

Press release

Contact

Phone Gudrun Litzenberger
Fax +49 69 66 03-1502
E-Mail +49 69 66 03-2502
Date gl@worldrobotics.org
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The robotics industry is getting back on track! Sales slump in 2009 - Strong recovery in 2010 – Further growth expected in 2011 and 2012

Munich, 09 June 2010 - The IFR Statistics Department presented the preliminary results of the annual statistics on Industrial Robots on Wednesday, 9 June 2010, in Munich at the AUTOMATICA. In 2009, with about 62,100 industrial robots shipped, the number of units sold worldwide slumped dramatically by about 45% compared to 2008, one of the most successful years. But in the first quarter 2010 the sales skyrocketed worldwide by more than 50% compared to the first quarter 2009.

“This is the start of a recovery which may result in annual worldwide sales of almost 100,000 industrial robots by 2013, maybe reaching the level of 2008 even earlier, one of the most successful years of the robotics industry.” commented Åke Lindqvist, IFR President.

2009 – A troublesome year

The worldwide financial and economic crisis impacted the robotics industry heavily in 2009. In all regions the robot sales slumped in a range between 41% and 48% compared to 2008.

Especially the three largest robot markets were dramatically down. Japan, was faced with a decrease of 57% compared to 2008. About 14,000 industrial robots were sold, less than half of the average number of units sold yearly between 2005 and 2008 (about 37,000 units). The other big robot markets, Germany and North America fell by 44% and 48%, respectively.

These three countries represented 50% of the annual worldwide robot sales in 2009. Even the growing robot markets were down. China, the fastest growing market up to 2008, bought 31% less robots in 2009 compared to 2008. Also, the robot shipments to ASEAN countries, India, the Central and Eastern European countries and Brazil were down.

The trend towards automation was interrupted worldwide. The car manufacturers consolidated their production capacities globally and restructured their business. This affected the automotive parts suppliers heavily. The rubber and plastics industry, the electrical/electronics industry as well as the metal and machinery industry drastically reduced their investments in robotics. The robot sales to these main customers slumped by more than 50%. Also industries which should hardly be affected by the crisis, invested only cautiously. The food and beverage industry ordered 12% fewer industrial robots; the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industry had a decrease of 6%.

Still a high potential for industrial robots in many industries and countries

The IFR conducted a study on the worldwide automation potential requested by the Messe Munich. The number of robots in operation per 10,000 employees in various industry sectors and countries were evaluated (robot density). The results show a tremendous potential for industrial robots especially in growing industries, such as the pharmaceuticals and cosmetics industry, medical devices industry and the food and beverage industry. But also in the metal industry and the solar industry the robot applications are still far away from that of the automotive industry.

But there are more reasons for a bright future of robotics: Huge consumer markets are opening up in China, India, Brazil and Russia. The competition of the automotive companies results in new investments in production facilities in these markets. Other industries are following as well. The degree of automation in North America is comparatively low with a need to catch up by investments in robotics. Companies in high-wage and in low-wage countries have to reduce costs and guarantee high quality to remain competitive on the world market. The Middle Eastern countries are becoming new markets for automation.

The robotics industry meets the challenges

The challenges of the manufacturing industry will again boost automation in all industries. The robotics industry is back on track and is ready to accept the challenge to increase the use of industrial robots. Åke Lindqvist said: "The task from the beginning has been and still continues to be the same: In order to expand industrial robotics automation into every segment, the robotics industry as a whole, must help solve the limitation in robotics solution integration capacity around the world."

One of the most important challenges is the trend to a more sustainable and eco-friendly production and more eco-friendly products. Light weight robots save energy. Innovative robot control systems provide energy-efficiency. Robots, working in dangerous and dirty environment, can keep the workers safe and healthy. Robots optimize the production of solar cells and the painting of rotor blades for wind powered energy generation units.

Consumer products are increasingly individualized with quick times to market, meaning more versions or variants of the goods available for the consumers. This requires a flexible automation. Robots, once programmed for several processes can easily switch from process to process.

Easier handling and programming facilitate robot applications. Robot-Vision optimizes quality control. Small and fast robots are operating in confined spaces within high value-manufacturing areas. Improved sensor technology allows applications to work outside of a security fence. These achievements will enable small and medium sized companies or even in small trade companies, i.e. carpenter's shops , to use robots.

Åke Lindqvist summarized: "I am convinced that manufacturing companies must automate and use robotics to stay competitive – or die."

Do you still have questions? **Gudrun Litzenberger, IFR Statistical Department, Telephone +49 69 66 03-1502 is ready to answer.**

The **International Federation of Robotics** was established in 1987 in connection with the 17th International Symposium on Robotics, as a professional non-profit organisation, by robotics organisations from over 15 countries. Since 1970 an International Symposium on Robotics is organised every year on a different continent, in a different country and another city. The Symposium is systematically organised in conjunction with an International Robot Exhibition.

The purpose of the International Federation of Robotics is to promote research, development, use and international co-operation in the entire field of robotics to act as a focal point for organisations and governmental representatives in activities related to robotics.

The IFR is hosted by VDMA Robotics and Automation.

The **IFR Statistical Department**, which is hosted by the VDMA Robotics + Automation association publishes two studies World Robotics every year. In 2010:

1. World Robotics 2010 Industrial Robots:

This unique publication presents comprehensive global statistics on industrial robots in uniform tables allowing consistent country comparisons. It contains detailed statistical data for some 40 countries, broken down by application areas, industrial branches, types of robots and by other technical and economic variables. Data on production, exports and imports are presented for a selection of countries. Trends in robot densities, i.e. number of robots per 10,000 persons employed in relevant sectors, are also featured.

2. World Robotics 2010 Service Robots:

This unique publication presents comprehensive global statistics on service robots, market analysis, case studies and international research strategies of service robots. The study is evaluated in cooperation with our partner the Fraunhofer IPA, Stuttgart, Germany.

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