

Press Release

Vienna/Breitenbrunn, December 2007

First ever World Championship in Robotic Sailing on Lake Neusiedl in Austria

The first ever world championship in robotic sailing is to be carried out in May 2008 in the Austrian village of Breitenbrunn. The championship will be organised by 'Austrian Association for Innovative Computer Science' (InnoC) and 'Yachtclub Breitenbrunn'. The competition provides an ideal playground for the participants in the Microtransat in autumn 2008, during which unmanned, up to four meter long sailing boats are expected to autonomously cross the Atlantic Ocean.

Research in fully autonomous sailing techniques has increased rapidly over the last few years. More and more enthusiastic teams around the world are doing their best to "teach" their boats the complex task of sailing. The Austrian InnoC team proved its world leadership by winning international competitions twice already. With wind as the only propulsion, their "ASV roboat" is able to autonomously aim for any given target. For that purpose the ideal route is continuously recalculated based on online measurements of weather data and drift parameters. Artificial intelligence converts all these data into commands for rudder and sails as well as tacks and jibes. 'We are very much looking forward to the next liaison with the world's best autonomous sailing boats and are already preparing our Roboat for a tough challenge' says Roland Stelzer, President of the InnoC association and project manager. 'So far six teams from the countries of Austria, the USA, Canada, France, Wales, and Portugal are expected for the tournament.'

In their attempt to become the first ever world robotic sailing champion the boats have to face different challenges. Points will be granted for good routing, adaptiveness towards changing weather conditions, and good timing of tacks and jibes. In addition to the official competition a 48-hour-race will be carried out in order to simulate the conditions of the Microtransat, which will take place in autumn 2008. This race will show the practicality of the boats to remain sailing autonomously for long periods of time and the ability to hold station at a fixed point. The international jury consists of experts in both, sailing and robotics. The event will be carried out from May 18th till May 25th, 2008. The program will be topped off with a scientific conference and a 'man against machine' race.

Further information to be found on <http://www.roboticsailing.org>. High resolution photos are available from <http://www.roboticsailing.org/presse>. Sponsorship is warmly welcome.

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Organisers

InnoC – Austran Association for Innovative Computer Science

The “Österreichische Gesellschaft für innovative Computerwissenschaften” (Austrian Association for Innovative Computer Science; InnoC) is a non-profit research organization located in Vienna. Aim of the association is to support talents in the field of innovative computer science. Acquired knowledge and experience has to be provided to a broad public. Science should be interesting and amusing. It is intended to offer an incentive for dealing with new technology in the field of innovative computer science and related topics - theoretically and practically.

InnoC has huge experience in organizing international robotic competitions. The first RobotChallenge was held in 2004. Within a few years the RobotChallenge, organized by InnoC, became one of the biggest robotic competitions in Europe.

A research group within InnoC developed the Roboat, a fully automatic steering and navigation mechanism for an autonomous robotic sailboat. The Roboat team won the first international Microtransat event in Toulouse, France in June 2006. In September 2007 the InnoC team won the Microtransat again. This year's competition was held on the Irish Sea in Aberystwyth, Wales.

Furthermore InnoC runs the HappyLab, where facilities for embedded systems prototyping are provided to internal research groups as well as to the public.

Yacht Club Breitenbrunn

The venue of the WRSC 2008 is Yachtclub Breitenbrunn on Lake Neusiedl.

Yachtclub Breitenbrunn is well-known among experts for its years of experience in organizing prominent and high-ranking sailing regattas.

Since the foundation of Yachtclub Breitenbrunn in 1969 numerous dinghy classes have been hosted by the club at any number of European championships, the latest being the Laser Masters Euro 2007.

The Austrian Youth Sailing Championships originated at Yachtclub Breitenbrunn. The latest were organized by Yachtclub Breitenbrunn in 2007.

The extensive club grounds on the lakeside on the one hand, and the wholehearted support of the Municipality of Breitenbrunn on the other guarantee optimum conditions for this type of event from start to finish.

Yachtclub Breitenbrunn is very pleased to now be able to participate in organizing a competition which is characterized by the use of the latest computer and network technology in an area in which Austrian researchers have attained a top position. The province of Burgenland has recently made very considerable progress in these fields of modern technology.

We are therefore looking forward most particularly to this regatta and extend a hearty welcome to all our guests!