German Surface Technology consolidates at high level

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Hannover, April 2, 2019 – Following the strong growth of German surface technology over the past 5 years, VDMA expects a growth in production volume of 1 percent to over 2.3 billion euros for the current year. The general economic slowdown is now also noticeable in surface technology. However, the capacity utilization of the companies remains at a high level.

World trade by exports is clearly led by the European Economic Area with a 52 percent share. Germany contributes about 30 percent to the European export volume. East Asia follows with 36 percent. East Asia's share of world trade is dominated by China and over the past 15 years has more than doubled. Over the same period, the share of the US-dominated North American economic area has shrunk by a third to 11 percent today. The share of other economic regions in exports in world trade in surface technology is less than 1 percent. With a share of 40 percent, the European market is also the largest sales market in international trade for surface technology. Around three quarters of European demand is supplied from Europe itself.

More than 60 percent of German surface technology production goes to the target sectors of automotive, automotive suppliers and the metalworking industry. With the highest demands on the performance of their products, these target industries provide the greatest impetus for innovation in surface technology.
Surface technology with key role for lightweight construction

In the main target sectors of surface technology, lightweight construction concepts are firmly anchored in product development, especially in the automotive industry and its suppliers, but the potential of lightweight construction concepts is also increasingly being exploited in mechanical engineering.

Surface technology is an indispensable basic technology for lightweight construction. It enables the use of materials, regardless of their surface properties. Joining processes, uniformly high-quality coatings on different materials and coating of tools for the machining of fibre composites are some striking examples of applications which stand for the fundamental importance of surface technology for lightweight construction.

Additively manufactured components present special challenges. Due to the process, rough surfaces have to be adapted to the performance requirements of the products. Here, too, solutions from the entire spectrum of surface technology are in demand.

Due to the specific tasks for high-performance lightweight products, it can be assumed that there will also be a high development demand for surface technology. This demand is also reflected in the technology transfer program for lightweight construction currently being prepared by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy (BMWi).

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The VDMA represents more than 3200 companies in the medium-sized mechanical and plant engineering sector. With 1.3 million employees in Germany and a turnover of 232 billion euros (2018), the sector is the largest industrial employer and one of the leading German branches of industry overall.

The Air Handling Technology Association comprises the departments Air Conditioning and Ventilation Technology (Process air as well as Ventilation and air conditioning), Refrigeration and Heat Pump Technology, Air Pollution Control (Process air), Surface Technology and Drying Technology.