

Open Industry 4.0 Alliance - Spotlight: Initiatives for intralogistics in view of the coronavirus crisis

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The demands placed on intralogistics are becoming ever more demanding as a result of crises such as the current COVID-19 pandemic and the trend towards individualisation right down to batch size 1, as opposed to survey findings from last year on production logistics among German SMEs by Swiss material flow specialist Interroll. The average degree of automation of internal material handling is only 53 per cent among the companies that were surveyed. At the lower end of the scale, just under 10 per cent of companies with a degree of automation of less than 25 per cent did not invest last year and are now potentially at risk in view of the corona crisis.

Manual processes still often dominate in intralogistics. In German plants, order picking usually still works with printed pick lists, and forklift drivers retrieve goods from the warehouse on demand [such as a shout out]. The Open Industry 4.0 Alliance identifies three initiatives in which rapid progress can be made in intralogistics:

- In automated small parts warehouses, shuttles or robots autonomously take over the operation of the storage locations and bring the [bins / containers] to the respective stations for picking.
- In route optimisation with driverless transport systems, following the trend towards systems that operate completely autonomously and continuously to improve their routes.
- Tracking and tracing with RFID brings decisive advantages in the movement of raw materials, semi-finished goods and end products. Since RFID chips are writable, the part can store product history. The integration of the readers into a Warehouse Management System (WMS) or an Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) ultimately results in a seamlessly traceable and automatic recording of material movements.

Daniela Oppmann, Head of Business Development Logistics at SALT Solutions AG, explains:

"In order for processes in intralogistics to be efficient and flexible, it is necessary to ensure that systems, equipment and people work and communicate efficiently with each other. In the Intralogistics working group of the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance, we are working on how to further develop existing standards for this purpose, so that simple harmonization between all these parties is possible".

"This also opens up new potential and business models in intralogistics and thus makes a significant contribution to faster growth. Companies gain a significantly higher degree of investment security, for example by making complex interfaces easier to handle and supporting a high degree of flexibility for logistics, among other things. For customers such as Wuerth, for example, we have been providing a high degree of automation in the warehouse for many years, such as integrating transport control systems, fully automated systems and by the supportive use of RFID technology. Many years of practical experience now help us when planning projects with other members of the alliance".

About the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance

The Open Industry 4.0 Alliance acts as a partnership of leading European industrial companies that pragmatically participate in the implementation of cross-vendor industry 4.0 solutions and services for manufacturing facilities and automated warehouses. The alliance was launched in April 2019. The association is headquartered in Reinach, Switzerland.

Further information can be found at <https://www.openindustry4.com/>

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