



RECORD
With a volume of one liter the Pocket Delta is the world smallest industrial robot.

Asyri starts its international expansion

The Fribourg-based manufacturer of micro industrial robots is expanding across borders and across sectors.

BY FABRICE DELAYE

Spun off from the Swiss Centre for Electronic and Microtechnology (CSEM) only three years ago, Asyri is already entering into the German markets thanks to a distribution agreement with Frei Technik + Systeme. The move illustrates the company's strategy: it is planning a similar expansion this year in France and another later in the United States.

"Germany and particularly south Germany is home to numerous sensor manufacturers and components subcontractors," explains Alain Codourey, CEO of Asyri. "The robots we have developed, the smallest industrial robots in the world, are particularly well suited to their needs, especially in clean rooms where any bit of space is expensive".

SMALLEST INDUSTRIAL ROBOT

In fact the camera-guided Pocket Delta robot, prototyped at CSEM and developed when Asyri became an affiliate of the CPA Group in Fribourg in 2007, has a volume of

just one litre. Even so, it can perform up to four pick-and-place motions per second. And the robot's ability to carry out repeat tasks with movements below 2.5 micrometres makes it especially well suited for microassembly.

This Swiss Technology Award winner is now associated with Asycube, a component-feeding vibrating platform that selects extremely small parts from bulk during industrial processes such as conditioning or assembling. Quickly adopted by Swiss watchmaking giants such as Tag Heuer, the success of this automation system has fed double-digit growth during Asyri's first three years.

But with one client in the semiconductor industry in Zurich already equipped and another Swiss customer in medical devices, Codourey has identified strong new growth potential in those two sectors for small robots. "They are cost effective not only because they are compact but also because their size make them cheaper to produce," he adds. ■

New solar technology cluster lands first deal in the Middle East

Switzerland's solar cluster signs agreement with the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting.

BY FABRICE DELAYE

The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Lausanne (EPFL) and an associated cluster of research institutions and companies based between Lake Geneva and Neuchâtel, has developed numerous Photovoltaic (PV) technologies. These have triggered spin-offs, and intellectual property has been in-licensed by PV manufacturers and equipment makers, such as Oerlikon Solar.

Since June 2011 The cluster is now operating under the banner of, "Pole suisse de technologies solaires". "We want to combine our competencies to attract solar companies into the region and help our member companies to replicate their business models in other regions," explains the president of the cluster, Daniele Oppizzi, CEO of Iland, a solar technologies integrator.

AUTOMOTIVE MAKERS

Major German car makers and a French electric vehicle developer have been already attracted to the cluster, drawn in particular to the industry-oriented IMT-EPFL PV Lab in Neuchatel. Civil engineering companies and architects have expressed interest too, but the cluster's big breakthrough has been in the Middle East.

A delegation from the Swiss solar cluster, lead by SymbioSwiss's director Claude Bégé and Geneva's OPI, has agreed a long-term partnership with the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GOIC), to collaborate on technology transfer. This supports investment in R&D, and will co-finance Swiss PV companies serving the Gulf market. "The Gulf States have clearly chosen to diminish their dependency on oil, and solar energy is thriving there", Oppizzi says. ■