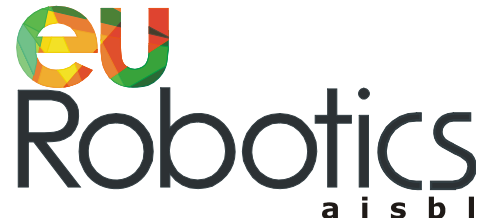


PRESS RELEASE



Brussels, 23 March, 2013

The European Robotics Forum 2013

Towards a new Research and Innovation Agenda for Robotics in Europe

"Building the Future of European Robotics" was the motto of the 3rd European Robotics Forum (ERF) in Lyon, 19 - 21 March 2013, attracting more than 300 participants from the European robotics community. The three day event hosted more than 30 community-driven workshops with topics covering the newest developments and trends within robotics.

After its start in San Sebastian in 2010, this annual event has quickly become the most influential meeting of the European robotics scene, organized by hitherto two different organisations: the industry-minded European Robotics Technology Platform EUROP, and the European Robotics Research Network EURON.

This year's Forum finalized a metamorphosis which started with the establishment of euRobotics AISBL in September, 2012. This new, non-for-profit association based in Brussels aims at bringing all relevant competencies in European robotics together. euRobotics was set up by a few stakeholders from EUROP and EURON to enter into a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with the European Commission, and, towards this objective, to develop the Horizon 2020 roadmap for European robotics.

Hence, at the European Robotics Forum about 300 researchers, engineers, managers, and a growing number of entrepreneurs and business people from all over Europe came together to discuss topics and contents for the new Strategic Research Agenda for Robotics in Europe which will influence EU funding priorities in robotics and cognitive systems in Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 is the upcoming EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, a financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, aiming at securing Europe's global competitiveness.

Running from 2014 to 2020 with an estimated €80 billion budget, the EU's new programme for research and innovation is part of the drive to create new growth and jobs in Europe. The European Robotics Public Private Partnership (PPP) is the teaming up of the robotics industry in its wide range of size and business models with research and university institutions as the private side, together with the European Commission as the public side to launch a joint research, development and innovation program in order to strengthen the position of European robotics as a whole.

The main objective of the Robotics PPP is to boost current European robotics research, development and innovation. It also aims to cultivate a positive perception of robotics in order

euRobotics aisbl is registered as an international non-profit association according to Belgian law on 19 Nov. 2012, No. 0.500.791.964

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to assure competitiveness and industrial leadership of manufacturers, providers and users of robotic technology based systems and services, as well as fostering the excellence of its science base.

Research and industry unite towards strengthening Europe's position

The General Assemblies of EURON and EUROP decided to dissolve their respective organisations, and to continue their successful activities under the common roof of euRobotics AISBL. But it is not only the recognition of a common umbrella – it is breaking down walls between industry and academia. The President of euRobotics AISBL, KUKA's CTO Bernd Liepert, opened the General Assembly of the new association with good news: "110 members by now are a clear indication that the concept of creating this new organisation has found a clear acceptance level – an association to integrate all robotics forces in Europe: within 6 months, 44 members from industry, 65 from research, plus one associate member decided to join. With members from large industry, many SME's, universities and research organisations from 17 EU member states demonstrate that we are on the way towards a perfect representation of Europe's topography in robotics."

High-ranking representatives from the European Commission were excited and confirmed that this collaborative formation is a milestone in European R&D and unique on a world scale.



The euRobotics members elected new representatives into the Board of Directors, which has 11 Directors from industry and 12 from research, creating a unique and balanced representation and underlining the important confluence of academics and industrial players in this new association. The 12th position on the industry side will be filled at a later time with a representative from a user company.

Photo: courtesy AFJV

As President of euRobotics AISBL, Bernd Liepert, CTO of KUKA, was confirmed; so were the Vice-President representing Industry (Rainer Bischoff, Head of KUKA's Technology Development) and the Vice-President representing research activities in Europe (Herman Bruyninckx from KU Leuven), as well as Giovanni Barontini (Finmeccanica, Italy) as Treasurer.

European Robotics Forum ERF links European initiatives with local networks

Since its establishment in 2010, the European Robotics Forum follows the principle to build on opportunities arising from a connection with, and organisation by local robotics initiatives. This year's ERF was hosted by GdR Robotique, the French National Network in Robotic Research, and Innoecho, the official organizer of INNOROBO, an annual robotic summit and exhibition which took place at the same time and in the same conference centre, the prestigious Cité Internationale - Centre de Congrès, just one floor below.

The deliberate coincidence with the INNOROBO event this year created many additional synergies – in both directions. Arnaud Montebourg, French Minister for Industrial Reconstitution, utilised the occasion to announce a 100 M EURO robotics initiative in France, which is

to help SMEs to get robotics equipment and thus gain competitiveness and increase in productivity. More on the INNOROBO event can be found here:

<http://www.innorobo.com/index.php?lang=en&Itemid=211>

European Investment Forum and Entrepreneurship Award

As part of the European Robotics Forum, a Robotics Investment Forum was organized by euRobotics AISBL with support from the European Commission, DG CONNECT.

During the two-day workshop, 15 European entrepreneurs were first coached on how to effectively present their business ideas to early stage investors. In the second part of the event, the entrepreneurs actually pitched in front of a group of specialized investors from France, Germany and Finland. Ultimately, the entrepreneurs with the most convincing business plan were to receive the Entrepreneurship Award.

The lucky winners 2013 are:

1st Prize: Christof Eberst, CEO, Convergent Information Technologies GmbH, for “Automating Robotic Touch-Up and Spot-Repair”;

2nd Prize: Sven Schmidt-Rohr and Rainer Jäkel, ArtiMinds, for “InRoP - Intuitive Natural Robot Programming”;

3rd Prize: Irene Sardellitti, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia (IIT), for “CompAct™”, a new variable stiffness actuator.

Finalists were also honoured: Davide Zerbato, Altair robotics lab (U. Verona), for “Xron - virtual simulator of robotic surgery”, and João Santos and João Estilita, selfTech Systems and Robotics Engineering, for “Golmow”, a mowing machine for golf courses.



ERF Entrepreneurship Awards on Stage:

From left to right: Renaud Champion (euRobotics AISBL), finalist João Estilita, Geoff Pegman (euRobotics AISBL), finalist Davide Zerbato, prize-winner Sven Schmidt-Rohr, Jon Agirre (euRobotics AISBL). All other winners and finalists were not available any more at the time of the banquet.

Photo: courtesy AFJV

Georges Giralt PhD Award 2013

The Georges Giralt PhD Award is an annual award which used to be given by EURON for the best PhD thesis in Europe. The aim is to encourage high-quality work amongst young researchers in their first research period.

The PhD award is named the Georges Giralt PhD Award in recognition of the significant efforts made by Georges Giralt (LAAS) to set up and stimulate a European community in robotics during multiple decennia and starting from the 1970s.

With the fusion of the two predecessor organisations EURON and EUROP into euRobotics

AISBL, future Georges Giralt PhD Awards will be issued under the auspices of euRobotics AISBL. Nominated were:

- Jens Kober, TU Darmstadt, for his PhD thesis entitled “Learning Motor Skills: From Algorithms to Robot Experiments”
- Grégory Mermoud, EPFL, for “Design, Modeling and Optimization of Stochastic Reactive Distributed Robotic Systems”
- Amit Kumar Pandey, LAAS CNRS, for “Towards Socially Intelligent Robots in Human Centered Environment”

After the candidates’ presentations during the ERF in Lyon, the jury deliberated and decided to give the award to Jens Kober.

Prof. Herman Bruyninckx happily presents the winner and the two finalists of the 2013 Georges Giralt PhD Award: Amit Kumar Pandey, Grégory Mermoud, and Jens Kober – this year’s winner (from left to right). Since the contenders were very close to the winner, all three finalists got a publication offer for the Springer Tracts in Advanced Robotics (STAR), which normally only the winner gets.

Photo: courtesy AFJV



Like in 2012, the 2013 jury consisted of: Sarthak Misra, Geert De Cubber, Fabio Bonsignorio, Krzysztof Kozlowski, Paolo Rocco, Catalin Buiu, Giuseppina Gini, Jose A. Castellanos, Daniele Nardi, Alessandro Saffiotti, Aydan Erkmen, Jorge Dias, Angel P. del Pobil, Gerhard Kraetzschmar, and Herman Bruyninckx.

European Robotics Technology Transfer Award 2013

As every year, the European Robotics Technology Transfer Award Session was one of the highlights of the European Robotics Forum: Five finalists were invited to present their proposals to the European Robotics Community.



The Tech Transfer Award is presented each year in recognition of outstanding innovations in the field of robotics and automation, in order to promote excellence in applied research, and technology transfer between research and industry. A comprehensive press release on the Technology Transfer Award can be found here:

<http://www.eunited.net/robotics/index.php?idcat=196>

Photo: courtesy AFJV

The award is supported by EUnited Robotics and is financially sponsored by the following industrial members: ABB, KUKA Roboter, COMAU, GÜDEL, and SCHUNK, which are also industrial members of euRobotics AISBL.

About euRobotics AISBL

euRobotics aisbl (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif) is a Brussels based international non-profit association for all stakeholders in European robotics. euRobotics builds upon the success of the European Robotics Technology Platform (EUROP) and the academic network of EURON, leading towards the establishment of only one sustainable organisation for the European robotics community as a whole.

One of the association's main missions is to collaborate with the European Commission (EC) to develop and implement a strategy and a roadmap for research, technological development and innovation in robotics, in view of the launch of the next framework program Horizon 2020. Towards this end, euRobotics aisbl was formed to engage from the private side in a contractual Public-Private Partnership with the European Union as the public side.

The objectives of euRobotics are to boost European robotics research, development and innovation and to foster a positive perception of robotics. It aims at:

- strengthening competitiveness and ensuring industrial leadership of manufacturers, providers and end users of robotics technology-based systems and services;
- the widest and best uptake of robotics technologies and services for professional and private use;
- excellence of the science base of European robotics.

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