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18 June, 2021

Review: EMVA Business Conference Special Edition 2021

- Key Takeaways and Conference Attendees' Feedback
- Next physical 20th EMVA Business Conference to take place 12-14 May, 2022

Barcelona, 18 June, 2021. With a participation of 135 participants from 23 nations the 19th EMVA Business Conference Special Edition 2021 took place online last week. A total of 20 speeches, two fireside chats and two CEO/Management panel discussions covered virtually all current actual economic and technical topics that the machine vision world currently deals with. During the individual B2B sessions about 90 virtual bilateral video meetings were arranged between conference attendees before and after the conference program in the afternoons.

Positive Feedback to Online Format

In their feedback almost 95 percent of participants appreciated the EMVA's decision to offer the conference in online format instead of cancel it. Here's a few of the personal comments given about the conference:

"The best thing you can do to learn and be inspired by the innovative trends in the world of machine vision in a very condensed way."

"As always excellent organization, great job everybody, especially in such difficult times!"

"Again although strange not to be face to face the EMVA did not disappoint with the organization of the event."

"Thank you for putting on a great event and adjusting the timing to accommodate North American attendees."

Key Takeaways

The top-class panel on the second conference day discussed the current status of Industry 4.0 and stated the term Industry 4.0 has already become a standard itself with AI and machine vision as core components such as in generating digital twins. However, industrial business models are often not as disruptive as in the end consumer business e.g. where the smartphone triggered a paradigm shift; but would rather put effort into improving business models instead of new business models. According to the panelists more data also requires increasing use of AI and digitalization automatically contributes to decarbonization. Vison as it was stated can provide the right data at the right time to make the right decision in Industry 4.0.

AI being a megatrend in the machine vision industry was present in various technical parts of the conference sessions. The keynote on the second day given by IBM Benelux CTO Wouter Denayer reflected on the current developments pledged to change the fundamental structure of neural networks towards Neural Symbolic AI Systems. Simply making networks bigger would not help in future and the increase in accuracy for training AI is no longer equivalent to the amount of energy input and pollution which makes carbon footprint of AI unjustifiable. Or as EMVA President Chris Yates put in his conference wrap-up: "With great power comes great responsibility".

This conference also provided room to put early-stage innovators in the focus: No less than six companies in the initial or post star-up stage presented their innovations which circled around the big topic AI and Deep Learning focusing on logistics and complex inspection tasks on the factory floor. Other new approaches were presented in the area of feature-based and variable density 3D scanning; contactless traceability of items with a digital image; and combining brain and AI into an innovative decision-making system.

The CEO Panel Discussion on the pandemic impacts for the machine vision industry found that vision tech overall coped fairly well in the crisis due to its vertical market focus. Business expectations of the company leaders from Stemmer Imaging, Basler and Tiama Inspection were even that pre-pandemic business level can be achieved again within the current year 2021. One obstacle, however, could be the lasting material shortage which affects virtually all components. In addition, Covid-19 taught that more elements of value generation need to move closer to the customer in all regions of business activity enabling to react on-site. The crisis was a big push for remote maintenance and webinar business meetings saving travel costs, which will keep physical meetings lower even when restrictions are lifted.

In another presentation the European Photonics Industry Consortium (EPIC) announced the launch of the first industry association led Photonics index. The basket is composed of 65 public listed companies, quite a number of them from the machine vision world. The index is an excellent opportunity to reach out to the investors' community.

Messe Stuttgart then gave an inside in how the trade show organizer suffered in the pandemic. Most important for the machine vision industry, Messe Stuttgart asked for some more patience regarding the final decision if VISION 2021 will take place as currently the stakeholders are interviewed; with so far rather good industry sentiment but mixed company feedback when it comes to exhibit.

The session on hyperspectral imaging summarized that HSI technology is scaling up quickly in the market as it has become easier to use and more affordable. It was pointed out that with hyperspectral imaging an additional layer of information regarding the nature and consistency of an object.

Machine vision in China was in the focus of the second fireside chat. Electronics and Semiconductor are the largest industrial user sectors of machine vision in China, according to CMVU president Isabel Yang. The country experiences a huge 30 percent increase in business after the crisis, mainly pushed by a rising level of automation. 3D imaging finds a lot of attention which led to the formation of a 3D standard group. Also IR imaging gains attention.

The next physical 20th EMVA Business Conference will take place 12-14 May 2022 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

About EMVA
The European Machine Vision Association is a non-for-profit and non-commercial association representing the Machine Vision industry in Europe. The association was founded in 2003 to promote the development and use of vision technology in all sectors, and represents members from within Europe, North America, and Asia. The EMVA is open for all types of organizations having a stake in machine vision, computer vision, embedded vision or imaging technologies: manufacturers, system and machine builders, integrators, distributors, consultancies, research organizations and academia. All members – as the 100% owners of the association – benefit from the networking, cooperation, standardization, and the numerous and diverse activities of the EMVA. The EMVA is the host of four global machine vision standards: The two widely established standards GenICam and EMVA 1288 as well as the two standardization initiatives Open Optics Camera Interface (OOCI) and Embedded Vision Interface Standard (emVision).