

COST Action CA16116 on Wearable Robots for Augmentation, Assistance, or Substitution of Human Motor Functions

Short-Term Scientific Mission 40687: “Ethical, legal and social issues in the design and use of exoskeletons: taxonomy and focus groups”

Home institution: Foundation for Responsible Robotics (FRR), The Hague, NL

Host institution: NUI Galway, Galway, IE

STSM start and end date: 09/04/2018 - 30/04/2018

The development and use of wearable robots have ethical, legal and social implications, whose analysis is the task of WG4 of the Cost Action. The purpose of this STSM was twofold; first to develop a taxonomy of such implications, and second, to plan focus groups with engineers to understand to what extent these implications are considered in their work.

First, supervisor Dr. Heike Felzmann and I prepared the focus groups and the necessary ethics review application at NUIG. For that, we wrote a study description, a consent form, a participant information sheet, interview questions, and a recruitment letter. The ethics review approval form was approved later. The focus groups are planned as four sessions with 4-6 participants over the next year. For the taxonomy paper, the previously documented brainstorming sessions of the WG were clustered and complemented with information from a literature research. We decided to use three main categories: ‘WR and the self’, ‘WR and the other’, and ‘WR and society’. This work will result in a journal article. Finally, we decided to conduct an additional systematic literature research on the ELSIs of WRs.

Both Dr. Felzmann and I agreed that, depending on my future obligations as a PhD student, I will continue collaborating with her and the WG4 of the Cost Action. As part of my internship at the FRR, I will continue working on the taxonomy paper and the systematic literature review, which are planned to be submitted for publication soon. If my obligations allow it, I will also help conducting the focus groups. I am very grateful for the experiences and insights I received in Galway and would like to thank Dr. Felzman and Dr. Veneman for their support!