

25 May 2017

## EU project to support growth and competitiveness of SMEs

With the average productivity of SMEs falling in both the UK (12%) and France (2%)<sup>1</sup> the Interreg France (Channel) England programme has today announced (25 May 2017) that it will fund 2.6 million euros towards a Franco-British project that will develop new autonomous robot technology to help improve the competitiveness of SMEs.

Led by French engineering university CESI, the project, named CoRot, will develop innovative and affordable robot software and hardware that is focused on the needs and budgets of smaller businesses. SMEs often face issues such as large variances in volume and short deadlines, and the automated robotic systems and software developed by the CoRot project will allow SMEs to become more flexible and responsive to this type of demand.

This is an important step in improving the competitiveness and productivity of SMEs, as existing industrial robots on the market are often seen as being too expensive and too complex for smaller businesses to implement into their production processes.

The new systems will be trialled in six industrial workshops (3 in France, 3 in the UK) where the project will aim to improve productivity in these trials by as much as 30%. After the project has ended a combination of software packages, a low cost robot arm and training guides will be made readily available to SMEs.

Commenting on the announcement, Chantal Hurard from the Lead Partner, CESI said: *“This project is an important step in our process of supporting regional businesses to adapt to the ‘industries of the future’, and in the development of similar research activities. The elements developed by CoRot will allow any interested SMEs to then adopt these key technologies to help improve their competitiveness.”*

The project budget totals 3.9 million euros of which 69% is funded by the Interreg FCE Programme, representing a European Regional Development Fund budget of 2.6 million euros. The project is made up of 8 organisations, 5 from France and 3 from the UK,<sup>2</sup> and is expected to last 3-and-a-half years.

**-Ends-**

**For further information, please contact:**

Titus Carey, FCE Communications Officer

## Notes to Editors

1. Area needs and SWOT analyses for the regions and territories of the France (Channel) England and 2 Seas cooperation programmes
2. The Interreg FCE Programme is a European Territorial Cooperation programme that aims to fund high quality cooperation projects in the Channel border region between France and England. It focuses on a range of specific objectives including supporting innovation, improving the attractiveness of the FCE area and developing low carbon technologies. The Programme has a total of €223million of ERDF funds to distribute by 2023 and is managed by Managing Authority Norfolk County Council.
3. Project approval is subject to the Grant Offer Letter being signed
4. Full list of project partners:
  - *Lead Partner – CESI* (French)
  - University of Greenwich (English)
  - University of Exeter (English)
  - ESIGELEC (French)
  - Autofina Ltd (English)
  - University of Le Havre (French)
  - BA Systèmes (French)
  - CERI (French)
5. The Programme operates within a clearly defined eligible area, covering the South and East Coasts of England from Cornwall to Norfolk, and the North Coast of France from Finistère to Pas-de-Calais. The full programme area can be found [here](#).
6. More information about the Programme can be found at <https://interreg5a-fce.eu/>.