

## EU to double its R&D investment in robotics

***At the occasion of AUTOMATICA 2008, one of the leading international trade fairs in robotics and automation held this year in Munich/Germany, the European Commission has announced a policy to boost European robotics. The European Union will double its investments between 2007 and 2010 with almost € 400 million to support European robotics research. This ambitious programme aims to forge stronger links between academia and industry, and plans to fund a widespread experimentation by academic researchers and industry. The European Commission also calls on the industry to intensify its efforts in producing critical components in Europe, such as gears, in order to face competition from Asia and avoid strategic dependencies on other regions of the world.***

*"There is a clear window of opportunity for automation industries in Europe – in particular robotics – not just to maintain leadership, but to grow further and to move higher up the value chain", said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media. "To achieve this, the industry has to intensify its efforts in several areas".*

The European Union has today a strong position in industrial robots for automation: about one third of all industrial robots are produced in Europe. The robotics market's growth rate will form an important part of the world economy within the next two decades: the International Federation of Robotics (IFR) estimates the current world market for industrial robots at about € 4 billion and forecasts a 4.2% increase per year until 2010.

Service robots that operate outside the manufacturing domain offer opportunities for new applications and market expansion: according to the IFR, growth in this market is expected to reach between 10% and 15% per year between now and 2010 and the number of professional service robots will grow from 40,000 in 2006 to 75,000 in 2010. Service robots are used in many sectors, e.g. for the distribution of goods, for cleaning vehicles, in agriculture and in medical applications.

Robotics is strategic for Europe's future competitiveness. Manufacturing will only be maintained in higher wage regions such as Europe through automation. Automation also plays a key role in ensuring a sustainable production and minimizing wasteful use of resources. Finally it will contribute to help Europe's ageing society by compensating for a declining labour force.

As part of its € 400 M research programme, the European Commission is taking steps to set up a technology transfer scheme between academia and industry enabling European research labs to use industrial-strength robots for large-scale experimentation. The resulting scientific knowledge will directly be fed back to participating companies.

Beyond research, European industry recognizes the need for reducing dependencies on critical components such as drives, gears and motors. The European Commission also encourages industry to agree on technical standards and develop business models in this field in order to ensure sustained provision of such critical components.

**For more information:**

**Cognitive Systems and Robotics:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/ist/cognition/index.html>

**AUTOMATICA 2008:** [www.automatica-muenchen.com](http://www.automatica-muenchen.com)

## Annex

### Comparison of R&D Investment in Robotics

Region	Europe	South Korea	Japan	USA
Year 2007	100 M€	250 M€ <sup>1</sup>	11.5 M€	15 M€
Funding Programme	EU's 7 <sup>th</sup> research Framework Programme on Information & Communication Technologies	ATP Korean Government's Advanced Technology Programme	METI Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry	NSF US National Science Foundation

<sup>1</sup> Average annual expenditure of a 4 year programme 2004-08

Source for Korea: British Embassy Seoul, Science & Technology Briefing Paper

Source for Japan: International Advanced Robotics Programme (IARP) Japan delegate report 2007

Sources for USA: IARP USA delegate report 2007