PRESS RELEASE

# Europe needs to maintain its leading position in robotics

## Ljubljana has launched European Robotics Forum 2016

**Slovenia has launched the European Robotics Forum 2016, the most important European event in the field of robotics, attended by 700 European robotics experts. The event was opened by the representatives of European institutions and the Slovenian Government, who pointed to the importance of digitised industry, the smart specialisation strategy, research investment and innovation in robotics. Robotics has a tremendous impact on our economy and society. Robots are known to save costs, to improve the quality of products and working conditions, and to minimise resources and waste. From today's €22bn worldwide revenues, robotics industries are set to achieve annual sales of between €50bn and €62bn by 2020. In the field of industrial robotics, which is currently growing at 8% p.a., Europe's share of the world market is about 32%.**

### There is still plenty of work to be done to build better robots

**Bernd Liepert, President of euRobotics AISBL and Head of Innovations in the company KUKA stated:** *"Robotics is a success story of interdisciplinary imagination, innovation, and hard work of: engineers, physicists, computer specialists, psychologists, ergonomists and many more. Robotics means always solving new problems in the dynamics of reality. You never know in which field and when the next application is popping up. We need this mental richness in Europe to advance in technology and strive for innovative solutions to global problems on this planet."* **Liepert** also emphasised: *"Robotics is a dynamic, interdisciplinary field, where ideas, associations, and creativity merge. To build better robots, for example, there is still plenty of work to be done in 'mechatronics' – a term relating to the intelligent combination of mechanics, electronics and information technology. Research in this field should aim at human equivalent performance in mobile manipulation and physical interaction in human centred environments. This is only to be achieved with the further development of core robotics technologies, such as perception, planning, control and simulation."*

*"We should also look for solutions to **let robots work better** – together with humans in interdisciplinary teams. This is more than avoiding accidents – we imagine the robot as true partners, as 'companions', with capabilities to learn, to **help** humans, but also to ask humans for assistance, and to react cleverly in situations which are not foreseen,"* concluded **Liepert**.

### We need to mobilise regional expertise and regional entrepreneurship

***Markku Markkula***, President of the Committee of the Regions, pointed to the economic benefits robotics could bring, *"Robotics will increasingly play an integral role in regional development driving innovative and technological change. With careful planning and open dialogue with local and regional governments, the private sector and universitires, robotics can help address regional inequality and spur sustainable growth." He further added, "Robotics is the culmination of years of investment and innovative thinking which will continue to impact key industries, agriculture and*

*public adminiatration. This is why we need smart specialisation which integrates robotic policy. But if it is to be truly successful, it must be developed with careful consultation with our regions and cities so it meets the real needs of all communities."*

## Robotics and Artificial Intelligence are key drivers of this innovation

**Juha Heikkila, Head of the unit Robotics, DG CONNECT** said: *"Digitisation leads to innovation in products, processes and business models, and holds major potential for economic growth. Robotics and Artificial Intelligence are key drivers of this innovation. Therefore, Europe needs to maintain leadership in these technologies, to enable wide access to it, to ensure an appropriately skilled workforce and to have smart regulation enabling digitisation."*

*"We need a balanced European framework for the development of robots and AI. A smart regulatory approach seems to be the most appropriate one. The future European and global rules must address issues relating to liability, contract law, international law, company law, standardisation, data protection, privacy, ethics, and many more,"* emphasised **Mady Delvaux, a European Parliament member from Luxemburg**.

*"Financing advanced robotics falls within the Innovation and skills priority area. Europe is facing a major challenge in terms of competitiveness and innovation and investments are required in order for Europe to remain at the frontier of these key technologies,"* stressed **Matteo Fusari from the European Investment Bank** and noted: **"***New innovative technologies – and among these advanced robotics and flexible automation – are by definition risky. They meet an uncertain market size and growth, often against powerful incumbents and various barriers to enter new markets."*

*"Innovation is key for our welfare and wellness an the Innovation Framework needs to stimulate not hinder innovation,"* stated **Jasper Wesseling, Ministry of Economy of the Netherlands,** and continued: *"We have to join forces in Europe, users of technology, developers and researchers, education and governments need to act together and we need to educate and train the right, multidisciplinary and digital skills."*

*"European economy does not wish to take part in global competition on the basis of cheap labour. At the same time, we must maintain and build the manufacturing industry, with the processing industry already accounting for about 20% of the European GDP. Therefore, the main objective is to achieve a higher-level automation of processes and manufacture, in which robots play a key role,"* stated **Dr. Zoran Stančič, the European Commission representative in Slovenia** and added: *"The EU decided to invest €700 million in robotics research and innovation by 2020. An equal share of investment is expected from the industry. All these efforts must be understood within a broader context of digitising industry, with a successful introduction of new technologies, such as robotics, cloud computing, internet of things and big data. The European Robotics Forum 2016 in Ljubljana is also an opportunity for closer integration of Slovenian economy and research institutions into the European currents."*

**Dr. Maja Makovec Brenčič, Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Slovenia** stated: *"Our ministry, as an institution responsible for science, has three focuses, scientific excellence, internationalisation and establishing stimulative environment for cooperation within the knowledge triangle. Last year Slovenia adopted the smart specialisation strategy, which is a precondition for investment in research and innovation from the structural funds. One of the objectives of the smart*

*specialisation strategy is raising the level of digitalisation with automation and robotisation in manufacturing and increase export of automated industrial systems and equipment by at least 25% by 2023, in particular in tool industry, robotics and smart industrial mechatronic systems. These commitments clearly represent our awareness of importance of development in robotics,"* and added: *"European Robotics forum has important task to contribute to closer integration in this part of Europe. We share the belief with Mr. Uwe Haass, former Secretary General euRobotics, that Slovenia can and should play an important role in setting up a network of innovation hubs in this European region, our immediate neighbourhood. Innovation hubs are one of the pillars of the initiative Digitising European Industry."*

**Additional information:**

Alja Gogala

+386 41 823 669 / alja.gogala@idejal.si