

PRESS RELEASE

Slovenia to host the most important European robotics conference in 2016

Ljubljana, 24 February 2016 – **Between 21 and 23 March, Cankarjev dom will host the seventh edition of the European Robotics Forum (ERF2016). The event will take place under the title “Robotics for Europeans” and will be attended by more than 500 experts from entire Europe. Slovenia has been selected to host the European Robotics Forum 2016 on the grounds of its committed involvement in the European technology advancement and with references to the Slovenian highly respected science and industry. Organised by euRobotics, a Brussels-based European non-profit association for all stakeholders in the European robotics sector, the event is the most influential meeting of the European robotics community with over 500 participants from industry, business, academia, and relevant European policy makers.**

*“The European Robotics Forum 2016 (ERF2016) will be the most important European networking event, this year held in Slovenia. Top European experts will present high-level strategies and their implementation as to maximize the benefits of robotics for economy and society, and to make sure that Europe stays number one in the next industrial revolution. A key approach is to link national and regional initiatives under a European “umbrella”, such as the “Digitising European Industry” proposed by the European Commission. Representatives of European organisations will showcase EU- funded projects in the context of the Public-Private Partnership in Robotics called SPARC, in which the European Commission has engaged with euRobotics, the organiser of ERF. The approach fits well within the “smart specialisation” of regions strategy which is the key element by both the Committee of Regions and the European Structural and Investment Funds, says **Reinhard Lafrenz**, Secretary General of euRobotics.*

*“Slovenia has been selected to host ERF2016, since it is a well-industrialised country, able to play a major role in setting up a network of “innovation hubs” which take advantage of local and regional expertise in industry and research. With over 500 participants from industry, business, top-level academia, and relevant European policy makers, ERF is the most influential meeting of the European robotics community. This year’s ERF aims also to reach out to Southeast Europe, in order to catalyse innovation and cooperation in robotics as part of a development strategy, hence contributing to a growing integration of Europe in this part of the continent, says **Uwe Haass**, Consultant to euRobotics and chairman of a Workshop on Robotics in the Western Balkans to take place at ERF2016.*

On a global scale, the application of robotics is still largely confined to manufacturing industry, where robots can replace humans in executing heavy, monotonous and dangerous tasks that often take place in inappropriate and unhealthy environment. According to the latest estimates of the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), industrial robot sales will grow 15% on average each year until 2018. Slovenia too is regarded a well-automated country and its application of robotics in car industry makes it comparable to other European countries. In 2013, there was an average of 82 industrial robots per 10,000 persons employed in European production industry and 90 in Slovenia. With double-digit growth rates, however, it is expected that so-called service robots for agriculture,

security, maintenance, logistics, mining and many other applications in professional or household environments will surpass the turnover for industrial robots by 2025. Robots will become a technology with applications everywhere. Slovenia's technological capacities will play a major role in these developments.

Prof. Marko Munih, Head of the Laboratory of Robotics (Robolab) at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Ljubljana – a co-partner with the Jožef Stefan Institute (IJS) and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU) in organising the European Robotics Forum 2016 – stresses that robotisation leads to higher productivity and economic growth. And even though robots can work without interruption, thus importantly contributing to greater competitiveness, lucrativeness and consequently economic growth, many fear that they will replace people and reduce the number of jobs. This opinion is shared by 70 percent of Europeans and 73 percent of Slovenes, according to the Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2015 with nearly 28,000 EU citizens. But **Prof. Munih** says: *“The fear of job losses is completely ungrounded. The latest research shows that robotisation creates new, yet different profiles of jobs that envisage the cooperation between man and the robot.”*

According to the estimates of the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), robotisation is expected to create between one and two million new jobs globally between 2017 and 2020, mostly in the fields of electronics, photovoltaics, electric vehicles, production, sales and food industry.

The Programme of the European Robotics Forum is available [here](#).

Before the European Robotics Forum 2016 is launched, you are kindly invited to join us at the press conference to be held on Thursday, 3 March, at 11 a.m. in Hotel Union on Miklošičeva cesta 1, Ljubljana.

On that occasion the experts will talk about major trends in the development of robotics, EU-funded projects in the context of public-private partnerships in robotics, important achievements in robotics, as well as about the European Robotics Forum.

Presentations will be made by the following speakers:

- **Reinhard Lafrenz**, Secretary General of euRobotics;
- **Uwe Haass**, Consultant to euRobotics;
- **Hubert Kosler**, Director of Yaskawa Slovenija;
- **Prof. Dr. Marko Munih**, Head of the Laboratory of Robotics (Robolab) at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Ljubljana.

Further information:

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