

PRESS RELEASE

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ROBOT BOAT TEAM AIMING FOR SECOND SUCCESS

Intelligent sailing boats are taking to the water for a unique race and an young Austrian research group is hoping for victory in the event. A research team from the Austrian Association for Innovative Computer Science (InnoC) is competing in the second Microtransat Challenge, an international competition for autonomous sailing boats taking place in the Irish Sea next month.

The team's innovative vessel, known as ROBOAT, has a fully automatic steering and navigation system. With wind as the only propulsion, the ROBOAT is able to autonomously navigate towards any given target and the best route is calculated by weighting drift coordinates against weather parameters. The rudder and sails as well as the tacks and jibes are autonomously controlled by incoming data from sensors (GPS, compass, anemometer etc) which are analysed using artificial intelligence.

The ROBOAT team won the first Microtransat challenge, held on a lake near Toulouse, France, last year. This year's challenge is being held at Aberystwyth, on the Welsh coast, and will mark the first time that an autonomous boat race has been held on the open sea.

Roland Stelzer president of InnoC and the project leader for ROBOAT. Roland said: "The ROBOAT is about four metres long but the algorithms and systems used on board can be scaled up for use on larger boats that are more frequently found on the open sea. The future we envision for the ROBOAT system is that it can become a reliable support tool for sailors in leisure boats."

Although the boat is fully autonomous, if the technology is adapted for use on a full sized boat there will be an override system to allow manual control.

The event is being held between 3 and 6 September, with the winner being announced on 6 September. The team hope to design a boat that can make a fully autonomous crossing of the Atlantic Ocean by 2010.

High resolution photos:

<http://www.roboat.at/en/pressecenter/aktuelle-presseinformation/article/>

Contact and further information:

Roland Stelzer (project leader)

Email: roland.stelzer@innoc.at

Tel.: +43 664 6113849

www.roboat.at and www.microtransat.org