

Industry 4.0 in Austria Gathers Momentum despite Corona Crisis

Current study by TU Wien in cooperation with FHWien der WKW presents a positive picture of the domestic manufacturing sector and highlights its digital transformation.

Vienna, October 21, 2021 – Austria's industrial companies are looking to the future with positive expectations and are driving forward the digital transformation. This is the conclusion of the industry panel "Made in Austria: Future of Production in Austria", for which more than 100 managers of manufacturing companies are surveyed annually. According to the survey presented for 2021, 85% assess the business situation of their company as very positive or positive. Companies have utilized the corona crisis to improve their competitiveness through digital transformation, taking further steps towards Industry 4.0 – a digitalized industry.

Digital assistance systems are on the rise, the use of algorithms remains constant

The results of the study show that digital assistance systems have finally arrived in Austria's production companies. Almost 90 percent of companies use such solutions. "In addition to mobile applications and augmented or virtual reality systems, companies are increasingly using digital assistance systems for learning close to the workplace. This is certainly also due to the trend towards digital learning triggered by COVID-19," confirms Walter Mayrhofer, study co-author and Head of Research at FHWien der WKW.

The use of algorithms and machine learning in production has remained almost constant in recent years – despite the media presence of these topics. Algorithms and machine learning are preferably used in the planning and control of production as well as in quality management.

Transparent supply chains as a flexible solution for shortages in deliveries

Long delivery times due to global supply bottlenecks currently require a high degree of flexibility from Austrian companies. In response to these conditions, which have been tightened by COVID-19, companies are increasingly relying on various smaller and, more frequently, regional suppliers. At the same time, transparency in the supply chain increased through digital networks.

Robots as co-workers of a highly skilled workforce

According to the study, the degree of automation is increasing in the use of robotic systems in companies. This is mainly due to the use of collaborative robots – so-called cobots. In addition to improved working conditions and technology testing, the increase in economic efficiency is named as one of the main motives for the use of robots. Nevertheless, human labour has a special significance for domestic production companies, since a high degree of automation requires highly qualified employees.

About the Industry Panel "Made in Austria: Future of Production in Austria 2021"

From January 13 to June 22, 2021, more than 100 leaders of Austrian industrial companies were surveyed for the third time on the situation of their own company, the market, competitiveness and the application of robotics and assistance systems.

The aim of the survey, initiated by Univ. Prof. Dr. Ing. Sebastian Schlund (TU Wien) and FH-Prof. Dr. Walter Mayrhofer, MBA (FHWien der WKW), is to provide a regular and methodical presentation of

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the status quo and future expectations of domestic industry. The topics of automation, digitalization and assistance systems play a central role. More than 60% of the company employees participating in the panel work directly in production or in production-related areas. The average number of employees before the COVID 19 pandemic was 15,522 worldwide and 1,452 in Austria. The share of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the 2021 survey was 18%.

“Made in Austria 2021: Future of Production in Austria” is a study by the Institute of Management Sciences at TU Wien in cooperation with the Institute for Digital Transformation and Strategy (IDS) at FHWien der WKW, Fraunhofer Austria and EIT Manufacturing CLC East.

About the Institute for Digital Transformation and Strategy (IDS)

Founded in 2021, the Institute for Digital Transformation and Strategy (IDS) at FHWien der WKW focuses its research activities on the analysis and solution of complex problems in the organization of digital transformation processes. As part of the Department for Digital Economy, it places practice-oriented research questions in the following areas at the center of its work:

- Digital Transformation
- Organization Design
- Strategy & Competitiveness
- Corporate Governance

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Austria's industrial companies have used the corona crisis to improve their competitiveness through digital transformation. This is shown by the results of the study “Made in Austria: Production Work in Austria 2021”.

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“Companies are increasingly using digital assistance systems for workplace-based learning,” explains Walter Mayrhofer, study co-author and Head of Research at FHWien der WKW.

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