbear product uses a patented sound technology and creative design patent for soft plush products.

The internal safe magnets and external long legs of this contemporary bear ensures that new parents can position and attach the product to the crib to serve as a playtime companion. The Whisbear patented cry sensor is one of the most popular features because it soothes baby to sleep. The new 2017 line extends the cry-sensor time feature to 40 minutes. It also adds an app that allows parents to turn on the soothing sounds remotely.



Giulia Eri of Okbaby and to the right Igor Waletko (Mini-Maxi).

### Nursery exhibitors

– While the Polish baby care products market is growing, we notice that parents are more and more looking for high quality articles and that price is no longer a big problem, says Igor Waletko, Key Account Manager of Mini-Maxi, Polish distributor of ABC Design, Concord, Be Cool, Okbaby, Shadez and Rastar.

– Consumers can spend more for quality products and the ‘made in Europe’ tag is privileged. Furthermore, there is support from the State in the form of a social program which assists parents with more than one child with a monthly aid up until 18 years

of age. Demand focuses on good design and practicality, benefitting articles that are smart and clever, transformable, multifunctional.

**According to Gianluca Migliorisi**, Country Manager of Artsana Poland (Chicco brand), “the Polish market is ever more dynamic and active, particularly in specialized product categories such as car seats: competition is high and growth is constant. Many local manufacturers have once more concentrated upon the domestic market due to the crisis in Russia, which however has been felt less in the last twelve months. The Polish consumers’ education is getting deeper and deeper, thanks to the information they receive from the specialist media. However, price remains an important consideration, together with the after sales service which must be taken care of serio-



Gianluca Migliorisi

usly by manufacturers, distributors and retailers”.

**Canpol, with its brands Lovi** (premium range) and Canpol Babies (mainstream range), is the leading Polish company for feeding, soothing, hygiene baby care articles: its main manufacturing site lies 20 km from Warsaw and its lines are exported to 50 countries. Łukasz Różycki, Canpol’s Export Manager for Southern Europe and Middle East, observes that “at the start Kids’Time was intended for the Polish marketplace but now it has become really international. This year we have been even visited at our booth by people from South Korea. The event will surely go on growing. All our products are certified for the different countries we reach, where we are represented by distributors (except in Slovakia, where we have our own company) that we support with our know-how and marketing material. Thanks to our specific solutions we are doing well against strong competitors”.

Nyhet!

# EN BABY ÄR FÖDD!

SVERIGES STÖRSTA BUTIKSKEDJA HAR FÅTT TILLÖKNING

Den 15 september 2016 fick Sveriges största leksaksbutikskedja Lekia tillökning då Babya kom till världen.

Babya växer snabbt och är nu Sveriges största babykedja.  
Vår målsättning är att erbjuda det mesta av det bästa inom baby genom noga utvalda samarbeten.  
Vi värdesätter den fysiska butiken med lönsamhet som fokus.

Välkommen

VILL DU VARA MED?

Skicka ett mail till: [thomas@babya.se](mailto:thomas@babya.se)  
För mer information: [www.babya.se](http://www.babya.se)