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Press information

50 years of Mitutoyo in Europe: half a century of passion for metrology

The measuring instruments' manufacturer Mitutoyo has throughout its history been in the fore when it comes to top-quality handheld measuring tools, coordinate measuring machines, optical and vision measuring systems, hardness testers and form measuring instruments. Their automation and Industry 4.0 solutions count amongst the best throughout the world. Now the Japanese company celebrates its 50 years anniversary on the European market.

Neuss, March 2018. It was a long way from the humble beginnings of Mitutoyo on the European market to being one of the leading suppliers for all branches' quality assurance.

Mitutoyo's history began with the establishment of a research center in 1934 – with the aim of producing Japan's first micrometers in Tokyo's Kamata district by company founder Yehan Numata, son of a Buddhist priest's family. He was accepted into the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in statistics and received a degree in economics.

Numata rented a little office near Tokyo to produce a prototype micrometer. He built a calibration room with constant temperature and humidity. The production run of the first model was 100 units, but his quality control was so strict that he allowed only 17 of them to be sold.

In the years and decades to follow the micrometers vastly gained quality and accuracy. More handheld measuring instruments were added to the portfolio: Vernier and dial calipers, depth and inside micrometers, height gauges and many more. Mitutoyo instruments were not only successful domestically. Soon the first overseas department was founded in North America in 1963.

At the time, Yehan's son Yoshiteru visited the first two European dealers in Great Britain (Draper) and the Netherlands (Hoekstra) and already had plans to establish a European headquarter in Germany. In a second visit he met Bernd Schrader, the owner of Sartorius Nachf. who later became an exclusive agent in Germany, an equal partner (Sartorius Mitutoyo) and one of the most important distributors. In 1965 a Mr. Nakajima showed up in Schrader's office, bringing along a sliding caliper, a micrometer, an indicator and a height gauge made by Mitutoyo. Schrader and his team liked the quality of the instruments and saw a chance to introduce the instruments on the extremely conservative German market.

In those days, Japanese products were somewhat exotic and the significantly different way in which they were presented on trade fairs called the domestic competitors into action. Some of them threatened the organisers of trade fairs with boycott if Mitutoyo was further allowed to present their products. With the converse effect: This

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made potential customers all the more interested in the new marque. And they would soon find out about the extraordinary product quality at fair prices.

Düsseldorf had been the first choice when it came to finding the right location for the new headquarter – finally established in 1968 under the name of "Sampoh". When the company was founded, it had the main task of making the brand name „Mitutoyo" well-known on the European market. In the Western European countries, the general agencies were installed. At the same time, Mitutoyo also opened up the Eastern European market. However, due to the political situation in the socialist countries, the feasibility of measures was very limited. Nevertheless, Mitutoyo participated in numerous industrial fairs, visited the state-run purchasing associations, etc. Furthermore, Mitutoyo presented their measuring instruments in demonstration vehicles, on customers' premises.

The late Sixties and early Seventies saw Mitutoyo's business in Europe gather pace rapidly, and soon the Düsseldorf headquarter reached its limits. A new office and warehouse building was erected in Neuss-Norf in 1974 – and part by part extended to its today's size.

Great Britain has since Mitutoyo's beginnings in Europe been a strong market, so in 1980 a subsidiary was established in Andover/England. Sales companies in Scandinavia and the Netherlands (1981), Belgium (1982), France (1986), Italy (1987) and Switzerland (1988) followed.

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact made Mitutoyo's business also easier in the former WP countries. Subsidiaries were established in Hungary (1997), Poland and the Czech Republic (2002) and later also in Russia and Romania (2011). The youngest sales company was founded in Austria in 2013.

In January 2010 Mitutoyo synchronised and strengthened the concerted pan-European activities by the establishment of a European headquarter. The location of Mitutoyo Europe GmbH in Neuss oversees all the activities of Mitutoyo's sales, service and production facilities throughout Europe and adjacent markets. A Mitutoyo Europe GmbH key objective is to promote coordination amongst its European group companies in order to optimise its sales and technical support services in the best interests of customer satisfaction.

Mitutoyo CTL Germany GmbH in Oberndorf, founded in 1983, focuses solely on developing ground-breakingly powerful and easy to use software for three-coordinate measurement technology. Jigging and loading systems, styli and thermal cabins are covered by KOMEK, a highly-specialised company acquired in 1997.

Today Mitutoyo in Europe is represented by 14 sales companies and general agents covering the adjacent markets. Under the strategic direction of Mitutoyo Europe GmbH there is a large production, sales and service network at the customers' disposal, with more than 85 offices in 33 European countries.

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