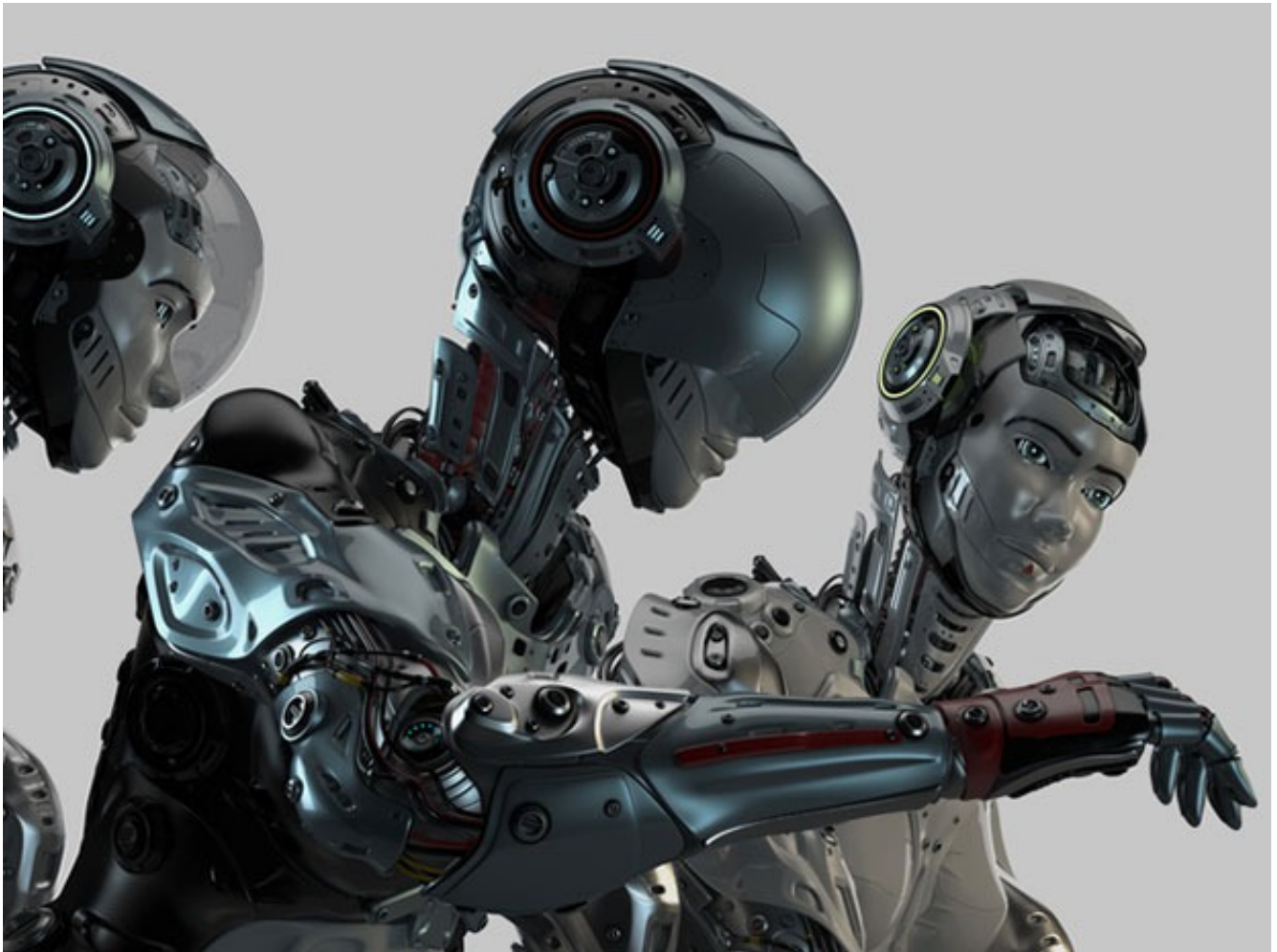


European Union launches \$4bn project to innovate in robotics

Summary: *The EU has launched "the world's largest civilian research and innovation programme in robotics", which it expects to create more than 240,000 jobs.*

By Jack Schofield for [Jack's Blog](#) | June 3, 2014 -- 22:48 GMT (23:48 BST)

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Aye, robots are coming. Image: Shutterstock

The European Union has launched "the world's largest civilian research and innovation programme in robotics", which it expects to create more than 240,000 jobs in Europe.

The [SPARC robotics project](http://sparc-robotics.eu/) (<http://sparc-robotics.eu/>) will cover manufacturing, agriculture, health, transport, civil security and households. The European Commission will invest €700 million and euRobotics €2.1 billion, with the total investment coming to €2.8 billion (\$3.8bn / £2.3bn) from 2014 to 2020. See: [What robots can do for you](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-386_en.htm) (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-386_en.htm) .

[euRobotics](http://www.eu-robotics.net/) (<http://www.eu-robotics.net/>) is a consortium of about 180 companies and research organisations "formed to engage from the private side in a contractual Public-Private Partnership with the European Union as the public side".

Neelie Kroes, the European Commission vice president leading the Digital Agenda, announced the initiative

in a speech at Automatica 2014, the International Trade Fair for Automation and Mechatronics, in Munich, Germany.

She said (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-14-421_en.htm) : "The EU has already committed €700m for robotics research in our next funding programme. And the industry has agreed to match that three to one. With over 200 members expected, together employing over 12,000 researchers and developers.

"That would make it the largest civilian robotics research and development programme in the world — something which will all together create 75,000 new qualified jobs in service robotics, and 140,000 new jobs in wider service industries, and a boost of €80bn to GDP.

"Other parts of the world are taking this seriously. The US just launched their National Robotics Initiative; South Korea and Japan are both investing heavily."

Kroes admitted that "70% of EU citizens believe that robots steal people's jobs. None of these worries mean that we should turn our backs on innovation."

Indeed, [the EU argues](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-619_en.htm) (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-619_en.htm) that "robotics enables companies to continue manufacturing in Europe, where they might otherwise move operations to lower-cost countries".

The euRobotics project was one of a number announced last December, along with initiatives on Factories of the Future (FoF), Photonics, 5G Networking and so on. See my earlier story: [EC invests €6bn in future tech with Horizon 2020 partnerships](http://www.zdnet.com/ec-invests-6bn-in-future-tech-with-horizon-2020-partnerships-7000024410/) (<http://www.zdnet.com/ec-invests-6bn-in-future-tech-with-horizon-2020-partnerships-7000024410/>) .

Calls for proposals are being issued through the [Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/leadership-enabling-and-industrial-technologies) (<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/leadership-enabling-and-industrial-technologies>) programme. The next funding call will be published in October 2014 with an April 2015 deadline.

It's not clear what SPARC stands for in a robotics context. The EU has already used it for different projects on Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, Space Awareness for Critical Infrastructure, Spatial Planning and Regional Competitiveness, and perhaps other projects.



*Neelie Kroes Photo
credit: European
Commission*



Infographic from euRobotics

Topics: [EU](#), [Emerging Tech](#), [Government](#)



About Jack Schofield

Jack Schofield spent the 1970s editing photography magazines before becoming editor of an early UK computer magazine, Practical Computing. In 1983, he started writing a weekly computer column for the Guardian, and joined the staff to launch the newspaper's weekly computer supplement in 1985. This section launched the Guardian's first website and, in 2001, its first real blog. When the printed section was dropped after 25 years and a couple of reincarnations, he felt it was a time for a change....

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