

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **New colleague of steel performs exceptionally – 1,000,000th bin picked up**

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27.08.2021

*Bad Mergentheim/Main-Tauber-Kreis.* In the age of digitalisation, robots are more involved in the processes of production, logistics and trade. Through new technology such as Machine Learning, the capabilities of robots are expanding and their possible applications are becoming more diverse. Würth Industrie Service GmbH & Co. KG has also discovered this potential! Since 2016, the company has been already deploying a total of eight robots in the most modern logistics centre for industrial supply in Europe at Bad Mergentheim. In the beginning of August 2021, a milestone was beaten and the millionth bin was picked up by “robotic hand”.

Logistics has a lot more to offer than just transporting goods from A to B. It is one of the largest economic sector after automotive industry and trade in Germany, and therefore, is one of Germany’s core competencies: a key economic factor, a job creator and pioneer - particularly, a pioneer in the field of digitalisation for deploying artificial intelligence and robotics.

In order to automate the processes and ease the everyday working life of the employees, Würth Industrie Service has also deployed robots. The company had already started the first trials in 2009. At that time, one of the biggest challenges were customised solutions, high requirements of flexibility for individual process steps as well as complexity within the logistics centre. In 2017, finally the time arrived. Since then, eight robots started operating fully on different stations supporting the logistics colleagues in physically demanding activities or standardised routine tasks. Kevin, Hanna, Mario, Knecht Rupprecht, Bob & Co. assist in picking up and palletising – the employees came up with these names for their new colleagues of steel and voted during an idea contest. It is already clear here that the employees do not just consider simple machines in the robots as a result of artificial intelligence, but conceive them as profitable “colleagues of steel”. At the picking stations, the robots remove the desired order quantities from the storage location and transfer them into a transport unit. They can also pick up and label the entire bin from a pallet and transfer it into a transport tray. Individual bins can thus contain up to a maximum weight of 25 kilograms, which makes it clear how they can relieve the burden on people. Up to 2,000 items and 15 tonnes’ weight can be achieved in a single robot workday. In total, two pick-up robots will be able to now provide one million bins independently till August 2021. In palletising, on

the other hand, the robot does nothing more than place the ready-to-ship bins from the conveyor onto a pallet, which then makes a journey from the logistics centre to the customer. Through bins standardised as per the VDA norm, this process can be learned easily and quickly undertaken by robots. The intelligent machines manage up to 5,000 small load carriers (bins) and 35 tonnes per day. On one hand, it increases the productivity and actual output, and on the other hand, it results in an optimised material flow and improved lead times in logistics. By end of the year, three more robots will be implemented in logistics centre.

The advantages are also quite evident in the support and physical relief provided to the employees. The safety and health of our colleagues is of highest priority, as they guarantee long-term satisfaction and employee loyalty – a valuable aspect particularly in times of demographic change and shortage of specialists relating thereto. Therefore, those who think that advancing automation will reduce employment, are mistaken. On the contrary, every individual colleague is asked to move with and design this change. More than 400 employees are currently working in the logistics department of Würth Industrie Service, and robotics is particularly offering enormous potential for additional tasks and jobs. Machine and man will continue to grow together, which means that projects are waiting especially in equipment support in operating technology and software programming in IT. Not only there, but also at each individual workstation in the warehouse, there are supporting tasks handled together with the robots - from active troubleshooting, control of individual processes through robot and in upstream process steps to coordination with IT and operating technology. No specific prior knowledge or even specific training or further education in the field of automation or robotics is required in advance for the job in logistics. The handling and knowledge can be learned onsite during operation. In addition to an intensive training, Würth Industrie Service offers comprehensive training concept and individual support. Young individuals can start a qualified training as electronics engineer (m/f/d) for operating technology or as expert (m/f/d) for warehouse logistics as well as dual education in the fields of economics and IT and gain practical experience in directly working together with robots.

Artificial intelligence is gaining ground and has changed our working environment. Robots are taking over more and more processes in industry, trade and logistics, and working with people hand-in-hand. In spite of

progressive digitalisation and automation, people will still be a valuable asset, mind and initiator of the company. They are the most important link and will remain focus of all the activities. It is important to understand that Industry 4.0 does not aim to replace people. "We are rather pursuing the approach of optimising the value-added chain, relieving the physical burden on people and increasing the process reliability for our customers by connecting people, system and robotics. Combining the unsurpassed cognitive abilities of man with the technical potential of robotics guarantees success.", states Maximilian Hammel, Head of Commissioning, Logistics department.

### Photo material:

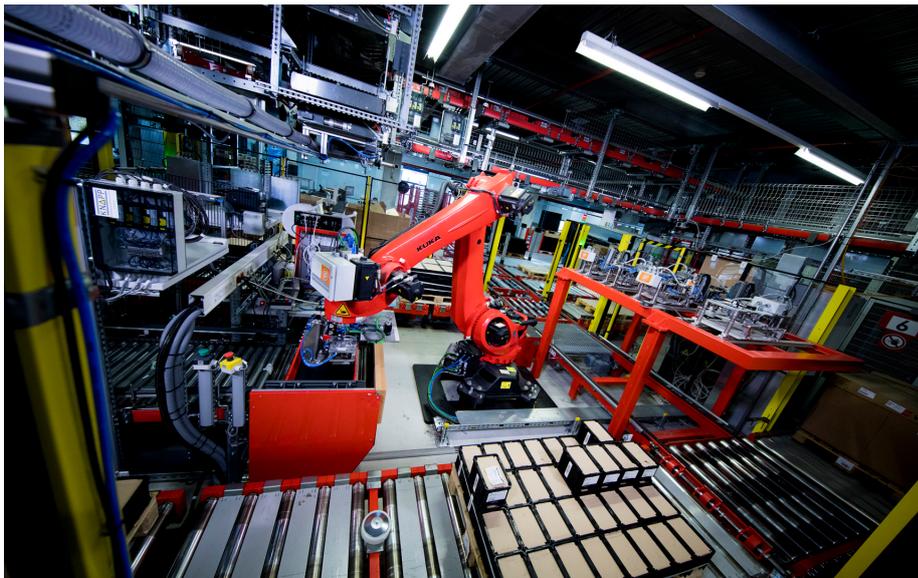


Photo 1: Pick up robots.jpeg

Caption 1: New colleague of steel performs exceptionally - 1,000,000th bin picked up

Photo source: Archives of Würth Industrie Service GmbH & Co. KG

#### Brief profile of Würth Industrie Service GmbH & Co. KG

Within the Würth Group, Würth Industrie Service GmbH & Co. KG is responsible for the supply of the industrial sector. Since its foundation in 1999, Würth Industrie Service is located at the Industriepark Würth in Bad Mergentheim, Germany with over 1.700 employees.

As a complete C-Parts provider, the company offers its customers a specialised product range of over 1,100,000 items: from screws, connection and fastening technology, tools to chemical-technical products and occupational safety. In addition to the extensive standard range, the strength of the company lies in its customer-specific, logistical and dispositive supply and service concepts as well as in special parts. Under the service brand "CPS® - C-Product Service", the company offers modular solutions, which are customised as per customer-specific requirements. Thereby, the consumption-based and demand-based systems significantly rationalise the processes for purchase, logistics and quality assurance and enable the procurement of small parts in a cost-optimised manner. Logistic and dispositive services such as shelving systems with scanners or a just-in-time supply using Kanban bin systems contribute significantly to increasing the productivity.