



FP6-507728

EURON

European Robotics Network

Network of Excellence
Information Society Technologies Priority

DR 14.3
Workshop(s) on SME Issues

Due date of deliverable: 30 April 2007

Actual submission date: 31 May 2007

Start date of the project: 1 May 2004

Duration: 48 months

Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable: GPS Stuttgart

Revision:

Dissemination level: PU

Workshop(s) on SME Issues

The following activities are currently under way (pre-financed by GPS Stuttgart):

1. A directory of European SMEs in Robotics/Service Robotics is currently being compiled with the available resources.
2. Together with Univ. of Applied Science Bonn-Rhein-Sieg a coaching program is being developed to account for the needs of entrepreneurs in that field.
3. A first informal adhoc-meeting with EUnited Robotics representatives (Stefan Sagert and Thilo Brodtmann) and a EUROP representative (Geoff Pegman) was organized during ICRA 2007 in Rome. A proposal was made to these representatives to turn WP 14 into a joint activity. The proposal was well accepted.

Further steps were put on hold until a decision regarding the future of EURON and EUROP is made by the European Commission. This includes the announcement of the the foundation of CESERE (Consortium of European Service Robotics Enterprises) and the distribution of a call for participation.

4. In case of a go by the Commission a first "Consortium Meeting" is planned for some time in October 2007.
5. Two domains www.cesere.org and www.cesere.eu were secured to set up a homepage for the consortium.

There is a delay of 3 – 4 months minimum in the implementation of workpackage WP14 for the following reasons:

1. Due to a decision of the European Commission GPS Stuttgart, in order to receive any prepayment for the implementation of its project obligations, had to provide a bank guarantee in the amount of its total budget. To provide such a bank guarantee GPS had to put an equivalent amount of money on a blocked bank account. This would have had significantly reduced the liquidity of the company, which a is very counter-productive measurement for the growth of a SME. GPS therefore decided to accept payments to be deferred until reporting or completion of work as the lesser evil.

In accordance with this decision, GPS received a first payment after reporting on Y1 in August 2005 in the order of 18500 Euro. Any further payments were held up, however, due to the fact, that a wrong cost model (FC instead of FCF) was used in the financial report for Y1. Although this mistake has been corrected, GPS has not received any further payment since August 2005.

Main reasons for the delay of any payments may have been the uncertainty regarding the co-ordination of EURON 2, which was not resolved until fall 2006, and change of the responsibility for EURON from FET to Cognitive Systems.

Meanwhile it was announced by the Coordinator that the payment for Y2 should be arriving shortly.

2. Given this situation and given the lasting uncertainty regarding the future of EURON, the CEO of GPS Stuttgart did not give the clearance to hire extra personnel for the implementation of WP14. At present only one staff person is working on the work package at a rather slow pace (compiling a directory of European service robotics SMEs and startups) until the payment for Y2 (and Y3) finally arrive and the future of EURON and (re-)allocation of the remaining budget is decided.

Once the decision regarding the future of EURON and EUROP is made by the European Commission and a budget for WP14 is allocated, a person will be hired part-time for an equivalent of 3+ person-months to implement WP14 with no further delay. The person is already under part-time contract for other activities.