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European Robotics Week

The first European Robotics Week was held from November 28 to December 4, 2011. More than 130 organisations and institutes in 19 European countries organised over 360 robotics related activities. Based on initial estimates about 80,000 people have been reached across Europe.

In the near future robots and devices with robotic functions will be used almost everywhere. Creating an energy and resource-efficient production with economies of scale, creation and retention of equal-opportunity and high-quality employment, coping with an ageing workforce by keeping the ageing workforce with valuable work experience in the production process, independent living for elderly people, affordable healthcare, protection against external and internal threats to security – without robotics these goals are very hard to achieve. Robotics will help European manufacturing stay competitive against global competition. A considerable share of research in robotics in Europe is focused on medical and rehabilitation research, such as robotics surgery and patient rehabilitation, for example with stroke patients who need constant monitoring and regularly adjusted support.

Robotics is a thriving sector expected to create one million jobs worldwide in coming years, including in the Germany auto industry and Danish shipbuilding industry. In 2010 more than 118,000 industrial robots were sold worldwide – almost twice as many as in 2009. For 2011, 18 percent growth is forecast. In particular professional service robots are expected to enjoy sales increase of 60 percent by 2014.

Aimed at the general public, the first European Robotics Week focuses on inspiring Europeans of all ages to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, or learn about the role robots can and will play in daily life. Events included school visits, open labs, exhibitions, challenges, robots in action on public squares, and much more.

Echord

One of the projects which took centre stage during Robotics week is ECHORD, the European Clearing House for Open Robotics Development. ECHORD's unique approach brings together 53 universities and 80 industrial companies (including many SMEs and start-ups) to put the EU robotics industry in a global leadership position by improving the technology transfer between academia and industry. ECHORD's experiments include those geared towards joint enabling technologies (develop new robots, components, networks, etc.); others towards application development (use of robots and components in new areas and scenarios, such as using robots in agriculture); and others towards feasibility demonstration (showing that prototypes can actually be deployed in specific industrial settings which do not yet use robots). ECHORD is financed partly by the European Commission and partly by its participating partners. The total budget is 24.9 million euro with the European Commission contributing 18.9 million euro. The EU supports more than 100 projects in the area of robotics and cognitive systems with 400 million euro of funding between 2007 and 2011.

“European Robotics Week was the product of a successful cooperation between the leading companies, robotics institutes and universities all keen on educating the public about the growing importance of robotics. Many different robotics activities simply brought the wonder and genius of robotics to the people inspiring especially the youth to study science, technology, engineering, and math subjects.”, stated Henrik Schunk, Chairman of EUnited Robotics European Robotics Association and Managing Partner of Schunk GmbH, Germany.

For more information, please visit: www.eurobotics-project.eu

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