



The 8th World Robotic Sailing Championship in the Åland Islands

The 8th World Robotic Sailing Championship has come to an end, with a day of perfect weather conditions outside the Maritime Quarter of Mariehamn. The events started with the International Robotic Sailing Conference on August 31. Researchers from all over the world including USA, Japan, China and many parts of Europe presented their work related to sailing robots. The remaining week has been devoted to the sailing championship, where autonomous boats were competing in various challenges

Teams from France, Norway, Åland Islands, Switzerland and Wales have taken part in the competitions. At the end the winner of the micro-sailboat category is the team IfAAutonomous from ETH Zürich in Switzerland, and in the sailboat category the Åland Sailing Robots from Åland University were the winners in hard competition from ENSTA Bretagne.

An increasing number of research teams around the world try to teach their boats the complex task of sailing. The best routing decision, perfect handling of ever changing wind conditions and perfect timing during tack and jibe are some of the skills an autonomous sailing vessel has to master.

A robotic sailboat is able to autonomously navigate towards any given target without human control or intervention. The optimal route is calculated dependent on strategic goals and weather parameters. Rudder and sails are autonomously controlled in order to keep course and to execute manoeuvres like tack and jibe. As sailboats operate in a highly dynamic, environment an autonomous sailboat has to respond quickly to ever-changing environmental conditions. Incoming data from sensors (GPS, compass, anemometer, etc.) have to be analyzed by intelligent control mechanisms.

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