

RoboCup WM 2006 (2006-03-26)**The future has begun**

The world robot champions will be decided at RoboCup 2006

“RoboCup, the most important robot competition in the world, is coming to Germany. Parallel to the FIFA World Cup for the real flesh and blood players, the world champions of robot soccer will be decided at the Bremen Exhibition Centre from 14 to 20 June”, says Hans Peter Schneider, the Managing Director of Messe Bremen, setting the stage for the spectacular event which will be taking place in Germany for the first time. About 2,500 participants, information technologists, engineers and young people from all over the world, altogether 350 teams from 40 countries, are expected to attend. Media interest in this event which is seen as an absolute highlight worldwide with regard to technological developments in the areas artificial intelligence and autonomous mobile robots is already very high.



When robots play against one another it can be just as exciting as when their human colleagues compete to get the ball. But in this case the focus of interest is not only entertaining the crowds. “Robot soccer is used as a standardized problem which enables direct comparison of the results of different research disciplines”, says Dr Ubbo Visser, from TZI, the Centre for Information Technology, in Bremen to explain the background. “Once the whistle has blown the robots have to move autonomously over the field – that means without remote control – on wheels, on four or two legs, or as virtual players. They have to know as exactly as possible where they are at any time, have to follow the movements of other players and the ball, and react to these in an appropriate way”, continued Visser.

RoboCup offered researchers a platform to test their achievements in direct international comparison with their colleagues and in this way to make joint progress in the various specialist disciplines. There will be new developments in both the hardware and software sectors. The decisive objective of the RoboCup initiative is by the year 2050 to develop a team of fully autonomous humanoid robots that can play – and win – against the human world soccer champion team.



Already today robots guide museum visitors through exhibition rooms, steer wheelchairs through narrow doors, support surgeons when stitching up wounds after operations – and they are valuable, precise assistants in industrial production environments, too. And now they are increasingly finding their way into private households. Scientists believe that their market potential in this area is immense. But the automation of everyday intelligence is at present still the biggest challenge to researchers.

For whereas in industry robots mostly have to carry out repetitive motion sequences, the situation is quite different in a private household: furniture has to be moved, there are toys lying around, doors are open to different extents. Robots that are used here must constantly be able to find new paths and allocate objects – and as far as possible they have to do this independently.

“An extensive exhibition will be devoted specially to service robotics during RoboCup 2006 at the Bremen Exhibition Centre“, says Schneider. “The topics here are toys, service robots for household applications, and robots for use in research.”

RoboCup 2006 will take place at the Bremen Exhibition Centre from **14 to 20 June 2006**. The event organizers are HVG Hanseatische Veranstaltungs-GmbH, Geschäftsbereich Messe Bremen and TZI, Technologie- Zentrum Informatik Bremen.

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