

Kirchhoff Automotive

# Counting on automation

**Do lower wages mean more manual labor and less automation? Not for Polish automobile supplier Kirchhoff Automotive. Welding cells from ABB warrant high-quality production of structural automobile parts at its Mielec plant.**

> Despite the low wage structure found in Poland, manual labor takes a back seat to automation at the Kirchhoff Automotive plant in Mielec, Poland.

“Kirchhoff Automotive’s philosophy is to meet the customers’ quality demands and group standards with secure processes in low-wage countries such as Poland and Hungary,” explains Markus Selzle, who works with the company.

“Kirchhoff Automotive directs its investments toward the product,” he says. “The company follows its customers and meets their quality demands, regardless of the location.”

At Kirchhoff Automotive’s plant in Mielec, Poland (one of the company’s two production sites in the country), the company manufactures structural car parts for customers such as Ford, Opel, BMW, DaimlerChrysler, SAAB, Por-



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sche, Suzuki, Skoda and vw. However, despite the low cost of manual labor in the area, at the plant there is but one portable manual spot welding gun; ABB robots dominate the plant's activities in inert gas shielded arc welding.

Five ABB standard welding cells have been in operation in Mielec since 2003: two industrial IRB 6600 robots for spot welding and three IRB 1400 robots for MAG welding.

ABB engineered the welding cells and created the programs for the system controls (SPS). Kirchhoff Polska designed, constructed and built the welding devices. The Polish workers were quickly able to work with the robot technology. “Kirchhoff Polska's professional realization of tasks must be emphasized,” says ABB service technician Damian Sojka.

Kirchhoff Automotive is counting on standardization for welding cells. It prefers a self-supported pipe construction, including the standard elements, turning table, robot and welding technology. The compact cells provide flexibility in layout changes as well as quick restarts at the setup location and close-to-serial production prior to moving the systems.

Availability and global service are two important criteria for Kirchhoff Automotive's selection of a robot supplier, says Selzle. “The customer must be able to depend on manufacturers who work worldwide and who make spare parts available within a reasonable response time,” he explains.

ABB also offers the advantage of dependable delivery deadlines. “According to the customer, that is not true of all suppliers,” says Selzle. ☉

#### >FACTS

##### From component to module

Part of the Kirchhoff Group, Kirchhoff Automotive is one of the large medium-sized automobile suppliers with more than 2,000 employees worldwide. It has facilities in Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Hungary. The core competencies of this family-run company are engineering of automobile modules and processes for sheet-metal formation, welding, installation and surface treatment.