



## **Cobot assistant for SMEs: Belgian research team wins KUKA Innovation Award 2024**

**Augsburg/Hanover, 25. April 2024 – A particularly user-friendly cobot application for small and medium-sized companies, which can be used without programming: a team of researchers from Belgium has won the KUKA robotics competition with this innovative concept.**

KUKA has been presenting the Innovation Award to outstanding young teams for innovative robotics concepts for ten years. In the anniversary year, everything revolved around an important topic for the future: How can robotics and automation contribute to the transformation of skilled trades and SMEs and help to solve challenges such as the shortage of skilled workers and rising costs?

“The skilled trades and SMEs are still very sparsely automated areas today. The shortage of skilled workers and demographic change are affecting these sectors. The use of robotics can help here, but it is still relatively in its infancy. The concepts of our finalists show the great potential of robotics for these industries,” said Volker Schmirgel, Head of the KUKA Technology and Innovation Center and member of the Innovation Award jury.

The three finalist teams of the Innovation Award 2024 presented their ideas and solutions for collaborative robotics for the skilled trades and small and medium-sized enterprises to an international audience at the Hannover Messe. The research teams used the KUKA Cobot LBR iisy and the iiQKA robot operating and ecosystem as well as a vision system from Roboception for their innovative concepts. On the penultimate day of the trade fair, an international jury selected the winning team.

### **This is the winning team of the KUKA Innovation Award 2024**

Ricobb is a reliable, mobile LBR iisy cobot assistant designed to enable small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe to bring back manufacturing processes

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that would otherwise be in low-wage countries. This is the ambitious goal of the Belgian research group LVD Robotic Solutions and Acro. At the heart of the concept is a user-friendly cobot application platform that is specifically used for a bending process. The intelligent robot programming is embedded in the control system of the bending press and, thanks to simple modules, it is easily accessible and adaptable to the bending process, including processes and modules for product families.

The application also offers the option of being used for other related tasks such as sorting or deburring. The jury was particularly impressed by the simple operation of the application and the sophisticated concept. In addition, the team convincingly addressed the issue of skills shortages and demographic change with this idea.

## **The KUKA Innovation Award enters the next round**

In the new round of the KUKA Innovation Award, everything revolves around the future of medicine and healthcare under the motto “Medical Robotics Challenge 2.0”. Creative minds from all over the world are invited to submit their robotics ideas for diagnosis, rehabilitation, surgery, and many other forms of therapy. The finalists can look forward to a professional appearance at a major trade fair - and the winner will receive €20,000 in prize money.

[All information can be found here.](#)

## **KUKA**

KUKA is an international automation group with sales of more than EUR 4 billion and around 15,000 employees. As one of the world's leading suppliers of intelligent, resource-saving automation solutions, KUKA offers industrial robots, autonomous mobile robots (AMR) including controllers, software and cloud-based digital services as well as fully connected production systems for a wide range of industries- primarily for markets such as automotive with a focus on e-mobility & battery, electronics, metal & plastic, consumer goods, food, e-commerce, retail and healthcare. The company is headquartered in Augsburg, Germany.