

## Press Release

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### University of Girona takes 1<sup>st</sup> Prize at SAUC-E '10

4 July 2010, La Spezia, Italy -- The University of Girona, Spain, triumphed over 8 other teams to win the SAUC-E '10, the 5<sup>th</sup> Student Autonomous Underwater Challenge Europe. The team's AUV "Sparus" successfully completed a number of mission tasks, established by the event organisers including passing through an underwater gate and performing a "pipeline" inspection, all of which must be performed autonomously by the vehicle. The 2<sup>nd</sup> prize went to Heriot-Watt University from the UK with its AUV "Nessie V", while ENSIETA from France took home the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize. The other participating teams were from the University of Lübeck (Germany), University of Bremen (DFKI RIC Bremen, Germany), University of Cambridge (U.K.), University of Southampton (U.K.), University of West England (U.K.) and ESIEA (France).

Prior to the final in-water run, each of the 9 teams had to make oral presentations and write a technical paper describing the vehicle's design and their approach to the mission. The teams were judged on technical merit, mission tasks completed, journal paper, safety of the design, craftsmanship and innovation. SAUC-E '10 was sponsored by the Office of Naval Research Global (USA), THALES UK, ACSA Underwater GPS (France), CSSN (Italian Navy), Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (UK), ECA (France), Subsea Asset Location Technologies Ltd (UK) and NURC, the NATO Research Centre who hosted the event.

The first SAUC-E started in 2006 to encourage young engineers and scientists to think about underwater technology and its future possibilities, as well as to foster ties between the students and the organizations involved in underwater robotic technologies. "The Centre is pleased to organise this year's SAUC-E, and will be hosting the event in 2011 and 2012 as well," said the Director of NURC, Dr. Martin-Lauzer. "We want to be involved in providing students with the opportunity to experience first-hand the challenges of underwater technologies, and to nurture interest in this area of research."

Participating teams arrived on 28 June to put their vehicles into the water during practice runs. For many of the teams, this is the first time their vehicle was tested in a real harbour environment, with dynamic conditions such as changing wave action and salinity. The students worked from morning until late in the evening to resolve technical problems and to adjust mission plans and algorithms. After 4 days of practice, all 9 teams qualified for Sunday's final runs.



*The University of Girona team putting its AUV "Sparus" into the water during the final run*



*The University of Southampton  
calibrating its AUV in a test tank for  
before putting it into the harbour*

Despite the hot weather and various technical/logistical challenges encountered during the week, the level of energy and enthusiasm these future engineers displayed was inspiring. One participant said that his experience in SAUC-E '10 confirmed his decision to continue studies in this field, and that underwater robotics has a bright future and there are still many innovations to come. Others noted that they learned a lot from the event, not only the technical aspects of getting an AUV to complete autonomous missions, but also about the importance of team work, how to work efficiently due to time constraints, solve problems with limited resources, and from interaction with other teams, judges and scientists and engineers. These comments reflect the objectives of the SAUC-E,

re-iterated by the NURC Director during the awards ceremony: these participants will someday replace the scientists and engineers at the Centre, in the research labs of their own countries and in industry.

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