

How European robotics startups are leveraging a unique investment environment to outpace global rivals

As the founder of a UK-based humanoid robotics company, I've witnessed firsthand how European investment is reshaping the global robotics landscape, creating opportunities that were unimaginable just a few years ago.

Temps de lecture : minute

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The resilience of robotics investment is remarkable—according to Dealroom data analyzed by Sifted, the sector attracted over \$2B in 2023 in Europe alone, holding relatively steady compared to \$2.4B in 2022 and \$2.5B in 2021. This sustained investment, including the €100M funding round secured by 1X Technologies earlier this year, isn't just another headline—it's a testament to Europe's growing confidence in robotics innovation and marks a pivotal shift in how Europe approaches technological advancement.

What makes the European investment landscape particularly compelling is its three-pronged approach. First, we're seeing unprecedented support from venture capital firms that understand the long-term potential of robotics innovation and growth of the market.

The global humanoid robotics market shows remarkable growth potential, Goldman Sachs Research data shows. It is projected to expand dramatically to \$38B by 2035, which is 6 times more compared to the previous projection.

Second, corporate investments from European industrial giants are creating a robust ecosystem where theory meets practical application. These partnerships are particularly valuable because they provide immediate testing grounds for new technologies. When companies like BMW or Siemens invest in robotics startups, they're not just providing capital—they're offering real-world validation environments that accelerate development cycles.

The third, and perhaps most distinctive, element is the EU's strategic funding initiatives. Programs like Factories of the Future and the European Innovation Council's deep tech funding are more than just funding sources—they're catalysts for cross-border collaboration.

This coordinated approach sets Europe apart from other markets, where robotics development often happens in isolated corporate environments.

The impact of this investment ecosystem extends beyond individual companies. It's creating clusters of expertise across Europe—from Munich's robotics hub to London's AI corridor, and Stockholm's automation cluster. These regional centres of excellence are fostering knowledge sharing and talent development that benefit the entire industry. ETH Zurich, a leading technical university, plays a pivotal role in this ecosystem, with its robust startup support system and partnerships with major banks like UBS, which has committed up to CHF40M over 10 years to promote entrepreneurship and innovation.

What's particularly exciting is how this investment environment is allowing European companies to leapfrog competitors in specific areas.

Successful robotic assistance in production lines could systematically reduce costs and alleviate labor shortages, but the broader implications involve complex social and economic factors beyond simply replacing human jobs.

The European approach to human-robot collaboration aims to empower workers and democratise access to automation while preserving valuable expertise, with humanoid robots using specialised actuators with torque sensors at each joint—a key differentiator from industrial robots that could lead to a more diverse market of smaller, competing humanoid robot companies, unlike the consolidated industrial robot industry.

The EU's emphasis on ethical AI and responsible robotics development has also proved to be a strategic advantage. A notable example of a robot adhering to ethical AI principles is the *Care-O-bot 4*, developed by *Fraunhofer IPA in Germany*. This assistive robot is designed to support elderly care and incorporates several key ethical considerations, including human-centric design, privacy protection, transparency and safety.

As global regulations around AI and robotics evolve, European companies find themselves ahead of the curve, having already integrated these considerations into their development processes. This foresight is attracting investors who recognise that future-proof robotics solutions must address both technical and ethical challenges.

Looking ahead, the next wave of European robotics investment is likely to focus on scaling these innovations internationally.

However, this success brings its own challenges. As European robotics companies scale, they must maintain their innovative edge while meeting growing market demands. The key will be leveraging investment not just for growth, but for sustained innovation. This means continuing to invest in R&D, talent development, and cross-border collaboration even as companies expand globally.

The European investment landscape in robotics isn't just about funding—it's about building a sustainable ecosystem that can compete and lead globally. As we move forward, this ecosystem will be crucial in

developing the next generation of robotics solutions that can address global challenges while maintaining Europe's commitment to responsible innovation.

For those of us leading robotics companies in Europe, this supportive investment environment isn't just enabling our current projects—it's empowering us to think bigger about the future of robotics and its role in society.

The question isn't whether European robotics will compete globally, but rather how quickly we can scale our innovations to meet worldwide demand while maintaining our commitment to responsible development.

Artem Sokolov is the founder of *Humanoid*.



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