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Vecoplan and Valk Welding automate rotor production

Vecoplan

Content

Colofon

The Valk Mailing has been put together with care by Valk Welding. From concept to creation, our team has worked hard to realise this magazine and provide you with relevant information, inspiration and insights into the world of welding technology and automation. For any questions, comments or suggestions, please feel free to contact us at info@valkwelding.com. Thanks to all employees and partners who contributed to the success of this magazine.

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Dear reader,

It is a pleasure to write another foreword for the Valk Mailing, which is celebrating it’s 25th anniversary this year.

It is now shortly after the Schweissen und Schneiden international trade fair, which took place again in Essen, Germany, in September.

Valk Welding was present for the eighth time to support our international activities, which we started in 2000.
Valk Welding now has its own branches in 11 countries within Europe to guide, support, and provide service to customers and future users of welding robot systems in their own language and culture.

Our strategy of supporting customers in Europe with “High-Mix – Low-Volume” production has now proven successful with many customers who use our software solutions to better deploy welding robots for low volumes, thereby achieving a significantly higher operating time.
This strategy of keeping everything in-house means that our customers have a single point of contact and a “Total Commitment” from us as a supplier across all functionalities and disciplines.

Our 30 years of experience with offline programming offers major advantages when using different software packages for the automatic generation of welding programs.

However, it remains essential to use fully calibrated robot systems for offline programming, especially for automatic program generation. (ARP)

Combining these calibrated robot systems with automatic program generation is the solution for a functional and productive robot system with very low operating costs.

Look at our latest brochure, in which we support you with your future in robotic welding.

Remco H. Valk
(CEO Valk Welding Group)

Vecoplan and Valk Welding automate rotor production with robotic welding system

Germany

When experience drives innovation, it often looks like the collaboration between Vecoplan and Valk Welding: two companies with strong technical expertise joining forces to rethink manufacturing. At the heart of their joint project is a fully automated robotic welding cell for producing rotors – the core component of many recycling machines. Handling, positioning, gas-shielded welding, and even the highly complex hardfacing process are now automated at Vecoplan – thanks to a precisely coordinated system of two robots, intelligent software, and integrated safety measures.

Vecoplan®

Valk Welding impresses as a partner
As part of the “Rotor Production with a Robotic Welding System” project, an intensive and comprehensive market analysis was carried out to shortlist suitable suppliers. Five potential candidates were identified and evaluated in detail.

To ensure a well-founded decision, the project team conducted a utility analysis based on criteria such as technical performance, service quality, level of innovation, cost-effectiveness, and implementation expertise. Two suppliers achieved almost identical overall scores, making the final decision challenging.
To validate the internal analysis, an independent review was commissioned from an external institute. At the same time, in-depth discussions were held with the two shortlisted suppliers to include additional qualitative aspects.

After completing all evaluations and discussions, the decision was made in favour of Valk Welding. Key factors included the company’s professional and competent approach, as well as its convincing presentation of technical solutions and project workflows.

The implementation phase fully confirmed this decision. Valk Welding proved to be an extremely reliable and high-performing partner. The collaboration was – and continues to be – efficient, solution-oriented, and focused, clearly demonstrating that the choice was the right one.

Rethinking rotor production – from handling to wear protection
Rotors are among the most heavily stressed components in shredding machines. Their production requires maximum dimensional accuracy, precision, and – particularly when applying wear-resistant layers – a deep understanding of materials and processes. Until now, many of these steps at Vecoplan were performed manually. Skilled welders ensured quality, but the process was time-consuming, labour-intensive, and difficult to scale.

This led to the desire to automate the process – not with a conventional robotic solution, but with a holistic, scalable system that fully integrates handling, welding, and wear-protection processes and executes them autonomously. This is exactly what has now been achieved in collaboration with Valk Welding.

“Valk Welding impressed us not only with technical expertise but also with reliability and genuine partnership. The collaboration clearly showed that we chose the right partner – both professionally and personally.”

- Martin Selbach

Dual-robot system with storage tower and intelligent welding concept

The core of the new system is a setup of two cooperating welding robots, complemented by a central storage tower for tool holders.
This configuration enables fully automated production:

- Robot 1 handles the precise positioning of tool holders from the storage tower. A custom-designed gripper ensures correct alignment and safe transfer to the rotor, allowing Robot 2 to tack them in place.
- Once the components are fixed, both robots start the welding process simultaneously – a highly productive approach that significantly reduces cycle times.

A particular highlight is the welding process itself: in addition to conventional MAG welds, the system also performs fully automated hardfacing – a process typically done manually due to its high demands on positioning accuracy, layer thickness, and repeatability. Both robots now handle this task simultaneously without compromise.

Software as the key: QPC programming based on design data

A decisive success factor was software integration. Valk Welding implemented its proprietary QPC – Quick Programming Configurator, a parametric offline programming solution that automatically generates welding programs based on design drawings.

Instead of manually teaching every robot point, geometry data is interpreted directly from the CAD drawing. This saves enormous time – especially for new variants, series changes, or different rotor dimensions. The flexibility of this solution allows Vecoplan to efficiently automate even small batches or one-off production.

Safety and ergonomics: workplace protection built in

Modern automation goes beyond robotics. Safety and environmental requirements were integrated into the system design from the outset. The Vecoplan installation includes a large-scale extraction system, integrated torch extraction, and a high-performance exhaust hood. Welding fumes, particles, and gases are captured directly at the source – an important contribution to workplace safety and regulatory compliance.

Collaboration on equal terms: Vecoplan & Valk Welding

The project was implemented through close cooperation between Valk Welding’s automation experts and Vecoplan’s process specialists. Both partners worked in iterative steps, realistic simulations, and with short decision-making paths – from the initial layout to commissioning. “From idea to success – with friends in a great team! Together, across borders, we achieved our goal. It was a real pleasure to be part of this. A big thank you to Dortmund and Alblasserdam! Here in Westerwald, we’re thrilled with the new system – and we’re already looking ahead: with new ideas and continued collaboration with Valk Welding. Glückauf* – here’s to new opportunities and innovations!” says Klaus Weinbrenner, Head of Welding at Vecoplan. “This project was one of last year’s technological highlights and amazed many visitors to our facility. It also demonstrated impressively what is possible when two partners work openly, honestly, and as equals – in the spirit of our motto: The Strong Connection.” adds Christian Hüser, Sales Director at Valk Welding Germany.

Technology partners at a glance

Vecoplan AG, based in Bad Marienberg, is a global leader in machines and systems for shredding, conveying, and processing primary and secondary raw materials. With over 500 employees, the company provides solutions for the recycling, plastics, wood, and waste industries.

Valk Welding B.V., headquartered in Alblasserdam (NL), is a technology leader in robotic arc welding systems. In addition to hardware, Valk Welding offers innovative software solutions, comprehensive service, and modular production cells – specifically tailored for medium-sized businesses.

www.vecoplan.com

**Glückauf” is a traditional German miners’ greeting, meaning good luck or may you come back up safely. It expresses hope for success and a safe return.*

Future-proof with vision and precision

Northern Ireland

A legacy of innovation
Founded in 1971 by Creighton Hutchinson, Hutchinson has grown from a local agricultural service provider into a leading subcontractor for industrial fabrication. Under the leadership of Mark Hutchinson, who took over the company at the age of just 18, the company has consistently embraced innovation to stay ahead in a competitive market.

Strategic investment with a long-term vision
When Hutchinson decided to invest in their first robotic welding system, it wasn't just about solving today's challenges—it was about preparing for tomorrow. "Even before the machine arrived, we were already planning how to scale," says Mark Hutchinson. The company made deliberate modifications to the system to ensure it would be compatible with more robotic welding systems and future automated logistics, including AGV integration. "We didn't want to retrofit later. We wanted to be ready from day one."

In Valk Welding, they found a partner who not only supplied the technology but also opened their eyes to what was truly possible. From demonstrating advanced robotic welding automation to providing a one-stop solution—including welding wire and local support—Valk Welding helped Hutchinson dream bigger and plan smarter.

Building the right team around technology
One of the key lessons from a previous automation attempt was the importance of people. This time, Hutchinson built a dedicated team around the new system—engineers, programmers, and operators—well before installation. "We made sure they were trained, informed, and excited," Mark explains. "We even involved them in the decision-making process, showing them videos and explaining the 'why' behind the investment."

MIS

This proactive approach paid off. The team embraced the technology, and the transition from manual to robotic welding was smooth and efficient. "Some of them were researching robotic welding in their own time. That's when you know they're on board."

User-friendly programming and MIS integration
One of the standout features of the Valk Welding system for Hutchinson was the ease of programming. "The interface is intuitive, and the support from Valk Welding has been excellent," Mark notes. "It's not just about the robot—it's about the whole ecosystem around it."

That ecosystem includes Valk Welding's Management Information System (MIS), which has become a vital tool for the company. "We now have real-time data on machine uptime, cycle times, and performance," says Mark. "It helps us plan better, quote more accurately, and continuously improve."

A clean, safe, and inspiring workplace
Attracting and retaining talent is an important priority for Hutchinson. That's why they've invested heavily in creating a clean, safe, and modern working environment. "We want people to feel proud of where they work," says Mark. "Especially in welding and fabrication, where the perception can be outdated, we're showing that it can be high-tech and inspiring."

The company regularly hosts school visits to showcase their advanced facilities and spark interest in manufacturing careers. "When young people see the robotics in action, their eyes light up. It changes their whole perception."

Ready for the next step
The first robotic welding system was already running on two shifts within two months after installation, with a weekend shift soon to follow.

This forward-thinking approach, combined with a strong team and a commitment to quality, positions Hutchinson as a model for modern manufacturing. "Automation doesn't replace people—it empowers them," Mark concludes. "And with Valk Welding, we've found a partner who shares that belief."

www.hutchinson-engineering.co.uk

Tyllis takes a leap in robotic welding with RWAAS and ARP

Finland

Kokkola, Finland – Tyllis Oy Ab, a leading manufacturer of tailor-made transport solutions for over sixty years, has once again proven that innovation is deeply embedded in its DNA. As the first trailer builder in the market, Tyllis has adopted Robot Welding As A Service (RWAAS) from Valk Welding – a move that enables them to respond faster and strengthen their competitive position.

From pioneer to frontrunner

Tyllis is renowned for its high-quality, customer-specific transport solutions, ranging from semi-trailers and crane trucks to special truck bodies. With 12 years of experience in robotic welding, the company already had a solid foundation in automation. However, in recent years, the pace of robotisation slowed.

The main reason? Traditional offline programming proved to be a significant hurdle. In a production environment where almost exclusively one-off builds are made, programming a welding robot often took more time than the welding itself. This made the use of robots for small series or unique products economically less attractive.

The fresh approach of RWAAS

With RWAAS – Robot Welding As A Service – Valk Welding offers a complete robotic welding system, including service, training, and support, for a fixed monthly fee. Even the welding wire is fully included. This lowers the investment threshold and allows companies to adapt flexibly to production demands.

For Tyllis, it meant they could start using the latest technology without a large capital outlay.

ARP changes the game

The real breakthrough came with the introduction of Automatic Robot Programming (ARP). This Valk Welding technology automatically analyses 3D CAD or STEP files, recognises weld seams, and determines the optimal welding sequence and robot positions. The result: a robot that programs itself.

Where previously each new product required a time-consuming programming process, ARP now makes it possible to weld even single-piece products efficiently. Batch size simply no longer matters. This removes the biggest barrier to robotisation at Tyllis and opens the door to much broader use of robotic welding in their production.

The decisive factor: speed and energy

The collaboration with Valk Welding Finland moved at remarkable speed. The dynamism and energy of the Valk Welding team gave Tyllis the confidence to make an immediate decision. Thanks to the combination of RWAAS and ARP, Tyllis was able to take the leap into a new generation of robotic welding in record time.

Competitive advantage in the making

With this step, Tyllis can:

- Scale up quickly during peak production
- Implement new welding techniques instantly
- Spread costs and minimise investment risks
- Further improve quality and consistency
- Execute one-off production as efficiently as series production

In a market where lead time, quality, and customisation are increasingly critical, this combination gives Tyllis a clear and sustainable advantage.

www.tyllis.fi

“They either do it right or not at all. That fits our philosophy and builds trust.”

- Aart Aalbers

Watch the video

Laser welding is the future

The Netherlands

Forty years ago, AaltersIwico became the first company in Europe to invest in a Panasonic welding robot. Today, the metalworking firm is once again at the forefront—this time in laser welding. Last summer, Valk Welding installed a laser welding cell at AaltersIwico, featuring a changeover system based on the Ferris wheel concept. Aart Aalbers explains: “Some of our competitors have advanced laser welding technology, but they’re unable to integrate it into a complete system. Valk Welding has grown into a major system integrator and is the only one capable of doing so. That’s their true added value in my view.”

Aart Aalbers and his successors—nephew Gijsbert and sons Kees and Niels—have long recognised the potential and benefits of laser welding for their products. As a metalworking company, AaltersIwico supplies complete products to OEMs and has become a global player in architectural security through its defence & security division. Aart Aalbers: “Especially for those products, laser welding technology allows us to deliver even higher quality.”

Meeting high standards

One of the first applications where AaltersIwico significantly improved both product quality and production efficiency using laser welding was in the circumferential welding of double-plated doors. “For the Eastern Scheldt storm surge barrier (OSK), for example, we manufacture doors that must be hot-dip galvanised due to saltwater exposure. We can now weld them seamlessly and completely shut all around, allowing galvanisation without compromising quality. Previously, we used plug welding and had to seal the seams with caulking. But that method isn’t suitable for galvanising. Now we can deliver these doors in higher quality and fully galvanised.”

Initial manual testing

To gain experience with laser welding technology, AaltersIwico initially imported a handheld laser welding system from China. “We carried out extensive testing with it, and the results were promising. The major advantage is that, unlike MIG and TIG welding, laser welding introduces virtually no heat, which prevents warping in flat products like the doors we make. You can even place a cold plate on a profile and weld it through completely. The welds are cleaner, and the quality is superb. However, the high welding speed is impossible to maintain manually. That’s where a robot becomes essential.”

Ferris wheel changeover System

“Given our long-standing collaboration and positive experience with Valk Welding, we sat down with them to discuss our idea of a robot on a track,” says Aart Aalbers.

Valk Welding proposed a different concept: a Ferris wheel-style changeover table housed within a fully enclosed cell. “Thanks to the Ferris wheel concept, you can ensure safety while also using a crane to load and unload heavier components,” explains Alex Hol from Valk Welding.

“It’s also the first cell we’ve delivered with a Trumpf laser source, integrated with a Panasonic welding robot.”

Confidence in the organisation

Over the past forty years, Aart Aalbers has witnessed Valk Welding’s growth and has come to value the company’s ability to develop and translate welding and system integration expertise into tailored solutions. “They either do it right or not at all. That fits our philosophy and builds trust,” he emphasises.

Laser welding is the future

“With the advantages of laser welding technology integrated into a robotic cell, we can make significant gains in both quality and efficiency. For us, this is just the beginning. We see it as the future,” concludes Aart Aalbers.

www.aalberswico.nl

A safe and efficient step forward in welding automation

Laser welding is rapidly gaining ground within industrial welding technology. At Valk Welding, we do not see this development as a temporary trend, but as a logical extension of our expertise. As a technology partner, we also take full responsibility within this process – from concept to implementation. In doing so, we combine our own hardware and software developments with the strength of reliable partners.

Safety and reliability first

The rise of cheap handheld laser welding machines has not escaped our notice. Nevertheless, at Valk Welding we deliberately opt for a fully automated approach with robots. Manual laser welding involves many safety risks. That is why we offer a CE-certified solution that protects your employees and ensures consistent weld quality. Our laser welding machines are supplied as standard in a fully laser-safe cabin, equipped with various options such as automatic rapid roll-up doors, viewing windows, fume extraction and suction grilles. In this way, we create a safe working environment for your employees, while the system can be flexibly adapted to your production process. With a cost-effective concept and short payback time, we make laser welding accessible to a wide range of companies.

Smart technology, smart flexibility

What distinguishes our solution is, among other things, the flexibility to weld with or without filler material. In applications where filler material is required, Valk Welding offers a unique solution with its own VWPR line. This VWPR line has been specially developed for automatic processes and ensures perfect coordination between laser, robot and filler materials. As a result, even more complex weld seams can be carried out with high precision and repeatability.

Full integration for maximum performance

Our laser welding solution is fully integrated with the Panasonic welding robot, ensuring seamless cooperation between robot, laser source and control. This 100% integration guarantees optimal performance and high weld quality, while operation remains simple and reliable. The combination of advanced fibre laser technology, high-quality optics and efficient cooling makes the system robust and versatile – suitable for a wide range of industrial applications. In addition, our laser welding machines are equipped with extensive calibration and validation options, comparable to those of our welding robot installations. This allows the laser tool to be calibrated accurately, the Tool Centre Point (TCP) is maintained, and camera feedback in the welding process is possible. This ensures consistent weld quality and process reliability.

Scope of application

Our laser welding machines are equipped with a source power of 3 kW, enabling perfect welding of steel, stainless steel and aluminium. The system is particularly suitable for welding thin-walled products with high aesthetic requirements, as very little post-processing is needed and heat input – and thus distortion – is kept to a minimum. Any soot formation that occurs during the process can easily be removed with a cloth.

(Laser) Welding in the DNA

Laser welding fits seamlessly within our vision of welding automation. We remain true to our core: delivering high-quality welding solutions that really work in practice. Our European structure enables us to support companies of all sizes – from a single point of contact. Whether it concerns a first step towards automation or an advanced laser welding solution: Valk Welding is ready as a partner who thinks along, develops and relieves you of all worries.

Features of the Valk Welding laser welding solution:

- Fully safe CE solution for your employees
- Optimal performance and weld quality through 100% integration
- Welding with or without filler material
- Shorter ROI thanks to offline programming
- Complete peace of mind with Valk Welding service support
- Solution including welding jigs (if desired)

Van Hool picks up the thread again after relaunch

Belgium

Just over a year after bankruptcy and a restart, Van Hool Industrial Vehicles is back on solid ground. Automation of the production line for tank trailers and containers is set to double capacity. The arrival of a new Valk Welding robotic installation this autumn will mark the final step in this automation drive.

“Previously, we had three different production lines for tankers and tank containers. We are now merging these into a single synchronised production line, running in a loop through the plant,” explains Jos Hendrickx, Production Manager at Van Hool Industrial Vehicles (IV) in Koningshooikt, Belgium, some 20 kilometres from Antwerp.

Van Hool is a household name in the region and, until early last year, employed 3,000 people. The collapse of the bus market during the COVID crisis, the transition to e-buses and fierce competition from China brought the giant to its knees. The bus division, which accounted for 80 percent of group turnover, was hardest hit. Van Hool IV, responsible for the remaining 20 percent of turnover and producing trailers, container chassis and tankers, was less severely affected.

In April last year, the group was declared bankrupt. The bus division was acquired by Dutch company VDL, while the Industrial Vehicles division was taken over by GRW, a trailer builder affiliated with Schmitz Cargobull.

Twenty-second Valk Welding robot for internal welding to complete automation process

Rapid restart after bankruptcy

“We went bankrupt on 8 April and restarted with twenty people on 29 April,” continues Hendrickx, who has worked at Van Hool for 38 years. Within a year, a large share of the 700-strong workforce had returned to their former employer. “We now employ 250 people, 85 percent of whom also worked at Van Hool IV before the bankruptcy,” he explains.

Not only the employees, but also suppliers and customers — from food companies to petrochemical firms — remained loyal to the manufacturer. Van Hool has long been known for its flexible, tailor-made solutions. “The quality and strong reputation were the reasons for us to relaunch the company,” says GRW director Gerhard van der Merwe, who is closely involved in the restart and spends a great deal of time in Koningshooikt.

Whereas Van Hool IV previously produced a wide range of transport trailers, its focus after the restart is on chassis, stainless steel tank trailers and tank containers. “We have discontinued products such as curtain-sided and refrigerated trailers, as Schmitz Cargobull is far more competitive in those segments thanks to its scale,” Hendrickx adds.

Specialisation in tank construction

The new owners aim to maximise synergies between the companies, with Van Hool IV focusing more heavily on the construction of tank containers and trailers. Where 500 units currently roll off the line each year, that number should rise to 1,000 in the future. Production of chassis is stabilising at 1,000 units annually but could still increase over time.

The growth ambitions in tank construction explain the facelift the factory is currently undergoing. Machines have been relocated and conveyor systems installed. Within the new synchronised production line, an important role has been reserved for a Valk Welding robotic installation, to be delivered in September. “This robot is for internal welding, a task still being performed manually today,” Hendrickx notes.

Valk Welding robot completes automation

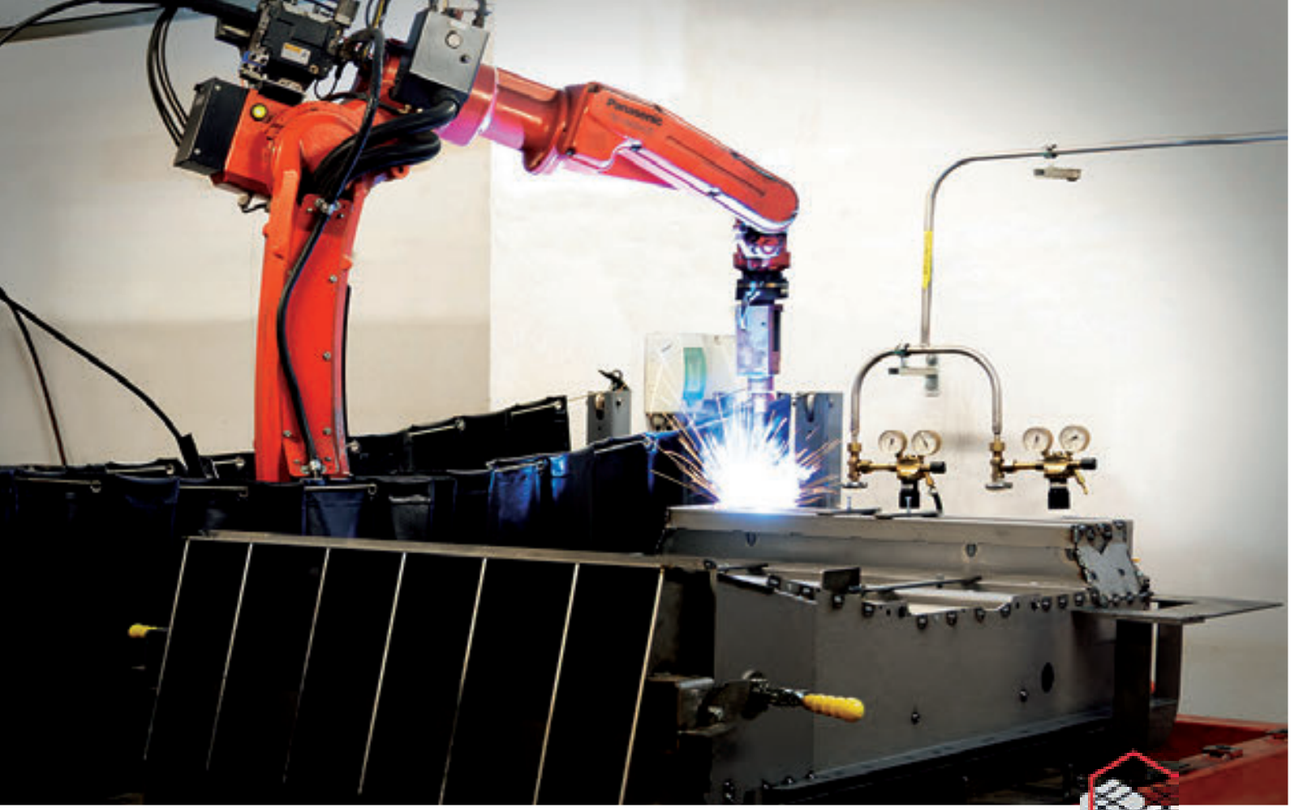
Valk Welding is one of the suppliers that has remained loyal to Van Hool. The welding automation specialist delivered its first welding robot in 1997 (with Hendrickx then also playing a key role in the specifications, implementation and choice for Valk Welding, ed.) and has since installed around 30 robots. Most of these went to the chassis department, which has already achieved a high degree of automation. By extending automation to the tank construction department, Van Hool can further boost productivity.

‘Many innovations developed with Van Hool’

Jan Wanten, responsible for Van Hool Industrial Vehicles at Valk Welding, is pleased to see Van Hool IV back on its feet so soon after the restart. “Van Hool is a key account for us and has always been at the forefront of testing new Valk Welding developments, providing us with valuable hands-on experience from production. That certainly also applies to this robot, which will take over the internal welding tasks.”

The strong partnership between Van Hool and Valk Welding has not gone unnoticed by Gerhard van der Merwe. The GRW director has also ordered a Valk Welding robotic installation for trailer production in South Africa, where GRW specialises in the construction of aluminium tank containers.

www.vanhooliv.com



DTPS

Mechanics by nature, welders by technology

SixPointTwo lifts production with third Valk Welding robot

Czech Republic

The success of SixPointTwo is built on Dutch business spirit and, above all, Czech craftsmanship. Every day, more than 150 specialists deliver components for OEM customers in the Netherlands and Germany, with a strong focus on the intralogistics market.

Co-owner and managing director Marco Wielink, originally from the Netherlands but a happy resident of the Czech Republic for over 18 years, is proud of the team that has grown the company over the past 15 years. The sales and project department in Weert, the Netherlands, processes offers and orders for Dutch and German clients, which are then manufactured in the production plant on the western edge of the Vysočina region in the Czech Republic.

With the investment in a third Valk Welding robot, SixPointTwo once again raises the bar in precision, flexibility, and reliability.

Marco answered a few questions with his characteristic naturalness.

What is SixPointTwo's broader strategy?
"Our company focuses on the development and production of mechanical and mechatronic modules for OEM customers. The basis is sheet metal processing, powder coating, and assembly. Our sheet metal processing department is equipped with Trumpf machines and now three Valk Welding robots. This combination allows us to deliver complex sheet metal products with high precision and short delivery times. For our customers, this means reliability and continuity."

Why did you decide to go down the robotic welding route?
"The simple answer is a shortage of skilled welders, pressure to speed up delivery times and, last but not least, the stability of welding results, which our customers absolutely demand."

What materials do you weld with robots?
"We mainly weld steel with a thickness of 1 to 8 millimetres, but also stainless steel. A good example is a complex component made of 1 mm steel sheet for conversion kits for wheelchair accessible vehicles. It is a large but thin product that places very high demands on dimensional accuracy. Thanks to well-configured robotic systems, we can achieve this accuracy without reducing production speed."

You have been using welding robots since 2017. Is there any equipment for such a machine that is indispensable for your type of production?
We produce a lot in small series (high mix/low volume), so flexibility and short changeover times are essential. With Valk's DTPS software, we can program completely offline (outside the machine itself). This allows us to virtually prepare and simulate a new order in advance. When it's time to start production, we already have a verified program ready. Downtime is therefore minimal, which makes the system cost-effective even for small series."

How do you manage the accuracy of sheet metal part preparation?
"Anyone who works with sheet metal knows that it is never absolutely perfect. Small tolerances can affect the welding process, especially with thin sheets. Valk Welding robotic systems are equipped with measuring systems such as the Quick Touch Sensing. These systems detect and correct deviations in real time. For us, this means much higher process reliability."

How do you assess the use of welding robots in your production after eight years?
"From the very first purchase, we were convinced that Valk delivers a complete package: the robot, welding equipment, software, and peripherals are all part of one integrated system. This means that everything works smoothly and without the need to integrate separate components. For us, this means reliability and ease of use."

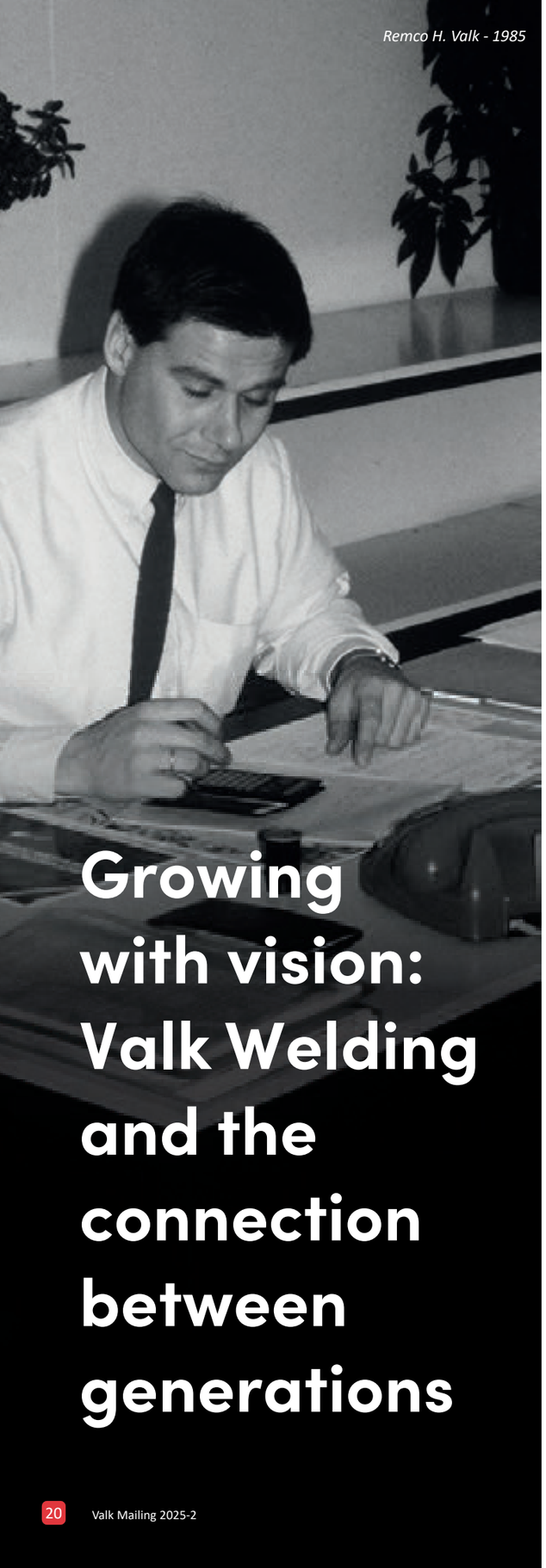
With our third Valk Welding robot, SixPointTwo is strengthening its position as a supplier of high-quality modules. The combination of in-house engineering, modern sheet metal processing technology, and advanced robotic welding creates a production environment that is ready for the future.

"If you want to know more about our company, or the considerations behind our investment in Valk Welding robot systems, you are always welcome and see for yourself", Marco concludes with a smile.

www.sixpointtwo.eu

"The simple answer is a shortage of skilled welders, pressure to speed up delivery times and, last but not least, the stability of welding results, which our customers absolutely demand."

- Marco Wielink, Co-owner and managing director



Growing with vision: Valk Welding and the connection between generations

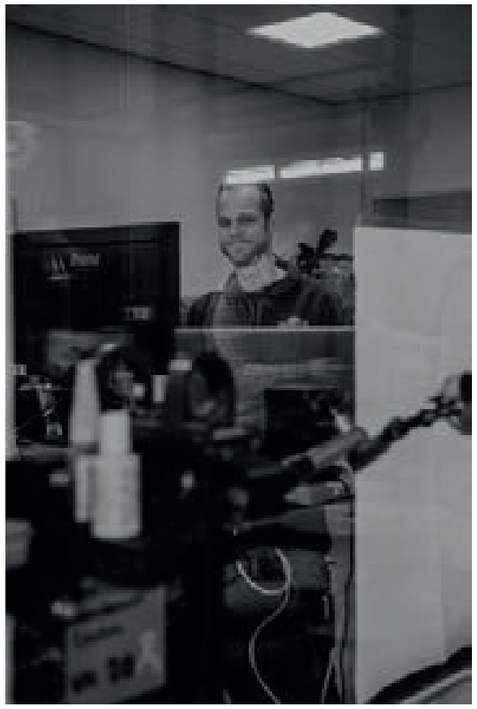
At Valk Welding, a family business that will celebrate its 65th anniversary next year, a leadership transition from the second to the third generation has been set in motion in a thoughtful and fitting manner. It's a transition that preserves culture and identity while confidently steering into the future. Valk Welding demonstrates that it is possible—with strategy, trust, and a widely supported vision for the future.

The third generation: more than just a family name
At Valk Welding, the term 'third generation' doesn't automatically refer to a family member with the same surname. It represents a broader group of employees who have been contributing to the company for years and now hold key positions. They form the backbone of tomorrow's organisation. This generation wasn't chosen—it evolved, driven by commitment, experience, and shared responsibility.

As Remco H. Valk puts it: "The third generation consists of people who treat the company as if it were their own—a mentality deeply rooted in our culture." It's a generation that may not always be in the spotlight but certainly makes a difference. Not through tradition, but through and with dedication.

A proven growth model
What sets Valk Welding apart is its method of growth: controlled, independent, and guided by a clear strategy. "The growth we've experienced as a company has become a proven concept," says Remco. "We started in the Czech Republic in 2004, and every expansion since has followed the same principle. No acquisitions, no shortcuts—we do everything ourselves."

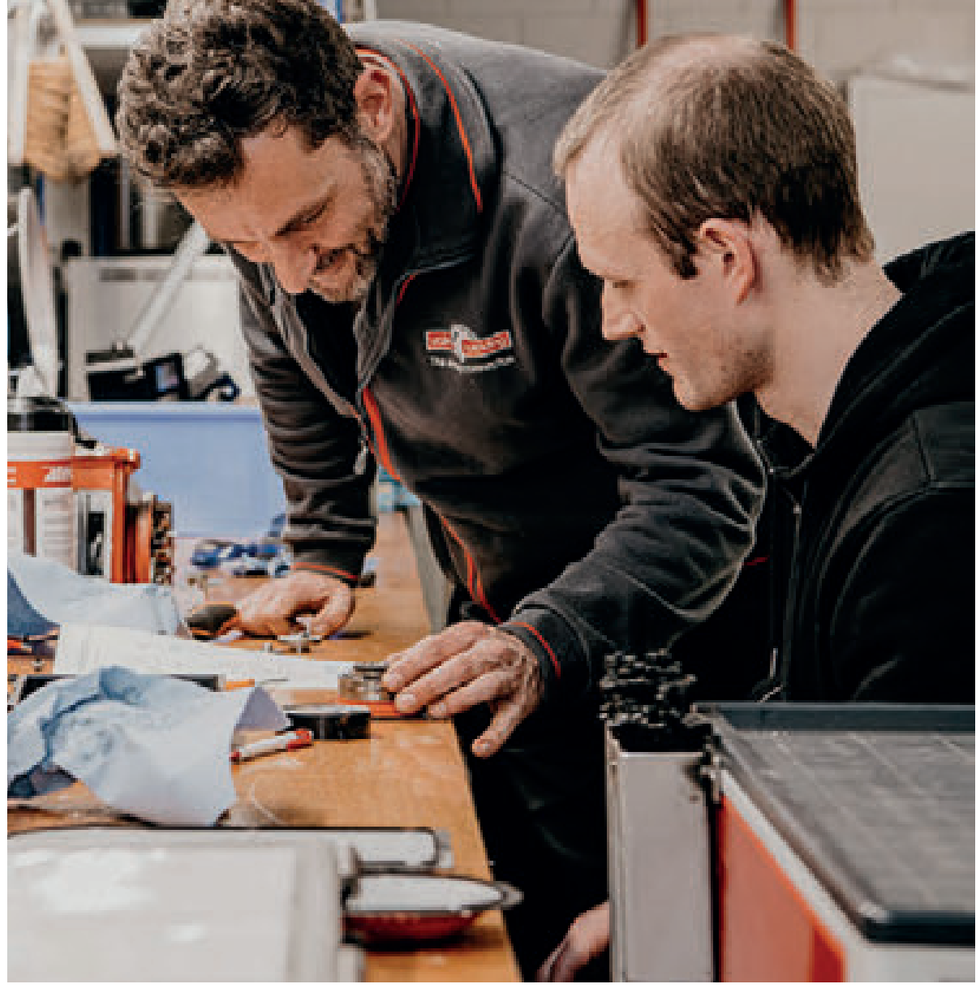
This model was recently reaffirmed with the successful launch of Valk Welding Finland. This approach not only ensures continuity but also preserves culture and quality. At Valk Welding, growth is not a goal in itself, but a natural outcome of vision and trust.

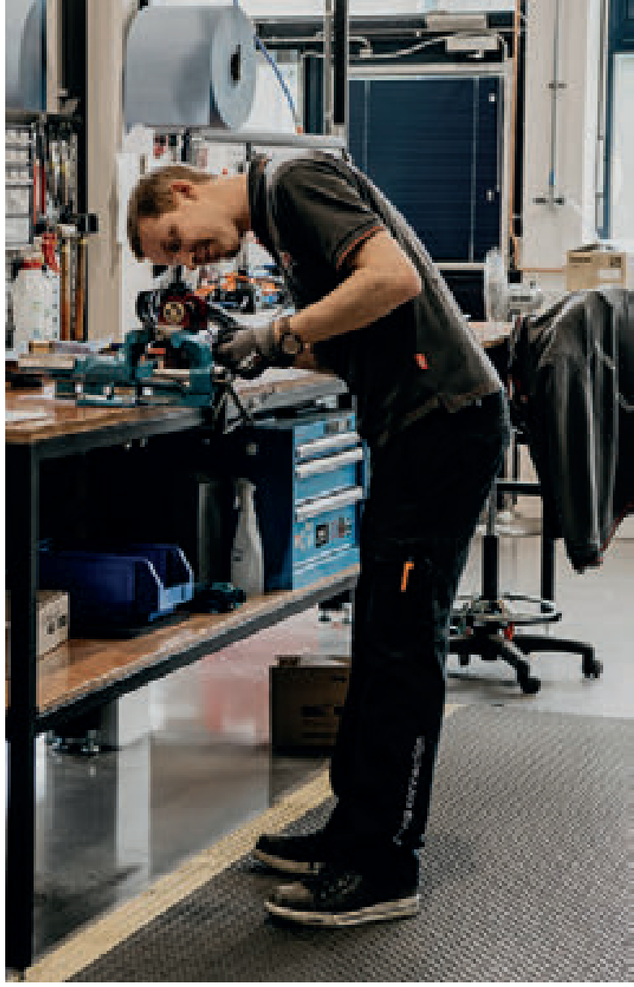


“The third generation consists of people who treat the company as if it were their own—a mentality deeply rooted in our culture.”

- Remco H. Valk, CEO,
Valk Welding Group

Group Leadership Team: building connections
A key element in connecting the generations is the Group Leadership Team (GLT). This team consists of colleagues from various countries who hold—or are preparing to hold—leadership roles within their local branches. The GLT was established to safeguard the future of the Valk Welding Group as a whole, rooted in the company’s ‘Strong Connection DNA’.
By meeting regularly, a network of current and future leaders is formed, leaders who are already contributing to Valk Welding’s strategy and direction today. The growth of the next generation within Valk Welding is therefore already clearly visible.





Henk J.L. Valk and Remco H. Valk - 1988

Remco H. Valk and Reinoud Valk - 2025

Trust as a foundation
Valk Welding shows that a successful generational transition is not about succession, but about development. By giving people the space to grow into roles that suit them—not because they have to, but because they want to—a resilient and agile organisation emerges. One where leadership is not imposed but cultivated.

“Dare to invest in people, in structure, and in culture. Because those who build trust, build the future.”
– Remco H. Valk, CEO, Valk Welding Group.

Eurofours optimises baking oven production costs through robotic welding

France

For more than 45 years, Eurofours – based in Northern France – has been designing, manufacturing, and selling ovens and proofing cabinets for the bakery and pastry industry. But behind the baking of delicious bread, viennoiserie, and pastries lies a surprising amount of technology.

"Baking 80 baguettes evenly – with the same doneness and colour is far more complex than to cook a Sunday roast in your kitchen oven. The temperature must be uniform throughout the oven, and the baking process must take place at a precise temperature and duration," explains Yoan Khinache, Head of the Methods Department at Eurofours.

The French company has built up this expertise since the late 1970s. Aerospace engineer Pierre Lancelot decided to apply his knowledge of airflow to baking technology. This led to the development of the first electric convection oven and the founding of Eurofours on 13 October 1980 in Gommegnies.

Over the years, the company has grown with new buildings, production lines, and acquisitions of brands such as Abry Nicolas, Angoulvant, Arpin, Bouton, Jolivet, Pierre Pont, and Ponton Lemeunier. In 2010, Stéphane and Nicolas Lancelot took over the family business following the death of their father.

Modernising sheet metal processing

Today, Eurofours offers a wide range of ovens (convection, deck, and rack systems), controlled proofing cabinets, and refrigerated display units – both standard and custom-made. With around 120 employees across three sites (two in Gommegnies and one in La Longueville), the company achieves an annual turnover of approximately €20 million, 30% of which comes from exports to Europe, Asia, Canada, and other regions.

To remain competitive, Eurofours is constantly looking for ways to reduce costs. In 2019, the company explored automating the welding of oven cabinets. "This was still done entirely by hand, while it is becoming increasingly difficult to find welders, partly due to competition from Belgium," says Mickaël Rousseau, Production Director.

However, before introducing robotics, another issue had to be addressed. "With our outdated bending and cutting machines, the parts would have lacked repeatability, meaning we would have needed expensive jigs. The investment in a welding robot and associated tooling would then have far exceeded the budget," explains Yoan Khinache. Therefore, in 2020, Eurofours invested in a complete solution from LVD.

From TIG to MIG

Among the suppliers of automated welding, Valk Welding stood out thanks to its cold SAWP welding process and Quick Touch wire searching. The chosen solution consists of a mobile Valk Welding FRAME-H concept, a TL-1800 robot, and an integrated power source with Panasonic's Super Active Wire welding process. "For us, this was the best solution," says Rousseau. "We are now saving even more time."

"By switching from spot welding to rivets, we have already reduced preparation time by 50%. This pre-assembly is now carried out by an operator before the welding department. The welder only needs to clamp the oven onto the table, and the robot does the rest," he explains. The switch from TIG to MIG welding has also further improved cycle times.

Since early 2024, Eurofours has been considering further automation of the four corner welds at the front. The engineering department's goal is to make the welding cell suitable for almost the entire product range – instead of the current 30%.

www.eurofours.com

At Eurofours, Valk Welding installed a solution consisting of a Valk Welding FRAME-H concept, a TL-1800 robot, and an integrated power source with Panasonic's Super Active Wire welding process.

Mickaël Rousseau, Production Director, and Yoan Khinache, Head of the Methods Department at Eurofours.

Panasonic Super Active Wire Process (S-AWP)

The Panasonic Super Active Wire Process (S-AWP) delivers major value by improving both productivity and quality in welding operations. It dramatically reduces spatter—by up to 99%—which means less cleaning, grinding, and rework, directly cutting production costs and downtime. The process produces smoother, cleaner welds with consistent appearance, enhancing product quality and reducing inspection or finishing time. Because S-AWP stabilises the arc and precisely controls heat input, it allows for faster welding speeds and safer operation on thin or heat-sensitive materials, expanding application flexibility. Overall, it increases throughput, reduces waste, and boosts reliability—key values for any automated or high-volume welding environment.

It’s always a good time to invest

Poland

Wytwórnia Konstrukcji Stalowych Szyszka – a company that produces equipment for excavators and is involved in the prefabrication of steel structures and containers – is taking its first steps in robotic welding.

Although WKS Szyszka was officially established in 2021, its roots go back to 1990, when production of tractor cabins began under the name Zakład Ślusarski Teresa Szyszka. Today, the company employs around 70 qualified staff and supplies products to both the Polish and international markets. It is run by two creative and enterprising brothers – Adam and Przemysław – who share their first experiences with robotic welding.

“We are constantly investing in development and modern technology, because we know that innovation is essential to maintain a high level of quality and competitiveness,” says Przemysław Szyszka, Vice Chairman of the Board and co-owner of the company. “The many economic turbulences of recent years have only increased the importance of investing in modern technology, robotics, and automation. We believe it is always a good time to invest – as long as those investments are well thought out and planned,” he adds.

The right Partner is the key to success

“The first discussions about robotic welding began a few years ago. That’s when we started looking for a supplier that matched our needs. Since this was our first welding robot, we naturally had some doubts. We took our time to make a decision. We sent our products to various integrators of robotic welding stations for test welds. At Valk Welding, the trials took place both at the branch in the Czech Republic and at the headquarters in the Netherlands. This helped us to better understand the system and confirmed our choice to make this investment with Valk Welding,” says Adam Szyszka, Chairman of the Board and co-owner. “We were looking for a supplier with experience in building welding stations for companies like ours. In our choice for Valk Welding, not only the quality of the equipment played a role, but also the technical support and the company’s experience,” adds Adam Szyszka.

Adapting to the robot

Good preparation of the welding parts is crucial – a robot does not forgive major inaccuracies. That’s why we optimised our processes for cutting, machining, and quality control. The layout of the production hall was also adapted to allow the station to operate under optimal conditions. We changed our approach to mounting parts on the welding station. The Quick Exchange system with “Schunk” holders, installed on the manipulator, forced us to make changes that turned out to be beneficial not only for the robot but also for the manual welding stations. Sensor systems, such as Quick Touch Sensing, are very valuable to us, especially for parts with less tight tolerances. They enable the robot to correct assembly deviations and maintain high weld quality.

The first step leaves us wanting more

We were pleased that the implementation of the station went quickly and smoothly. Valk Welding demonstrated that they could start up production with the results they had promised in advance. As a result, we were able to start series production immediately and quickly fulfil the first orders. Robotisation enables us to increase both efficiency and quality. We can now process more orders in less time, while maintaining repeatability and a high aesthetic standard of the welds. We are satisfied with this investment – it was a major change, but absolutely necessary. To companies that are just starting out with robotisation, we would like to say one thing: don’t be afraid to take that step. We have taken the first step and hope that many more will follow on the road to further robotisation.

www.szyszka.pl

The strong connection

Let’s connect at shows

Sepem Industries
27.01 - 29.01 (FR)

Technishow
10.03 - 13.03 (NL)

Nordic Welding Expo
17.03 - 19.03 (FI)

STOM Kielce
24.03 - 27.03 (PL)

Global Industrie
30.03 - 02.04 (FR)

Mach
20.04 - 24.04 (UK)

DIRA robotbrag
07.05 - 08.05 (DK)

Welding Week
19.05 - 21.05 (BE)

Elmia Automation
19.05 - 22.05 (SE)

Welding Week
01.10 - 03.10 (NL)

MSV Brno
06.10 - 09.10 (CZ)

Expowelding
13.10 - 15.10 (PL)

Euroblech
20.10 - 23.10 (DE)

Journée du Metal
03.12 (BE)

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