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EURON

European Robotics Network

Network of Excellence
Information Society Technologies

DR.3.1
Summary of 1st Advisory Meeting

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Minutes
EURON Strategic Advisory meeting
17 of February 2005, Warsaw, Poland

Present:

- Pekka Karp, European Commission, BE
- Hirochika Inoue, JSPS/AIST, JP
- Lynne Parker, UTK, USA
- Raja Chatila, CNRS-LAAS, FR
- Paolo Dario, SSSA, IT
- Heinz Woern, UKA, DE
- Henrik Christensen, KTH, SE
- Jeanna Ayoubi, KTH, SE

The following issues were discussed at the meeting.

- i) International activities within robotics.
- ii) Reflection on European robotics
- iii) Robotics roadmap
- iv) Safety in robotics
- v) Status of Robotics in FP7
- vi) Cooperation between industry and academia
- vii) EURON PR
- viii) Activities across IPs and in cooperation with EURON
- ix) Next EURON meeting and IPs review meetings

Robotic science continues to grow both internationally and in Europe. Old EU-projects that were mostly dealing with architecture and perception are now coming to an end and European Commission is giving more attention to new fields within robotics in future programmes. The open call for project proposals within EURON is a good instrument for finding such new fields and topics. The question is how close those proposals should be to the existing IPs? According to Prof. L. Parker it is important to give space to new topics in robotics - that will help to avoid stagnation or only a single direction. IT, biotechnology, nano-technology and environment are becoming major fields of development in Japan today. And even robotics is becoming one of them (mostly humanoid robotics). Researchers are looking for a roadmap and according to Prof. Inoue it is good that the development of robotics is being encouraged even in Europe.

Producing a roadmap for robotics is one of the main work packages in EURON. A small committee has been chosen to coordinate the work. According to HIC it was very difficult to get people to contribute to the document and it is also difficult to concisely describe a clear vision. A draft version was written during EURON1 and an updated version is one of the main deliverables of EURON 2 by the end of this year (2005).

Prof. Inoue asked if safety in robotics was taken into account in European projects as this issue is seen as a very important one in Japan today. Japan already cooperates on that issue with USA. When robotics becomes a part of our daily life, safety cannot and should not be neglected neither by researchers or robotic industry. This issue has a strong capability to stop the development in robotics,

if it is not taken seriously enough. A mistake made by one company/lab can close the way for all others. All seemed to agree with those statements. Prof. Chatila said that this was a wide issue and should be approached properly. He also said that this question is being raised in one of the projects financed by EURON ("PHRIDOM"). HIC underlined that standards and risks must be found and clarified. Prof. Inoue said that it was important to coordinate the companies in safety. Prof. Dario said that safety issue was highly respected in the surgical robotics project that he participated in. He described an example of how a mistake made by one hospital stopped all surgical robots in Germany. The lessons learned from this were: 1) there is a major market for lawyers that are ready to raise such cases; 2) the public attitude to new devices is often negative.

Pekka Karp gave an update on FP7. The overall structure is clear and now it is time to work on the details. The documents should be ready one year from now. First call is planned on November 2006. Instruments will be the same as in FP6. Robotics is one of the major fields together with environment, security in space and nano, ...

European industry seems to be enthusiastic and ready to support research in robotics. This is a positive trend and a relative new turn of events, but at the same time this can be easily explained: European companies want to remain internationally competitive. For that the products should become less expensive. They start to integrate with SMEs to get cheaper components produced in Europe and not in Japan or USA. That could also open possibilities for a new component industry. New tasks in the production process require new solutions. Europe had until now national defence forces, but now everything is being centralised and a new European security force is organised.

EURON has established a close cooperation with EUnited, but EUnited will keep having its conferences separately from EURON as industrial partners have their own specific issues to discuss, that are of no relevance to academia.

HIC told the participants about the PR press programme within EURON. There are 15 K Euro /year specified in the budget that can be used for that purpose. A contact with Michael Kenward -a technical journalist - has been established. It was even planned that he would come to the EURON meeting in Warsaw, but unfortunately he couldn't come this time because of some other meeting that he had to go to. Otherwise he is ready to help and will hopefully attend all EURON events. He even sent some interesting guidelines describing the typical mistakes made by scientists when writing texts for media. The issue of inter-project communication between IPs and EURON was raised. All agreed that it would be good to exchange information on some of the activities organised by IPs. Summer schools are a good example. EURON annual meeting is also a very good opportunity for such co-organised events and it is important to find new useful mechanisms to make it possible even in the future. Even if it was rather stressful for the IP co-ordinators, it is seen as a very good event for the robotic community in general. For the future meetings HIC suggested to make the IP-review meetings more open to the rest of the community. Appropriate mechanisms must be found. Prof. Dario also suggested to enlarge the Workshops - they should have a wider and more important role at the EURON meeting. Maybe topical WSs are more appropriate compared to separate IP WSs.

4-5 main objectives of the meeting must be defined and they could be: IP review meetings, inter-project cooperation, communication to robotic community, and communication to the science community.

It was also suggested to make EURON annual meeting to a major event that should be made well known to the community.

As the timetable was difficult to follow this year, it was suggested to have the next EURON meeting together with the IP reviews during the first weeks of March instead.

End of meeting