

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

- **Cecile Huet** – Head of Unit, 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**
- *Carla Gómez Cano – Co-founder of THEKER (tbc)*
 - *Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Lobnik – CEO of IO, 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:*
 - *Cecile Huet – Head of Unit, Excellence in AI & Robotics, DG CNECT, European Commission*
 - *Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Lobnik – CEO, Institute of Environmental Protection and Sensors (IOS)*
 - *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)*