

Continued growth with motion plastics: igus increases sales by 8.5 per cent

At Hannover Messe, the motion plastics specialist will be presenting 120 new plastic products that improve technical performance and reduce overall costs

Configurable online, on the go and on a tablet, as a durable special part, 3D printed or equipped with smart intelligence – motion plastics are increasingly becoming high-tech components. At this year's Hannover Messe, igus will be demonstrating this development with 120 new products – from the intelligent plain bearing to the world's first online platform that brings suppliers and users of cost-effective robotics together.

With its "motion plastics" core technology, igus ventures into new areas of industry every year: 3D printing for wear-resistant parts with a service life that can be calculated online, intelligent "smart plastics", energy chains with a travel of 1,000 metres or lubrication-free polymer ball bearings with a 10 times longer operating time. And the fact that high-performance plastics for motion continue to be in great demand all over the world shows just how successful igus is. In 2018, igus was able to increase its sales by 8.5 per cent to 748 million euros. Out of the total sales, 53 per cent was achieved in Europe, 31 per cent in Asia and 16 per cent in America and Africa. The number of employees rose to 4,150.

Moving into new areas with a start-up mentality

igus is growing organically and continually opening up new markets in areas such as the stage machinery and solar sectors. At the company's main site in Cologne Porz-Lind, there is an upbeat get-up-and-go atmosphere. "Due to flexible working methods and open structures, we are able to implement new motion plastics ideas in sprint teams very quickly", says Frank Blase, CEO of igus GmbH. "We continually test our products and remake them, improving them until the user gets exactly the right product that enables him to move forward." This dynamic approach has resulted in 120 new products, which igus will be presenting at Hannover Messe this year. At the fair, it will be apparent

that plastic machine elements became high-tech components quite some time ago. igus is exploiting the opportunities of digitisation and will be presenting igus plain bearings, which can be equipped with smart intelligence. With the expanded communication module icom.plus, the customer can now decide in which form he would like to incorporate the acquired data from the sensors. From an offline version for restrictive environments to the linkage of values to the igus server for automatic spare parts ordering, the user is free to integrate and read his data.

Robotics platform and 3D printing open up new possibilities for users

High-performance polymers from igus are also expanding the possibilities for Low Cost Automation. The reason is that enormous cost savings are possible if robots are built with gearboxes and many other parts made of plastic. Robots from 3,000 euros are already a reality. In conjunction with 16 industrial partners, igus will be presenting the online platform rbt.com as a world premiere that brings suppliers and users together on a platform for lean robotics. The customer can completely configure industrial and service robots there. The area of additive manufacturing also grew further last year. The 3D printing capacities were tripled due to new SLS printers and the company developed its own high-temperature printer for the heat-resistant tribo-filament iglidur J350. For frequently bought machine elements such as gears and rollers, igus now offers special online configurators and printed solutions with excellent wear behaviour. Unique worldwide: the service life of these 3D-printed components can be calculated online.

Test laboratory as a driver of growth

The data from the test laboratory are the basis for these calculations. Last year alone, more than 264 new plastic components were developed and tested in the test laboratory. In addition, more than 11,300 tests were carried out in the plain bearing area on over 50 different test stands. In the laboratory for energy chains and cables, over 4,100 tests were performed in 2018, involving more than 10 billion e-chain cycles. At the same time, the test laboratory is also a "think tank" that uses tribo-polymers to develop special solutions for the most varied of industrial sectors and practical applications. One result is the iglidur Q2E plain bearing, which can safely and reliably support up to 7 metric tons in building machinery and agricultural machines

without any lubrication at all. The E4Q e-chain is suitable for long travel applications. With its slimline pebble-shaped design, it weighs very little and is easy to assemble without tools thanks to QuickLock crossbars. At the moment, a new testing facility is being set up outdoors for corresponding long-travel tests. The size of the test laboratory will therefore increase to over 3,800 square metres. In many other parts of the world as well, there are moves towards a further expansion of capacities with the aim of being able to supply customers locally without any delays. For example, the size of the USA branch has been increased by a further 5,000 square metres to around 19,000 square metres for offices and production. In China, a new building offering 22,000 square metres of space is currently being built, the project will be completed in August. In addition to expanded facilities in Brazil, India, Poland and Thailand, a piece of land has been purchased for the new building of the local branch located in Korea. The building, which will be 9,500 square metres in size, will be completed by the end of 2019. But Frank Blase is sure of one thing: worldwide growth is only possible if the customer continues to be the focus of all the company's activities. "The question that my father, the founder of the company, put to the first customer in 1964 has lost none of its relevance for today", says Blase. "He asked: 'What is your most difficult injection-moulded part?' Today, we ask a slightly different question: 'How can we help you to lower your costs and improve the technical performance of your equipment, doing so easily, quietly and without lubrication, and offering a long service life at the same time?' With motion plastics, we are continually finding new answers."

Caption:



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Online simulation, intelligent cables and plain bearings, as well as, very recently, a platform for low-cost robots – igus machine elements made of plastics become high-tech components. (Source: igus GmbH)

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ABOUT IGUS:

igus GmbH is a globally leading manufacturer of energy chain systems and polymer plain bearings. The Cologne-based family business has offices in 35 countries and employs around 4,150 people around the world. In 2018, igus generated a turnover of 748 million euros with motion plastics, plastic components for moving applications. igus operates the largest test laboratories and factories in its sector to offer customers quick turnaround times on innovative products and solutions tailored to their needs.

The terms "igus", "Apro", "chainflex", "CFRIP", "conprotect", "CTD", "drylin", "dry-tech", "dryspin", "easy chain", "e-chain", "e-chain-systems", "e-ketten", "e-kettensysteme", "e-skin", "flizz", "igear", "iglidur", "igubal", "kineKIT", "manus", "motion plastics", "pikchain", "plastics for longer life", "readychain", "readycable", "ReBeL", "speedigus", "triflex", "roboLink", and "xiros" are protected by trademark laws in the Federal Republic of Germany and internationally, where applicable.