News story: Robotics and AI: apply in the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

Innovate UK is making the funding available for robotics and artificial intelligence technologies in applications such as deep mining, nuclear energy, space and off-shore energy.

This is an Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund activity. It aims to develop robotics technologies that can take people out of dangerous work environments and go beyond human limits.

Demonstrator programme

There is up to £6 million available for projects that stimulate the development of robotics and artificial intelligence demonstrators.

This is the first phase of the competition. Projects should focus on technical feasibility studies of individual technologies, systems or subsystems in extreme or challenging environments.

Phase 2 will run in 2018. This will focus on experimental developments of fully-integrated systems that will be tested and demonstrated in realistic, extreme environments. To be considered to lead a project in phase 2 you must apply in phase 1.

Collaborative research and development

You can apply for a share of £10 million for collaborative research and development (R&D) that results in new and novel systems.

Projects should demonstrate a potential step-change in capabilities. Examples include:

- innovative materials or systems, for example, actuators, sensors and telecommunications
- improved robotic capabilities, such as structural and radiation tolerance
- improved machine vision systems
- improved situational awareness, navigation, localisation and mapping
- more energy-efficient devices and systems
- miniaturised systems, for example, sensors, components and integrated sub-systems
- systems engineering including verification and validation tools and methodologies
- mission planning and risk management

The focus is primarily on off-shore energy, nuclear energy, space and deep mining, however, other extreme and challenging environments may also be considered. We are particularly interested in projects that cut across sectors.

Part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

Robots for a Safer World – part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

The robots and artificial intelligence challenge is part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

By developing new technologies and systems that can be deployed in extreme environments, this challenge will create a safer working world for people, as well as supporting advances in industry and public services to make them more productive.

Government will invest £93 million in this challenge area over the next 4 years.

Competition information

- both competitions are now open for applications
- in the demonstrator competition, projects should last up to 12 months and range in size up to total project costs of £500,000. The competition closes on 19 July 2017
- in the collaborative R&D competition, projects should last up to 36 months and range in size up to total project costs of £2 million. The competition closes on 2 August 2017
- all projects must be led by a business
- businesses can attract up to 70% of their project costs

News story: UK and France announce joint campaign to tackle online radicalisation

The UK and France have joined forces to tackle online radicalisation with plans that could lead to much stronger action against tech companies who fail to remove unacceptable content.

Ahead of the Prime Minister's visit to Paris today, where she will hold talks on counter-terrorism with French President Emmanuel Macron, the UK and France have announced a new joint campaign to ensure that the internet cannot be used as a safe space for terrorists and criminals.

Crucially, plans include exploring the possibility of creating a new legal liability for tech companies if they fail to remove content. This could, for example, include penalties such as fines for companies that fail to take action. The two countries will lead joint work with the tech companies on this vital agenda, including working with them to develop tools to identify and remove harmful material automatically.

In particular, the Prime Minister and President Macron will press relevant firms to urgently establish the industry-led forum agreed at the G7 summit last month, to develop shared technical and policy solutions to tackle terrorist content on the internet.

The Home Secretary and the French Interior Minister will meet in the coming days to drive forward this important work.

Speaking ahead of her visit to Paris, the Prime Minister said:

> The counter-terrorism cooperation between British and French intelligence agencies is already strong, but President Macron and I agree that more should be done to tackle the terrorist threat online.
>
> In the UK we are already working with social media companies to halt the spread of extremist material and poisonous propaganda that is warping young minds.
>
> And today I can announce that the UK and France will work together to encourage corporations to do more and abide by their social responsibility to step up their efforts to remove harmful content from their networks, including exploring the possibility of creating a new legal liability for tech companies if they fail to remove unacceptable content.
>
> We are united in our total condemnation of terrorism and our commitment to stamp out this evil.

Press release: Heineken/Punch must resolve concerns over pub merger

Heineken must now offer proposals to address these concerns by 20 June or face an in-depth investigation into the merger.

As part of an initial investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has looked in detail at areas where pubs operated by Heineken and Punch currently compete. It has identified 33 local areas where their pubs would not face sufficient competition after the merger, which could lead to price increases or a deterioration in the quality of the service on offer.

Concerns were also raised with the CMA that the merger would close off an important route to market for brewers that compete with Heineken. However, the CMA found that the pubs being acquired are only a very small part (4%) of the GB market and are therefore not a major route to market for brewers – which was backed by evidence from brewers showing that these Punch pubs typically account for only a small proportion of all of their sales to pubs.

The CMA also looked closely at whether the acquisition by Heineken could lead to a reduction in the choice of beer and cider on offer in the Punch pubs. The CMA found that any potential reduction would be limited, taking into account the drinks that Punch currently stocks and the range of drinks available in Heineken-owned pubs. It also found that Heineken would not have a strong incentive to reduce the range of beer and cider, in part because doing so would risk losing business in pubs where this is important to customers.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Acting Chief Executive and decision maker in the case, said:

> We have listened very carefully to a range of concerns about this merger. The companies will own less than 10% of all British pubs after any deal, but we are concerned about the loss of competition for pub goers in a number of local areas. Without sufficient competition from rivals, pubs in these areas might be able to raise prices or worsen the service they offer customers.
>
> Heineken will now have the chance to offer proposals to address these concerns – otherwise we will carry out an in-depth investigation.

The merger will be referred for an in-depth phase 2 investigation by an independent group of CMA panel members, unless Heineken is able to offer undertakings which sufficiently address the CMA's competition concerns. Heineken has until 20 June 2017 to do so.

All information relating to the merger is available on the case page.

Notes for editors

1. Heineken is proposing to buy approximately 1,900 pubs from Punch Taverns.
2. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For more information see the CMA's homepage.
3. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a merger reference, resulting in an in-depth phase 2 merger investigation, if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a 'relevant

merger situation' has been created, or arrangements are in progress or in contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and that the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.

4. Under the Act a 'relevant merger situation' is created if 2 or more enterprises have ceased to be distinct enterprises; and the value of the turnover in the United Kingdom of the enterprise being taken over exceeds £70 million ('the turnover test') or as a result of the transaction, in relation to the supply of goods or services of any description, a 25% share of supply in the UK (or a substantial part of the UK) is created or enhanced ('the share of supply test').
5. The CMA considers that it is under a duty to make a phase 2 merger reference in this case under the Act. However, the duty to refer is not exercised while the CMA is considering whether to accept undertakings in lieu of a reference.
6. All the CMA's functions in phase 2 merger investigations are performed by inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's panel members. The appointed inquiry group are the decision makers on merger investigations. The CMA's panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and/or business; the membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience (including industry experience).
7. The text of this decision will be placed on the case page in due course.
8. For more information on the CMA see our homepage or follow us on Twitter @CMAgovuk, Facebook, Flickr and LinkedIn. Sign up to our email alerts to receive updates on mergers cases.
9. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or by calling 020 3738 6798.

News story: Election 2017: ministerial appointments

The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of the following as Ministers of State:

Home Office

Ministry of Justice

Department for Education

- Rt Hon Anne Milton MP
- Robert Goodwill MP

Department for Exiting the European Union

- Rt Hon Baroness Anelay DBE

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

And in addition:

HM Treasury

- Financial Secretary to the Treasury – Rt Hon Mel Stride MP

The following have left government:

- Rt Hon Mike Penning MP
- Rt Hon Sir Oliver Heald QC MP
- Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
- Rt Hon David Jones MP

Further appointments will be added to this list as they are announced.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on the Kurdistan Regional Government's intention to hold a referendum on independence from Iraq]

In a statement the Foreign Secretary said,

> We note the announcement by the government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq regarding a referendum on independence. We understand the aspirations of the Kurdish people and continue to support them politically, culturally and economically within Iraq. But a referendum at this time will distract from the more urgent priorities of defeating Daesh, stabilising liberated areas and addressing the long-term political issues that led to Daesh's rise. Any referendum or political process towards independence must be agreed with the Government of Iraq in Baghdad. Unilateral moves towards independence would not be in the interests of the people of Kurdistan Region, Iraq or of wider regional stability.

> The UK supports a stable, democratic and unified Iraq, one that is able to provide the security, jobs and healthcare and education all

Iraqis want and deserve. We urge all parties to engage in dialogue to deliver a better future for their people on the basis of the Iraqi Constitution.

Further information

Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter: @BorisJohnson and Facebook.