

Survey: Germany needs to catch up with automation

Automation and robotics are key technologies for greater competitiveness, quality and sustainability in industrial production. In order to optimally tap the productivity potential of these technologies, the internal flow of materials plays a central role. This applies not only to the supply of materials to assembly lines or robots, but also to the most seamless connection of storage and picking areas with incoming and outgoing goods. Most large companies in Germany have recognized this challenge. But what is the actual situation with automation in medium-sized companies?

Interroll's survey "Production Logistics in Medium-sized Companies" identifies a clear need to catch up in this area: The average degree of automation of internal material handling at the companies surveyed is only 53 percent. Not even one in five companies (19 percent) achieves a level of automation of over 75 percent for these processes. Nearly one in 10 companies (9 percent) has been very reluctant to invest in these processes and has an automation level of just under 25 percent.

And those who believe that those responsible in medium-sized companies are not open-minded about future trends are mistaken: 67 percent consider predictive maintenance and professional service to be the most important criterion for ensuring smooth production processes, even before applications with a long service life (53 percent) and modularized products (50 percent).

In the survey commissioned by Interroll and conducted by the agency Faktenkontor (Hamburg), a total of 200 production companies in Germany were surveyed by telephone in 2019.. The focus was on companies with 50 to 500 employees and a turnover of up to 500 million euros

Interestingly, the survey also shows competitive potentials in productivity in the susceptibility of warehouse processes to failures, which the respondents reported. For example, the number of companies with a degree of automation of less than 50 percent doubles to 48 percent compared to 24 percent of companies with a higher degree of automation. But even those who automate are naturally not completely safe from disruption. Here, software malfunctions (40 percent) and the incorrect operation of complex systems (32 percent) are among the most frequent causes of impairment.

Incidentally, easy operability of conveyor modules also plays an important role for the survey participants in pallet handling. Sixty-one percent of the production planners even consider this feature to be the most important factor in these processes. Across all those surveyed, the durability and robustness of pallet conveyor technology (58 percent) accounts for the decisive

advantage of a solution.

With the results of this survey in mind, Interroll is actively working on a new solution - the Smart Pallet Mover, or SPM - to better organize and automate the “last mile” in manufacturing areas.

This new interface will improve the connection between the different phases of the material flow, that is, the movement, organization, input and output of pallets. The SPM can be deployed not only in proximity of manufacturing machines but also between different production cells within the same manufacturing process.

Information about the Smart Pallet Mover (SPM)

