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BALLUFF

Balluff integrates two companies into the group

Balluff integrates two companies

The Balluff family is growing and further extending its digitalization expertise with the integration of two companies

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iss innovative software services GmbH, Stuttgart and Matrix Vision GmbH, Oppenweiler are now part of the sensor and automation specialist based in Neuhausen auf den Fildern.

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Neuhausen a.d.F. – 14 September 2017 – Balluff is extending its digitalization know-how with the acquisition of not one, but two companies: the Stuttgart software company iss innovative software services GmbH (iss) and the machine vision pioneer Matrix Vision GmbH (MV) from Oppenweiler near Stuttgart are now part of the sensor and automation specialist. The relevant contracts were signed in July and August after nearly six months of negotiations. 160 employees will join the family-owned company, the sites in Stuttgart-Vaihingen and Oppenweiler will be kept on.

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Acquisitions strengthen strategic alignment

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The two new companies enhance Balluff's core competences in two key fields: software development and machine vision. Their integration thus represents a key building-block in the Group's strategic alignment. As Managing Director Florian Hermle commented: "Linking our network technology with the software expertise of the two companies will particularly improve our capability for supplying integrated automation solutions from one provider. The know-how of iss and Matrix Vision and their employees will help us capitalize on the huge growth opportunities in digitalization faster, while extending our portfolio in the hardware and software areas."

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Strengthening software expertise

iss is specialized in tools, test systems, processes and standardization in software development. Like Balluff itself, the main customer group for the company, founded in 1996 and with 60 employees, is the automotive and supply industry. Within the Balluff Group iss will assume the role of in-house software specialist, as the company from Stuttgart-Vaihingen is highly experienced in the field of embedded systems for the automotive industry. "We already have 25 software developers in our team, but we are focusing on consistently extending our digitalization expertise and we urgently need more qualified personnel to do so. To be more specific, we aim to develop open software platforms that will be needed increasingly in the future in order to offer our customers integrated automation solutions," says Hermle.

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"We are very happy to now be part of Balluff Group", says Joachim Mettenleiter, one of the two managing directors of iss. "Balluff is undoubtedly one of the industry's digitalization trendsetters and we are looking forward to the many very challenging and fascinating assignments. I am confident that we will be able to forge ahead with our colleagues in Balluff's software department in the upcoming years and take the group even further than it already is in the Industry 4.0 environment."

Extending the portfolio in the machine vision area

Matrix Vision and its product portfolio enhance the Balluff Group in an area that has so far played a relatively minor role: camera-based sensor systems or machine vision as it is known in the business. Founded in 1986 the company and its 100 employees is specialized in the development and marketing of frame grabbers, standard industrial cameras, video sensors, embedded systems and software in the area of industrial image processing. "Matrix Vision has been a successful development partner to us for the past four years," remarks Hermle. "One of our two camera-based product lines is from Matrix Vision. As a result, we already know that we are well-suited to one another and our product lines are optimally matched." Software also enjoys a high status at Matrix Vision: Around 30 of its 100 employees are mainly engaged in image processing in the industrial sector. As Hermle explains: "Matrix Vision lets us extend both our product portfolio in the area of camera-based sensor systems and our software development capacities."

It is an opinion shared by Uwe Furtner, technical managing director of Matrix Vision: "Balluff is an excellent match for us. We have gotten to know each other very well through many years of cooperation in our development partnership, and our product portfolios do not overlap, but rather complement each other perfectly." Furtner also identifies the great potential for Matrix Vision within the Balluff Group in terms of sales and services for customers. "Many of our customers have production sites worldwide and expect local support from their suppliers. At some point Matrix Vision would have run into difficulties on that score, simply due to our size, but with the worldwide service, sales and logistics network that Balluff brings we now have access to a whole different set of possibilities."

In 2016 Balluff increased its revenues by 3.3 per cent to EUR 378 million (previous year: EUR 366 million) and began the first half of 2017 very promisingly with revenues up 21.8 per cent. Including the new acquisitions Balluff employs 3,550 people at 37 sites worldwide. While Balluff acquired 100 per cent ownership of iss innovative software services, 25 per cent of

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Matrix Vision's shares remain in the ownership of the previous shareholders. With over 300 developers engaged in sensor systems, identification and network solutions for industrial automation worldwide, continuous innovation at Balluff has always been held in high regard, reflected by the fact that in 2016, 13.7 per cent of revenue was invested in research and development.

* * *

Caption:

The Managing Directors of all three companies inform the employees about the integration (f. l.): Uwe Furtner, Erhard Meier (Matrix Vision), Florian Hermle, Katrin Stegmaier-Hermle, Michael Unger (Balluff), Michael Wäschle and Joachim Mettenleiter (iss). Foto: Balluff

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About Balluff

Founded in 1921 in Neuhausen auf den Fildern, Balluff and its worldwide over 3,550 employees enjoy an international reputation for innovation, quality and cross-sector experience in industrial automation. As a leading sensor and automation specialist, the family-owned company in its 4th generation offers a comprehensive portfolio of innovative sensor, identification and network technologies and software for integrated system solutions. In 2016 Balluff Group reported revenues of around EUR 378 million. In addition to its headquarters in Neuhausen, Balluff has production and development sites around the globe, including 37 subsidiaries and representative offices worldwide. This guarantees customers swift worldwide product availability and a high standard of local support and service.

About Matrix Vision

Founded in 1986 in Oppenweiler near Backnang, Matrix Vision is one of the major providers of image processing components in the German-speaking market. As a pioneer in the field of vision, the company offers a wide range of frame grabbers, industrial cameras, intelligent cameras, video sensors, embedded systems and software in the industrial image processing sector. Together with experienced partners, Matrix Vision also develops customized solutions for special requirements ranging from individual components to complete stand-alone functional units. Matrix Vision employs 100 people and generated revenues of EUR 15 million in 2016.

About iss innovative software services

Founded in 1996 iss innovative software services offers software system development services (including database applications, development environments and web applications) and engineering services in the field of automotive and automation technology. The service portfolio ranges from strategic planning and analysis, conception and design to implementation. iss innovative software services reported revenues of EUR 6 million in 2016 with 60 employees.

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