

Press release

Automation, digital and software solutions, robotics and mechatronics among the trending sectors at SPS Italia 2019

On 28-30 May, SPS Italia, the trade fair for smart, digital, flexible manufacturing, which has by now become a reference point for the Italian manufacturing sector, is holding its ninth annual event.

The SPS Italia trade fair for smart, digital, flexible manufacturing is organized by Messe Frankfurt Italia. The annual appointment, which has become the landmark event for the Italian manufacturing sector, affords business leaders an opportunity to discuss the major challenges of their industry going forward.

“This year sees a further expansion of the fair. All told, we have six pavilions and more than 800 exhibitors. Over the years, the event has tripled in size to create the perfect conditions for the cross-fertilization of skills and experiences in the field of innovation,” explained Donald Wich, CEO of Messe Frankfurt Italia.

“Pavilions 3, 5 and 6 will exhibit all that is best in the world of automation technologies and software solutions for the digitization of production plants, along with innovative products and applications. Pavilions 4, 7 and 4.1, on the other hand, form part of ‘District 4.0’, a section of the trade fair that is dedicated to the digital transformation of manufacturing and showcases projects for the upgrading of manufacturing practices through the deployment of new technologies and the digitization of processes,” declared Francesca Selva, Vice President of Marketing & Events for Messe Frankfurt Italia.

What is District 4.0?

A fair inside the fair, District 4.0 is a pathway that branches into the following thematic areas: Advanced Automation, Digital & Software, the Competence Academy, and Robotics & Mechatronics. Each exhibition area includes working demos of scalable mechatronic solutions that integrate the different components of information and operational technologies (IT and OT), in reflection of the fact that the task of industrial transformation and modernization now demands greater knowledge-sharing and the development of a broader skillset than in the past.

The defining characteristic of the demos and solutions is that they are based on actual case histories. Rather than focusing on the specifics of a single product, however, the demos reveal the potential of the underlying technology and thus highlight the competences and skills that

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companies need if they want to make use of the most innovative applications.

Robotics and digitization: A special guest at SPS Italia

The forthcoming fair includes an entire pavilion dedicated to robotics, where the leading players in the sector have set up stands and will be giving live and compelling demonstrations of how robotics can be applied to the manufacturing process. It is only appropriate that Robotics, the combination of robot engineering with factory automation, should feature at SPS Italia, the venue for the earlier successful union between automation and IT. The presentational press conference of SPS Italia of last December offered an enticing preview of this field when it introduced attendees to “TeoTronico”, a robot-pianist who went head-to-head against a human rival in a competition whose real purpose was to invite the audience to reflect on how the ever-closer working relationship between humans and robots is evolving.

The main players of the sector will be staging live demos in Pavilion 4.1. Their representatives at the Fair will also be participating in a research project organized by Politecnico di Milano [the Polytechnic University of Milan] under the aegis of Prof. Giambattista Gruosso of the Electronics Information and Bioengineering Department. The research project will explore the current state of the market, with particular regard to vertical integration, and examine the challenges and opportunities that await industry in the future. For 2019, the focus will be on packaging technologies for the Pharma and Beauty segments. The research project aims to collect qualitative data from interviews with key companies about the importance of Robotics to their operations, and will seek to find out what the companies themselves are looking for from the sector and how they see their future prospects. The findings of the research will be published next November in Milan.

Complementing its focus on Robotics, SPS Italia returns to the theme of the digital transformation of manufacturing and the increasing convergence between IT and OT. Industry is continuing down a path that leads towards the digitization of factory processes and their ever-deeper integration with robotics. Any company that aspires to operational efficiency, cost containment and, generally, enhanced competitiveness and growth must necessarily embrace digital transformation. This is why SPS Italia is offering trade fair visitors the opportunity to meet and compare notes with major players in the digital world and with suppliers of industrial software who have accrued knowledge based on their real-life experience of installing advanced systems. The way forward for factories committed to modernizing their production processes is through the digitization of manufacturing, which is thematically so central to SPS Italia that it is practically part of the DNA of the trade fair.

4.0 training and skills

Technological evolution is advantageous only if human capital evolves in parallel with it. This is why the 2019 edition of SPS Italia, along with all the accessory and preparatory events leading up to the fair organized with ANIE Automazione [the association of electrical and electronic manufacturing industries] and other major industrial associations, has given pride of place to the theme of training and skills. The SPS Italia

roadshow recently visited the town of Cernobbio where the meetings and discussions centred on the textiles and clothing industry, followed by Milan for talks around the theme of Pharma 4.0, and will shortly be travelling to Bologna (20 March) for a round-table discussion on packaging machines and, finally, on to Turin (10 April) to discuss the automotive and aerospace sectors. All the foregoing meetings reserved ample space, including an entire afternoon session, for students of local and national technical institutes.

The forthcoming SPS Italia trade fair in Parma, on the other hand, goes a step further and will include a Competence Academy that has been developed with input from universities, research centres, institutions, digital innovation hubs and competence centres.

The many opportunities to participate in active training courses over the three days of the fair include an initiative organized in collaboration with the Cariplo Foundation involving the 76 technical institutes taking part in the "SI Project" which boast some of the best state-of-the-art laboratories in the country thanks also to the sponsorship they have received from major companies operating in the automation sector. SPS Italia will serve as a training platform for the young people from these technical institutes of higher education, who will receive preparatory training ahead of a guided tour of the fair.

To add depth and substance to the training and extend it to the teachers as well as the students, a number of leading industrial associations such as Aidam [mechatronics] and ANIE Automation, have asked some of their members to contribute to the trade fair's educational mission fair by putting on demos of industrial applications, suggesting thematic pathways to guide participants through the intricacies of the sector, and organizing initiatives and training sessions in the field of mechatronics and intelligent components. Organized in collaboration with Didacta and sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education and Universities (MIUR), the educational and training programme that begins at the SPS Italia fair will conclude in October.

Science conferences at the fair

SPS Italia is able to call on the expertise of a Scientific Committee whose members are drawn from universities and industry, and include managers of automated production lines, end-users and major Italian industrial machinery and equipment manufacturers. The Scientific Committee convenes at regular intervals to organize and plan the science conferences of the fair whose participants receive training/educational credits.

The upcoming trade fair will focus on the following sectors: Advanced Automation (specifically, the evolution of programming languages, the integration between robotics and programmable logic controllers (PLC), real-time networks, rules and guidelines for machine integration and computer modelling, and a call for papers is expected to be made shortly); Digital & Software (advanced analytics, cloud storage, big data, artificial intelligence, cyber security and augmented reality); and Mechatronics (new ergonomic devices for operators, independent trolley transport systems, new high-efficiency motors and intelligent components).

Participation is free and reserved for operators in the sector. To register online, go to: www.spsitalia.it/en.

Background information on Messe Frankfurt

Messe Frankfurt is the world's largest trade fair, congress and event organiser with its own exhibition grounds. With more than 2,500* employees at 30 locations, the company generates annual sales of around €715* million. Thanks to its far-reaching ties with the relevant sectors and to its international sales network, the Group looks after the business interests of its customers effectively. A comprehensive range of services – both onsite and online – ensures that customers worldwide enjoy consistently high quality and flexibility when planning, organising and running their events. The wide range of services includes renting exhibition grounds, trade fair construction and marketing, personnel and food services. With its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, the company is owned by the City of Frankfurt (60 percent) and the State of Hesse (40 percent). For more information, please visit our website at: www.messefrankfurt.com.

*preliminary figures 2018