

Robotics on record course

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The International Federation of Robotics (IFR) announces excellent sales figures for the robot market in 2014

“The sales figures for the robotics industry are going through the roof.” This was the resoundingly positive forecast announced by IFR Robot Supplier Committee Chairman, Dr. Andreas Bauer, at a robotics conference in Shanghai in July 2015. The preliminary figures have now been confirmed: The International Federation of Robotics (IFR) presented in Frankfurt the market figures of 2015. Title of the study: “World Robotic Survey: How Industrial and Service Robots are conquering the World”.

Over 1.5 million industrial robots are in use worldwide

IFR’s yearly growth forecast for the coming years is also for double-digit growth. According to the global umbrella organization for robotics, about 900,000 more industrial robots will be installed from 2015 to 2017.

The IFR – the global umbrella organization for robotics – predicts uninterrupted growth in many sales sectors, as it turned out during the press conference in Frankfurt. Expanded capacities, new model series and the modernization of existing automation systems are just some of the factors behind the increasing number of robots in the automotive industry – particularly in Asian markets (with growth here driven above all by China) and North America. Besides the automotive manufacturers as “traditional” buyers of robots, a further industry is booming, however, when it comes to automation with robots: the electronics market.

High potential in the electronics market

KUKA Roboter GmbH also sees high potential here, as CEO Stefan Lampa explains:

“The electronics industry finds itself confronting a growing number of new products, ever more rapid developments and short product life cycles. Flexibility is thus becoming paramount in the industry. Beyond this, mass production for a broad range of consumers is significantly increasing demand for cost-effective production. At the same time, there is a need to keep the costs for electronics products as low as possible. And this is precisely where robots come into play. As an important motor of innovation and growth, the electronics industry depends on modern, robot-based automation solutions.”

Robotics is growing primarily in Asia

As in the previous year, robotics is growing primarily in Asia. Here, the highest sales volume of all time has been recorded: 139,344 units sold. In China alone, more than 57,000 robots were sold. For the sake of comparison, 60,000 were sold worldwide in 2008. This trend will continue. Robot density in China is still well below the global average. The potential for robot-based automation remains enormous.

“These current IFR market figures confirm our commitment in China,” notes Lampa with delight. “Following the opening of our plant in Shanghai last year, we will be able to meet the needs of this booming market through fast and customer-specific solutions.”

Besides classic applications, IFR predicts that new trend topics will primarily be driving robotics forward: human-robot collaboration (HRC), mobile robot systems, two-arm robots, robots in the low payload range and also systems that are very easy to operate and install.

Through innovative products, KUKA has staked out a pioneering role: since unveiling the LBR iiwa lightweight robot in 2013 at Hannover Messe, the Augsburg-based robot manufacturer has shown itself to be an ideal partner for HRC. The robot is sensitive, compliant, precise and flexible, and features industrial-grade mechanical equipment and drive technology. It makes it possible to automate delicate and complex assembly tasks in which the use of robots was previously inconceivable.

And the LBR iiwa provides mobility as well. With the KMR iiwa (KMR standing for “KUKA Mobile Robotics”), KUKA is combining the strengths of the sensitive lightweight robot LBR iiwa with a mobile and autonomous platform, thereby offering a solution for all conceivable scenarios. The robot thus becomes a location-independent, highly flexible production assistant with an unrestricted workspace – an ideal basis for meeting the requirements of Industry 4.0.