

# Fraunhofer IPA at CIOSH 2026: A Chinese Exoskeleton Market in Motion

*From a robot-served coffee on arrival to an exoskeleton catwalk at EXO Park, Fraunhofer IPA's visit to CIOSH 2026 offered a front-row view of how occupational exoskeletons are being introduced and discussed in China.*

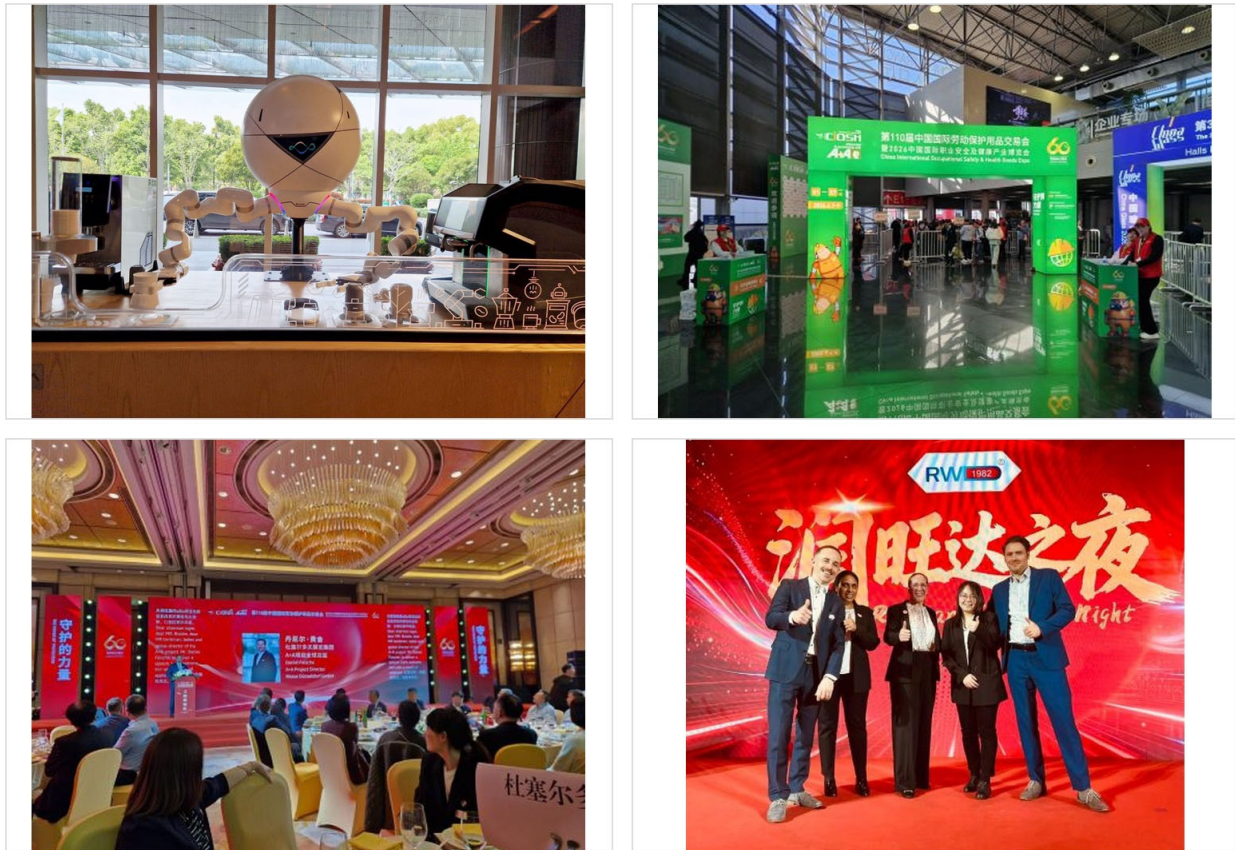


*Fraunhofer IPA at CIOSH 2026 in Shanghai. © Urban Daub / Mark Tröster*

When Mr. Urban Daub and Dr. Mark Tröster landed in Shanghai, their first coffee was served by a robot. It was a playful welcome, but also an unintentionally fitting prologue to the days ahead. At CIOSH 2026, the 110<sup>th</sup> China International Occupational Safety & Health Goods Expo, the Fraunhofer IPA team found themselves in the middle of a market where automation, safety, and wearable assistance are converging in the convention halls.

Held from April 7 to 9 at the Shanghai New International Expo Center, CIOSH marked its 60th anniversary in 2026. Organizers positioned this edition as a major meeting point for occupational safety, with pre-show materials projecting more than 1,500 exhibitors across 80,000 square meters and more than 40,000 professional visitors. Within that broader PPE and workplace-safety environment, exoskeletons had a distinct presence.

The show's EXO Park focused on wearable systems for construction, automotive manufacturing, logistics, and walking support. Fraunhofer IPA was part of that conversation on the show floor and in the seminar program, where the institute presented "Occupational Exoskeletons – Opportunities and Potentials for the Manual Workforce of the Future."



Arrival and opening scenes: robot coffee in Shanghai, the exhibition entrance, the opening program, and a reception photo.

© Urban Daub / Mark Tröster

## A major safety fair with a visible exoskeleton footprint

For Fraunhofer IPA, the Shanghai trip was a chance to compare notes with Chinese companies, see systems firsthand, and understand how the local market is framing industrial exoskeleton adoption. That perspective matters. Fraunhofer IPA has been active in occupational exoskeleton research for more than a decade, with a focus on ergonomic deployment, evaluation, and implementation.

So when the team observed that occupational exoskeleton adoption in China still appears to be at an early stage, the comment carried weight. Many systems seemed to be just entering the market. The interest was real, but the market still looked like one that is actively defining its categories, priorities, and decision criteria. Technical questions and pricing appear to dominate, while user acceptance is (still) not yet a primary focus.

### What stood out on the show floor

One of the most memorable moments of the visit was the exoskeleton “fashion show” at EXO Park. Trade fairs often struggle to communicate exoskeletons in a way that is both technically meaningful and visually accessible. The catwalk format solved part of that problem by treating wearable systems as something to be demonstrated in motion, not just displayed on a stand.

For a technology that lives at the intersection of body, task, and environment, that matters. Exoskeletons have to be seen on people and in context; a mannequin or static product sheet rarely tells the whole story. The format also made exoskeletons more accessible to a broader occupational safety audience that may not yet be immersed in wearable robotics terminology.

Fraunhofer IPA’s own session drew strong interest, and the nature of the audience questions was especially revealing. Technical specifications and price points were clearly top of mind. That is not unusual in a market at an earlier stage of adoption, but it does highlight a familiar tension in wearable robotics: the most successful deployments are rarely decided by hardware alone.

In more mature exoskeleton conversations, performance data, ergonomics, donning and doffing, compatibility with the task, maintenance, and worker buy-in all compete for attention. When the discussion is driven mainly by features and price, it often signals a market that is still mapping the basics: which category of solution fits which problem, how systems should be compared, and how value should be justified.



EXO Park scenes: panel and introductions, Fraunhofer IPA on stage, the exoskeleton catwalk, and the Exoworkathlon™ poster.

© Urban Daub / Mark Tröster

“Another important application area is already very present: supporting mobility in older adults.”

## Why the standards conversation matters

The discussions in Shanghai also pointed to a second issue that will only grow in importance as the market develops: evaluation and standards. Fraunhofer IPA brought not just technical expertise, but an assessment perspective shaped by its Exoworkathlon™ work: an approach designed to evaluate industrial exoskeletons in realistic working scenarios rather than through isolated impressions.

That focus is timely. As more exoskeletons reach the market, buyers need better ways to compare systems, interpret claims, and connect product design to real task demands. Standards and structured assessment do not solve adoption on their own, but they make the market more legible. They help end users ask better questions and help manufacturers explain value in a language the market can trust.

## More than a trade fair stop

Beyond the exhibition itself, the week underscored the importance of relationships. Fraunhofer IPA repeatedly highlighted the warm reception from Messe Düsseldorf Shanghai, A+A staff, and local partners, as well as the quality of the exchanges with Chinese and international participants.

And then there was Shanghai itself. Between the exhibition schedule, opening events, and time on the show floor, the team still managed to catch glimpses of a city that felt as kinetic as the technologies on display. The visual contrast was hard to miss: heritage streets and neon skyline, trade-fair stages and robot baristas, industrial ergonomics and consumer mobility devices. It was an apt backdrop for a wearable robotics field that is no longer confined to laboratories or niche pilot programs.



*Shanghai moments around the trip: arrival, old-city streets, cityscape, and the skyline at night. © Urban Daub / Mark Tröster*

## Why CIOSH is worth watching

For our readers, the clearest takeaway may be this: CIOSH is worth watching not simply because it is a large occupational safety expo, but because it offers a live readout of how exoskeletons are entering one of the world's most important manufacturing and technology markets.

Contacts:

**Urban Daub, M.Sc.**  
[urban.daub@ipa.fraunhofer.de](mailto:urban.daub@ipa.fraunhofer.de)

**Fraunhofer IPA**  
Research Unit | Health Technologies & Processes  
Business Segment Manager | Ergonomics & Medical Technologies

**Dr.-Ing. Mark Tröster**  
[mark.troester@ipa.fraunhofer.de](mailto:mark.troester@ipa.fraunhofer.de)

**Fraunhofer IPA**  
Research Unit | Health Technologies & Processes  
Research Team Lead | Physical Assistance Systems Engineering