

Closing the Automation Gap:

Robotics for Textile Handling in Europe contributing to competitiveness

18 June 2026 | 09:30 – 13:00

*Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Cientificas (CSIC) Brussels Office
CSIC 7th floor, Rue du Trône 62, 1050 Brussels*

*As Europe's textile industry faces mounting pressure to innovate, automate, and transition toward more **sustainable production models**, **robotics for textile handling** is emerging as a strategic enabler of industrial competitiveness. The launch event of the **White Book on robotic textile manipulation**, created within the **ROMANDIC project**, brings together policymakers, researchers, technology developers, and industry leaders to explore **how advanced robotics can help close the automation gap in textile manufacturing and recycling**. Through high-level discussions, collaborative exchanges, and the unveiling of a new European Network of Excellence, the event will present a shared vision and roadmap for strengthening Europe's leadership in smart, resilient, and circular textile production.*

Programme

09:00 – 09:30 Registration of participants

09:30 – 09:40 Welcome and Opening Remarks

- **Dr. Guillem Alenyà** – Director, Institut de Robotica i Informàtica Industrial (IRI), a joint centre of the Spanish Scientific Research Council (CSIC) and Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC)
- **Asst. Prof. Dr. Draško Veselinovič** – Director and Member of the Management Board, Slovenian Business & Research Association (SBRA)
- **Dr. Andrej Gams** – Senior researcher and Head of the Humanoid and Cognitive Robotics Laboratory, Jožef Stefan Institute (JSI)

09:40 – 10:30 Session 1: EU policies involving robotic manipulation of textiles

- **Antonio Enrique Puente Rodero** – Programmer Officer, Excellence in AI & Robotics, DG CNECT, European Commission
- **Silvia Ferratini** – Team Leader, Foundations of Circular Economy Team, DG ENV, European Commission

10:30 – 10:50 Session 2 – ROMANDIC White Book & Network of Excellence

- **Dr. Guillem Alenyà (CSIC) ROMANDIC PI** – *White Book on robotic textile manipulation*
- **Dr. Andrej Gams (JSI) ROMANDIC coordinator** – *European NoE on Deformable Object Manipulation by Robots*

10:50 – 11:10 Coffee Break

11:10 – 11:50 Session 3 — Fostering Industry Competitiveness: Needs and Opportunities

- **Marta González Anglés** – *Strategy & Go-to-market, THEKER*
- **Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Lobnik** – *CEO of IOS, Innovative solutions for textile recycling*
- **Nicholas Tengelin** – *CEO of Rebl Industries (AI-powered warehouse robotics solutions for H&M Group)*
- **Pedro Gonçalves** – *Senior Policy officer, EURATEX*

11:50 – 12:10 Session 4 — Research Landscape: European Projects on Deformable Object Manipulation

- **Dr. Andrej Gams (JSI)** – *ROMANDIC project coordinator*
- **Dr. Manuel Catalano (IIT)** – *FlexCycle project coordinator*
- **Dr. Júlia Borràs (CSIC)** – *SoftEnable project PI*
- **Dr. Arash Ajoudani (IIT)** – *Tornado project scientific coordinator*

12:10 – 13:00 Moderated debate and Q&A

- **Moderator:**
 - **Dr. Guillem Alenyà** – *Director, Institut de Robotica i Informàtica Industrial (IRI), a joint centre of the Spanish Scientific Research Council (CSIC) and Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC)*
- **Participants:**
 - **Silvia Ferratini** – *Team Leader, Foundations of Circular Economy Team, DG ENV, European Commission*
 - **Marta González Anglés** – *Strategy & Go-to-market, THEKER*
 - **Prof. Dr. Aleš Ude** – *Scientific Councillor and Head of Department of Automatics, Biocybernetics and Robotics, Jožef Stefan Institute (JSI)*
 - **Nicholas Tengelin** – *CEO, Rebl Industries AB*
 - **Pedro Gonçalves** – *Senior Policy officer, EURATEX*

13:00 – 14:30 Closing Remarks & Networking Luncheon

- *Summary of key messages*
- *Invitation to join the network*
- *Transition to networking reception (light refreshments)*