

Human-robot collaboration takes the trophy at prestigious international logistics award

A Danish robotics startup won IFOY 2026 with a self-driving pallet jack built not to replace warehouse workers, but to give them back time, energy, and control.

STUTT GART, GERMANY, June 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Every day, in warehouses and factories around the world, skilled operators spend hours walking the same routes, moving pallets from one place to another, repeating work that is necessary but rarely meaningful. They know the floor, the people, the exceptions, the irregular loads, and the moments when human judgment matters. But too often, their time is consumed by transport tasks that a machine could carry.



Emil Hauch Jensen, CEO of The Mobile Robot Company, receives the IFOY Award from Udo Schmidt at the IFOY Award ceremony.

That is the dilemma [The Mobile Robot Company](#) set out to solve. Not by removing the operator from the process, and not by asking warehouses to rebuild themselves around automation, but by creating a new kind of collaboration: a pallet jack that works like the familiar tool operators already know, then takes over the repetitive driving when the human decides it is time.

That idea has now been recognized on one of intralogistics' biggest international stages. The Mobile Robot Company ApS has won the [IFOY](#) AWARD 2026 in the category Industrial Truck of the Year for its J1600 self-driving pallet jack, a dual-mode vehicle that can be operated manually like a conventional electric pallet jack or sent autonomously between saved locations in warehouses and factories.

The award marks a breakthrough moment for the young Danish company. Founded in November 2024, The Mobile Robot Company entered the competition with a product aimed at one of automation's most stubborn barriers: how to bring robotics into everyday pallet transport

without making the project expensive, complex, and risky.

“Warehouse automation has too often been presented as a choice between doing everything manually or launching a major automation project,” said Emil Hauch Jensen, CEO of The Mobile Robot Company ApS. “We built the J1600 for the space in between. The operator still makes the judgment calls, handles the tricky parts, and stays in control. The robot takes over the repetitive transport that consumes time, energy, and attention every day.”



Emil Hauch Jensen, CEO of the Mobile Robot Company is demonstrating the J1600 self-driving pallet jack.

The IFOY AWARD, short for International Intralogistics and Forklift Truck of the Year, is regarded as one of the world’s leading technology awards in intralogistics. The 2026 competition received 49 entries, with 17 finalists undergoing the multi-stage IFOY Audit during TEST CAMP

INTRALOGISTICS in Dortmund. Winners are selected by an independent international jury of trade journalists.

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*Emil Hauch Jensen, CEO of
The Mobile Robot Company
ApS*

For The Mobile Robot Company, the significance of the award goes beyond the trophy. It is a signal that warehouse automation is entering a more practical phase: less about replacing people with fully automated systems, and more about giving operators better tools that fit into real working environments.

That signal became even stronger because of the company The Mobile Robot Company kept in the final field. In the Industrial Truck category, the Danish startup was nominated alongside STILL, part of the KION Group, and

Crown, two of the most established names in the global material handling industry.

It was a classic challenger story: a company barely more than a year old standing beside industrial giants with decades of history, global sales organizations, and deep engineering resources. The IFOY jury’s decision suggests that the next wave of intralogistics innovation may not only come from making machines more autonomous. It may come from designing automation around the people who still make warehouses work.

For decades, material handling has been built around two familiar categories: manual trucks operated entirely by humans, and automated systems designed to remove the human from the transport process. The J1600 points to a third path. It combines the flexibility, judgment, and adaptability of the operator with the consistency, endurance, and repeatability of a robot.

In its assessment, the IFOY jury highlighted the J1600's dual-mode concept, intuitive operation, low barrier to entry, and ability to make automation accessible and economically viable, particularly for small and medium-sized companies. The independent IFOY Innovation Check described the J1600 as a "game changer" for low-threshold automation in intralogistics.

"The fact that this award went to a human-in-the-loop robot matters," said Jensen. "It reflects something we hear from customers all the time: they do not want automation that only works when the warehouse is perfectly controlled. They want automation that can live in the real world, alongside real people, with all the exceptions and changes that happen every day."

The need is clear. Manual pallet handling remains one of the most common tasks in warehouses, production sites, goods receipt, storage, and shipping. Yet many companies still hesitate to automate because conventional solutions often require IT integration, infrastructure changes, expert configuration, and long implementation timelines. For smaller sites and fast-changing operations, that can make automation feel out of reach.

The J1600 is designed for those environments. Operators can use it as a normal electric pallet jack, manually picking up pallets wherever human judgment is needed. Once the pallet is ready for transport, the operator selects a saved destination on the touchscreen and sends the vehicle on its way. The J1600 then drives autonomously to the destination, while the operator can move on to the next task.

New locations can be added by simply driving the pallet jack to the desired point and pressing "Save Location." Training takes around 30 minutes, Wi-Fi is optional, and the system can be used without mandatory IT infrastructure or system integration.

"We did not set out to build automation for a perfect warehouse," said Jensen. "We built it for



Emil Hauch Jensen CEO of The Mobile Robot Company showing the IFOY Test Certificate for the J1600 self-driving pallet jack

real warehouses, where things change, people improvise, pallets appear in new places, and the smartest decision is sometimes still made by the person standing next to the truck.”

According to [IFOY’s assessment](#), the J1600 can reduce manual labor by up to 80 percent on repetitive transport tasks. The vehicle carries up to 1,600 kg, uses 3D LiDAR SLAM technology supported by an industrial NVIDIA Jetson AI computer, and navigates in dynamic warehouse and production environments while allowing immediate human takeover.

Safety and collaboration are central to the design. The J1600 uses a multi-layer safety architecture that includes 3D mapping, two 2D safety LiDARs, certified components, emergency stop functions, and a 360-degree safety field. The safety zone adapts to the vehicle’s speed, and the operator can take over at any time.

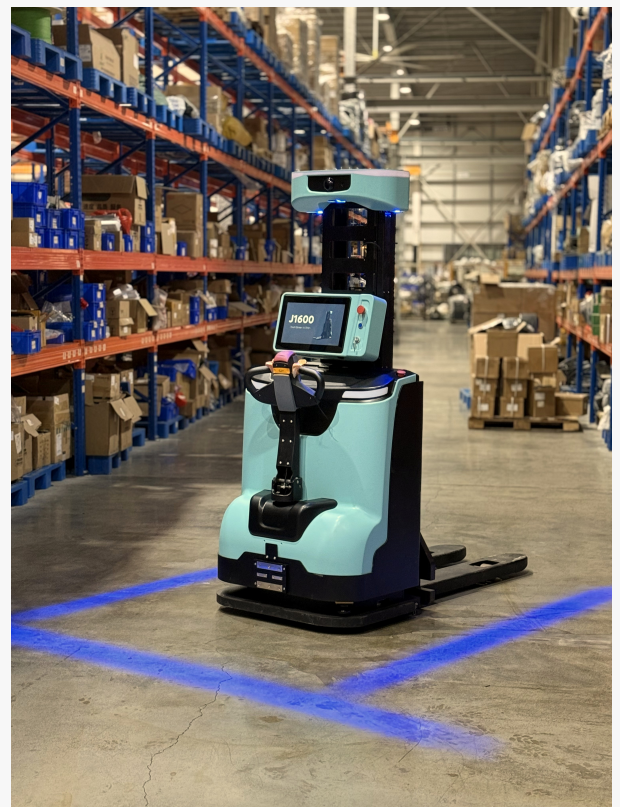
The result is not a robot that demands a new way of working. It is a familiar warehouse tool with a new capability: it can drive itself when the operator chooses.

The IFOY Test Report concluded that the J1600 addresses the growing need for flexible automation without the complexity and cost of large-scale automation projects, noting that its flexibility allows repetitive tasks to be automated while human intervention remains immediately available.

For the Danish startup, the award is also a validation of a different kind of robotics ambition. The company was founded in November 2024 by two Danish robotics veterans, launched its first product in 2026, and has already established distributor partnerships in eight countries.

“Winning IFOY is important because it is independent validation,” said Jensen. “But winning in a category with companies like STILL and Crown also says something about the moment the industry is in. The future is not only about bigger fleets and more complex systems. It is also about simple, practical robots that help people do better work.”

That opportunity is global. More than one million pallet jacks are sold worldwide every year, while much of the work they perform remains manual. The Mobile Robot Company is betting that the next wave of automation will not begin with huge projects and empty promises, but with practical robots that warehouse teams can understand, trust, and use from day one.



The J1600 self-driving pallet jack from The Mobile Robot Company

“We believe the future of warehouse robotics is not about pushing people out of the workflow,” said Jensen. “It is about giving people better tools, removing the dull and repetitive parts of the job, and letting human judgment stay where it matters most.”

Emil Hauch Jensen

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