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EURON

European Robotics Research Network

Network of Excellence

Information Society Technologies Priority

DR 21.2

Report on Gender Action—Year 3

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1 Background

The special effort put in place by EURON regarding a gender action programme considered the following three objectives during this period:

- Appointment of a special working group consisting of one senior and one junior female representative from each EURON member country.
- Organization of a gender issue panel discussion at the Annual Meeting.
- Generation of a database of female researchers active in EURON.

The below text summarizes the outcomes of the above actions.

Special working group

The aim of the appointment of the special working group was to (1) gather different statistical information about gender imbalance in member countries, (2) initiate a mentoring program for younger female researchers, (3) help with generation of a database of female researchers active in EURON.

The representatives of all the member countries have been contacted by Danica Kragic (KTH) and asked to provide a name of at least one female researcher from their country. This has, however, resulted in a rather disappointing result since we were not able to find a female researcher in robotics and related areas in all the member countries. The final table of the representatives is shown below. The first points of contact for the representatives was the Annual Meeting. All the representatives were invited to the meeting. The next sections shortly summarize the outcomes of the meeting.

Austria:	
Belgium:	Tinne De Laet
Bulgaria:	Galina Tzvetkova
Czech Republic:	
Denmark:	
Estonia:	Marjaa Kruusma
Finland:	Henna Mrsri
France:	Jocelyne Troccaz
Germany:	
Greece:	Xanthi Papageorgiou
Hungary:	
Ireland:	Mariam Ljazouli
Israel:	
Italy:	Debora Botturi
Netherlands:	Jacqueliën Scherpen
Poland:	Tereas Zielinska
Portugal:	Isabel Ribeiro
Slovenia:	
Spain:	Alicia Casals, Isabel Garca-Morales
Sweden:	Danica Kragic
Switzerland:	Aude Billard
UK:	Kerstin Dautehahn

Annual Meeting panel discussion

During the Annual Meeting, Danica Kragic has presented a 30min talk titled *Gender Issues in European Robotics*. The main objective of the talk was to present the Gender Action workpackage for the participants and it serves as the introduction to the panel discussion organized the next day.

The participants of the panel discussion were:

1. Alicia Casals, UPC
2. Debora Butturi, U Verona
3. Teresa Zielinska, Warsaw Univ. of Techn.
4. Lola Caamero, Univ. of Hertfordshire
5. Isabel Garcia Morales, U Malaga
6. Tinne De Laet, KULeuven
7. Ola Ravn, TU of Denmark
8. Eduardo di Silva, Instituto Politecnico di Porto
9. Jeanna Ayoubi, KTH
10. Danica Kragic, KTH

The goal of this first official gathering was primarily to discuss the current gender imbalance issues. All the participants were active in the discussion and some of the issues raised were the following:

- Women, family and career building
- Working on-site with mixed (male/female) research student groups
- Relation supervisor-student

The conclusions of the discussion was that most of the above issues still differ between different countries and that no clear path for the future is set by the research community at large. It was also said that it is important to continue with similar panels at the next meetings.

Compilation of the database

Based on the extremely low number of the female researchers currently active in EURON, it was decided not to make any special database. All the female researchers were instead encouraged to join the "Women in Robotics towards Human Science, Technology and Society" community.

Women in Robotics

"Women in Robotics towards Human Science, Technology and Society" (<http://women.ws100h.net/>) has been started as a new international community whose scope includes students, engineers and researchers in robotics, human science and technology.

The mission is to provide a venue for discussion and collaboration for technical development that creates enjoyable and efficient style of work and life.

ICRA 2007 Birds of a Feather Lunch for Women

As a related activity, a "Birds of a Feather" lunch on the topic of women in robotics and automation was held at ICRA 2007. Over 100 female and male attendees, including a large number of students, met to discuss the goals of (1) encouraging more women to join the field of robotics and (2) providing mentoring and networking opportunities for women in robotics. After a short presentation on the status and numbers of women in robotics, questions from the audience were answered by a panel of 6 roboticists: Aude Billard, Maria Chiara Carrozza, Alicia Casals, Deirdre Meldrum, Robin Murphy, and Daniela Rus. Panelists encouraged young roboticists to take advantage of opportunities presented to them, find good mentors (male or female), have confidence in their abilities, be efficient in balancing work with family, and follow their own interests to choose a career/research topic.

IEEE RAS and IEEE Women in Engineering provided financial support for the lunch, and Microsoft Research donated travel funds for students to attend ICRA and the lunch. The organizers of the event were Allison Okamura, Danica Kragic, Nancy Amato, Mihoko Otake, Aude Billard, and Robin Murphy. Over the past year, Mihoko Otake has been developing an international community called "Women in Robotics and Automation towards Human Science, Technology and Society", through a special session at the 9th International Conference on Intelligent Autonomous Systems (March 2006), a website (<http://women.ws100h.net/>), and a special issue on Women in Robotics in the Journal of the Robotics Society of Japan (Vol. 24, No. 5, July 2006) that features articles by prominent women roboticists. Aude Billard is the IEEE Women In Engineering (WIE) liaison to RAS.

A related event is planned for ICRA 2008.