Smart robotics for high added value footwear industry

Fact Sheet

Project Information

ROBOFOOT
Grant agreement ID: 260159

Funded under
FP7-ICT

Overall budget
€ 3 685 073

EU contribution
€ 2 559 540

Coordinated by
FUNDACION TEKNIKER
Spain

Project description

Smart Factories: ICT for agile and environmentally friendly manufacturing
Robots improving the shoe production processes
Footwear production is still mainly handcrafted. Currently, opposite to other manufacturing sectors like automotive, food or metal processing, robots are still uncommon in the footwear industry. The introduction of robotics will contribute to overcome the complexity in the automation of the processes of this industry that accounts for some of the shortest production runs to be found. ROBOFOOT will research and develop: new manipulation strategies and devices for non-rigid parts that allowed grasping, handling and packaging of shoes without damaging them; sensor based robot programming and controlling tools, in particular visual sensors as
the base for visual servoing; re-design of some shoe production processes to allow robot assisted manufacturing and assembly.

Footwear production is still mainly handcrafted. Currently, opposite to other manufacturing sectors like automotive, food or metal processing, robots are still out of Footwear industry: only technical shoe producers have introduced robots to assist in the injection moulding process but there are not other relevant applications in use. The introduction of robotics will contribute to overcome the complexity in the automation of the processes of this industry that accounts for some of the shortest production runs to be found. The main difficulties to achieve this goal are: • The high number of products variants. • Complex manufacturing process. • Complex assembly process. • Extensive labour demand on some processes.

To achieve this objective, a consortium composed by 4 Industrial companies, 4 Research centres and 2 Shoe manufacturers will research and develop: • New manipulation strategies and devices for non-rigid parts that allowed grasping, handling and packaging of shoes without damaging them. • Sensor based robot programming and controlling tools that will exploit the information coming from CAD systems and all sensors available, in particular visual sensors as the base for visual servoing, making possible easy to program and flexible robotic applications. • Re-design of some shoe production processes to allow robot assisted manufacturing and assembly, in particular selective heating, visual inspection and packaging.

The consortium has identified a set of six operations in the shoe manufacturing process as the more suitable for short-medium term robotics introduction. They will be packed into three prototypes that will be scheduled through the 30 months duration of the project in such a way that, from early phases, the Footwear Industry may get aware of the potential applications and benefits of robotics in their sector. This research activity is carried out in the framework of the "Factories of the Future" call promoted by the "Cognitive Systems and Robotics" ICT Challenge.

**Fields of science**

**Programme(s)**

**Topic(s)**

**Call for proposal**
Funding Scheme

Coordinator

FUNDACION TEKNIKER
Address
Calle Inaki Goenaga 5
20600 Eibar Guipuzcoa
Spain
Activity type
Research Organisations
EU contribution
€ 629 633
Website
Contact the organisation
Administrative Contact
IÑAKI MAURTUA
ORMAECHEA (Mr.)

Participants (9)

DEUTSCHES FORSCHUNGSZENTRUM FUR KUNSTLICHE INTELLIGENZ GMBH
Germany
EU contribution
€ 129 039
Address
Trippstadter Strasse 122
67663 Kaiserslautern
Activity type
Research Organisations
Website
Contact the organisation
Administrative Contact
Thomas Vögele (Dr.)

AUTOMATICA Y CONTROL NUMERICO SL
Spain
EU contribution
€ 153 008
Address
Cl Alemania 118
03600 Elda
Activity type
Private for-profit entities (excluding Higher or Secondary Education)
INSTITUTO TECNOLOGICO DEL CALZADO Y CONEXAS
Spain
EU contribution
€ 289 222
Address
C/ Alemania 102 Poligono Industrial Campo Alto
03600 Elda Alicante
Website
Contact the organisation
Administrative Contact
JOSÉ DOÑATE ALFARO (Mr.)

PIKOLINOS INTERCONTINENTAL S.A.
Spain
EU contribution
€ 86 950
Address
Calle Galileo Galilei Parque Industrial
03203 Elche
Contact the organisation
Administrative Contact
ENRIQUE MONTIEL (Dr.)

ROBOTNIK AUTOMATION SLL
Spain
EU contribution
€ 279 061
Address
Carrer De Barcelona, 3-A. P.i. Fuente Del Jarro
46988 Paterna
Activity type
Private for-profit entities (excluding Higher or Secondary Education Establishments)
ROTTA s.r.l.
Italy
EU contribution
€ 119 620
Address
Via Dell'industria
37066 Sommacampagna

Activity type
Private for-profit entities
(excluding Higher or Secondary Education Establishments)

Contact the organisation
Administrative Contact
Rafael Lopez (Mr.)

COMAU SPA
Italy
EU contribution
€ 338 919
Address
Via Rivalta 30
10095 Grugliasco

Activity type
Private for-profit entities
(excluding Higher or Secondary Education Establishments)

Website
Contact the organisation
Administrative Contact
Antonio Calearo (Mr.)

CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE
Italy
EU contribution
€ 413 088
Address
Piazzale Aldo Moro 7
00185 Roma

Activity type
Research Organisations

Website
Contact the organisation
Administrative Contact
QDESIGN S.R.L.
Italy
EU contribution
€ 121 000

Address
Via Il Sanguigno
56124 Pisa

Activity type
Private for-profit entities
(excluding Higher or Secondary Education Establishments)

Contact the organisation

Administrative Contact
Giuseppe d'Urzo (Mr.)

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