November 27, 2026

Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd.

Beckhoff Automation

SPS 2026: Kawasaki and Beckhoff sign MOU

—Open control technologies for next-generation robot systems—

Kawasaki Heavy Industries and Beckhoff Automation have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at SPS Smart Production Solutions 2026, stating that they will collaborate on open control technologies for industrial robots. As part of this cooperation, the two partners intend to explore the potential of PC-based control – including EtherCAT real-time Ethernet communication technology and the TwinCAT automation platform – for next-generation robot systems.

Labor shortages and the steadily growing demand for flexible production systems are driving the demand for solutions that enable seamless interaction between robots, sensors, and machine controls. AI technologies are being implemented more and more in the manufacturing industry, and this, together with connectivity to cloud-based systems, allows robots to be operated autonomously. An open control environment forms the basis for efficiently integrating devices and software from different manufacturers into a single control system.

Kawasaki is thus advancing the development of an open robot control platform, building on its experience as an industrial robot manufacturer. At the 2025 International Robot Exhibition (iREX) in Japan, Kawasaki premiered a next-generation robot control concept featuring open EtherCAT-based architecture.

EtherCAT, developed by Beckhoff, is established worldwide as the real-time Ethernet communication technology for the manufacturing industry. The TwinCAT automation platform from Beckhoff combines PLC, motion, communication, measurement technology, machine vision, and agentic AI in a scalable PC-based control architecture.

The aim of this cooperation is to explore how Beckhoff technologies can be applied to accelerate the creation and implementation of new, flexible, and scalable robot systems. Ultimately, the objective is to give users and system integrators greater freedom in selecting the best hardware and software for their applications, while also

increasing efficiency during implementation. The MOU between the two companies covers the following three areas:

- training and support concepts, including collaboration with system integrators
- integration of EtherCAT into Kawasaki industrial robot systems
- potential of PC-based control and TwinCAT for Kawasaki industrial robot systems

"The manufacturing industry is entering a new era in which robotics must work seamlessly together with AI, software, and connected equipment", underlines Kenji Bando, General Manager, Robot Business Division Kawasaki Heavy Industries. "Through this collaboration, we will accelerate the realization of open and flexible robot systems that provide greater value to customers and system integrators worldwide." Hans Beckhoff, founder and Managing Director of Beckhoff Automation, comments: "Thanks to its open approach, PC-based control provides a proven foundation for next-generation automation solutions. Combined with EtherCAT and TwinCAT, it brings robotics, sensors, vision, and AI together on a single platform. In Kawasaki, we have found a partner who shares this vision."

https://kawasakirobotics.com/emea/

www.beckhoff.com



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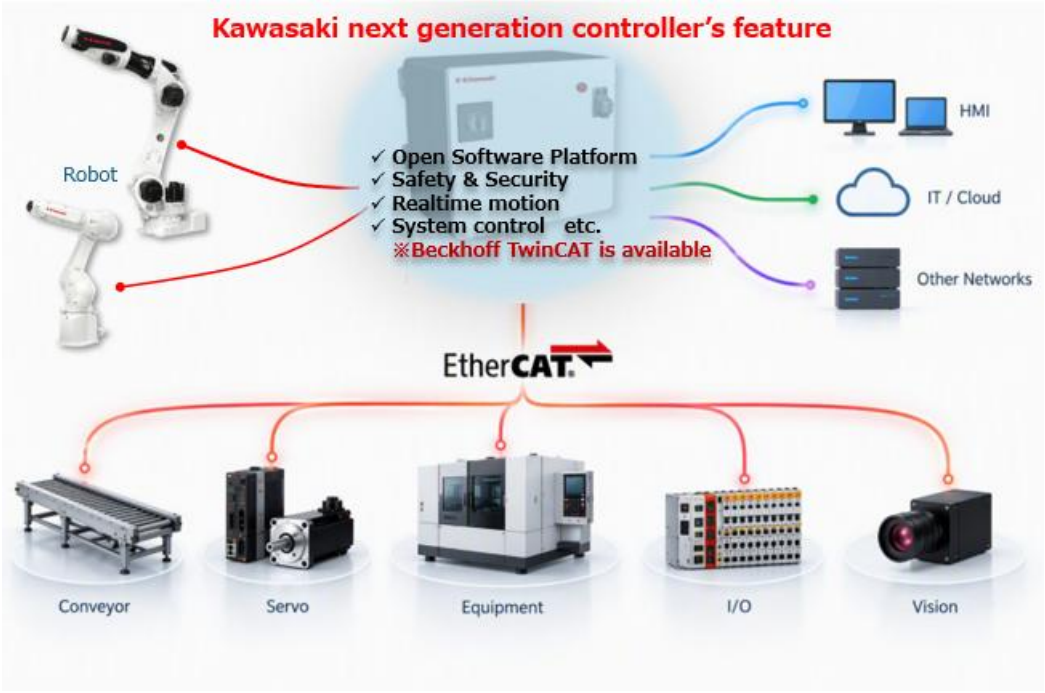

About Kawasaki Heavy Industries:

Since its founding in 1896, Kawasaki has provided value to society by leveraging technologies developed across a wide range of fields spanning land, sea, and air. In robotics, the company has developed and supplied industrial robots for more than 50 years and, in recent years, has expanded its efforts to include social robots powered by Physical AI. Guided by its purpose, "Unlocking Human Ingenuity to Create Robotics that Enrich the Future," the Robot Business Division contributes to solving social challenges as a Robotics Service Provider.

About Beckhoff Automation:

Beckhoff implements open automation systems using tried-and-tested PC-based control technology. The product range covers industrial PCs, I/O and fieldbus components, drive technology, automation software, control cabinet-free automation, and hardware for machine vision. New Automation Technology from Beckhoff consists of universal industry-independent control and automation solutions, ranging from CNC-controlled machine tools to intelligent building automation. Beckhoff is a family-owned company that was founded in 1980 and is headquartered in Verl, Germany. In 2025, the company generated global sales of 1.24 billion euros and employs 5,450 people; with 41 subsidiaries and representative offices, Beckhoff is represented in more than 75 countries.