



## Press Release

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### **EUROP, EURON and the European Commission: “Closing the gap”**

**Barcelona, 10 March 2009** – In a joint session at International Symposium on Robotics (ISR 2009), Rainer Bischoff (KUKA Roboter), Herman Bruyninckx (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) and Libor Král (European Commission) reported on the current situation of Robotics in Europe from three different angles. Rainer Bischoff, Chairman of the EUROP Executive Board and project manager at KUKA Roboter GmbH, presented the standpoint of the European robotics industry, Herman Bruyninckx, Coordinator of EURON (European Research Network for Robotics) and professor at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, spoke for academia. Last, but not least, Libor Král, Head of Unit Cognitive Systems, Interaction and Robotics at the European Commission, gave an overview of ongoing activities in the European Commission. The three speakers came to the same conclusion: European robotics is well positioned, but closer industry-academia collaboration could further improve the situation. All speakers emphasised their willingness to join forces and to bring the European robotics industry forward.

“We are all working on closing the gap between industry and academia”, says Rainer Bischoff. Just one day before about 75 European Robotics experts coming from both, academia and industry, met for a consensus meeting on the upcoming EUROP Strategic Research Agenda (SRA). The SRA combines the strategic vision for research across the diverse range of robotic application domains: industrial, professional service, domestic service, security and space robotics.

The SRA development started with concrete product visions describing expected future products in each of the robotic application domains. Based on these product visions common application requirements and related core technologies necessary for the further development of the European robotics industry were identified. During this process two important things became apparent: First, the technologies required for future products are converging across the five robotic domains. Therefore, they have the potential to fertilise each other. Secondly, to assess developments in emerging technologies the industrial

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stakeholders depend on experts in the specific technologies – which in most cases are academics. “The elaboration of the SRA has not only convinced the various robotics stakeholders that they should join forces within and across application domains, but also enhanced the dialogue between academia and industry,” Rainer Bischoff notes.

In exploiting the momentum created by EUROP, the European Commission is seeking to promote a structured dialogue between key industrial and academic players. Ideally this will go beyond discussions on the SRA. Substantial support for widespread experimentation by academic researchers on industrial robotic platforms is already planned for the near future. Libor Král reveals: “This will optimise the use of technologies and generate new know-how that will be directly transferred to the robotics industry.” The Commission is prepared to invest a substantial amount of money in Cognitive Systems and Robotics research in the near future. Currently about 50 research projects dealing with robotics are running. Libor Král summarises: “We can be proud of the situation of robotics in Europe. Up to now Europe has developed a strong base in industrial robotics and is well positioned in the burgeoning service, security and space robotics markets.”

The excellent R&D infrastructure in Europe is one of the reasons for the strong position of the European robotics industry. Herman Bruyninckx reports that more than 220 research institutes and universities in Europe deal with robotics, and states: “It’s amazing what’s going on in robotics research in Europe”. As coordinator of EURON he has a good overview of the European robotics research community and points out: “EURON, EUROP and the European Commission share the same goal, which is: Empowering the European robotics industry.” “And with the ongoing initiatives, in particular with all activities related to the upcoming SRA, we are well on the way”, Rainer Bischoff adds.

The next joint event will be the Award Ceremony of the “EUROP/EURON Technology Transfer Award”. The aim of this award is to improve the impact of robotics research and to raise the profile of technology transfer between academia and industry. A team of reviewers consisting of EUROP and EURON members has already evaluated the 12 submitted applications, all of which are outstanding innovations in robot technology and automation that result from cooperative efforts between research and industry. The evaluation is based on how scientific findings from research laboratories have been converted into successful

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products, processes and services for the commercial sector. The award ceremony will take place on 7 April 2009 at the EURON Annual Meeting in Leuven.

	<p><b>EUROP – European Robotics Technology Platform</b></p> <p>EUROP is an industry-driven framework for the main stakeholders in robotics to strengthen Europe's competitiveness in robotics R&amp;D and global markets.</p> <p>EUROP is one of several European Technology Platforms (ETPs) supported by the European Commission.</p> <p><a href="http://www.robotics-platform.eu">http://www.robotics-platform.eu</a></p>
	<p><b>EURON – European Robotics Research Network</b></p> <p>EURON is a community of more than 220 academic and industrial groups in Europe with a common interest in advanced research in the field of robotics.</p> <p>The network was founded in 2000 and was supported by the European Commission for 8 years.</p> <p><a href="http://www.euron.org">http://www.euron.org</a></p>
	<p><b>European Commission – Information &amp; Communication Technologies – Cognitive Systems and Robotics</b></p> <p>Portfolio under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of the European Commission supporting robotics related research.</p> <p>A list of projects funded under this particular subfield can be found on the website.</p> <p><a href="http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/cognition/">http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/cognition/</a></p>

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