



Volkswagen to Replace Retiring Workers with Robots

As at other German industrial companies, Volkswagen's workforce is growing older and as baby boomers begin to retire between 2015 and 2030, under demographic trends there will be fewer young people to take their place.

By Chris Bryant, The Financial Times - Filed Oct 23, 2014

Volkswagen plans to use robots to cope with a shortage of new workers caused by retiring baby boomers, and ensure that car manufacturing remains competitive in high-cost Germany.



As at other German industrial companies, VW's workforce is growing older and as baby boomers begin to retire between 2015 and 2030, under demographic trends there will be fewer young people to take their place.

Writing in Germany's Sueddeutsche Zeitung on Monday, Horst Neumann, VW board member for human resources, said some of the retiring baby boomers' jobs would be filled by robots, not people.

He insisted the robots would take over monotonous or unergonomic tasks, while humans would focus on more highly skilled jobs. The trend towards higher automation would not contribute towards increased unemployment in Germany, he added.

"We have the possibility to replace people with robots and nevertheless we can continue to hire the same amount of young employees. Or put the other way: we would not be able to compensate for this outflow of retirees by [hiring] young employees."

Mr Neumann added that a factory devoid of humans is "neither realistic nor desirable."

Automation has enabled high-cost Germany to retain a global lead in vehicle production. But adding more robots remains a highly sensitive subject as workers fear that advances in robotics might one day make them surplus to requirements.

The automotive industry is already by far the biggest user of industrial robots but it sees further potential for their use. For example, robots remain comparatively rare in the final assembly area where workers must carry out intricate tasks in the vehicle interior.

[Read the full story on The Financial Times.](#)

[<< Return to story](#)