

HARDWARE

Get ready for Europe's ROBO-BUTLERS: Billions of €€€ pledged to electro-slave dream

(And manufacturing, farming, health and so forth)

By Brid-Aine Parnell, 4 Jun 2014

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Pic The EU has announced a hefty billion-euro investment fund for robotics research, which it hopes will create 240,000 new jobs across the economic region.

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Care-O-bot ... not terrifying at all (Credit: SPARC)

In the world's largest civilian robotics programme, the European Commission, along with the 180 companies and research organisations that make up **euRobotics**, will fork

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agriculture, health, transport, civil security and household robotics. The commission is good for €700m (£569m, \$950m) of the fund, while non-profit euRobotics will be putting up the remaining €2.1bn.

"Europe needs to be a producer and not merely a consumer of robots," EC veepee Neelie Kroes said. "Robots do much more than replace humans – they often do things humans can't or won't do and that improves everything from our quality of life to our safety. Integrating robots into European industry helps us create and keep jobs in Europe."

The initiative, which will be called SPARC, hopes to carve Europe a bigger piece of the global robotics market, estimated to hit €60bn (£48bn, \$81bn) a year by 2020. The EC reckons the investment could create over 240,000 jobs in Europe and increase the region's share of that market to 42 per cent from 35 per cent.

SPARC will be researching a wide range of areas where robotic technology can help, like autonomous vehicles, home care for elderly and disabled people, minimally invasive surgery and environmental clean-up.

"SPARC will ensure the competitiveness of European robotics industries," said euRobotics president Bernd Liepert. "Robot-based automation solutions are essential to overcome today's most pressing societal challenges - from demographic change to mobility to sustainable production." ®

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