RESEARCH NOTE

Physical AI & Robotics:

Europe's Next Industrial Frontier Meets China's Automation Imperative

FTE® Capital Markets Summit | Lake Zurich | 17–18 & 26–27 March 2026

Executive Summary

Physical AI — the discipline of embedding artificial intelligence into machines that perceive, reason, and act in the real world — is undergoing a moment of explosive commercial realisation. From surgical robots and autonomous industrial systems to humanoid machines and AI-accelerated chip architectures, the sector is transitioning from laboratory promise to mass-market deployment at a pace that is redefining global industrial competitiveness.

Europe, and Switzerland in particular, occupies a position of exceptional strength in this transformation. Swiss and European companies have for decades led in precision engineering, robotics research, sensor technology, and applied AI — producing world-class institutions such as ETH Zurich, EPFL, and Fraunhofer, and globally recognised companies including ABB, Zurich Instruments, ANYbotics, and CSEM. This deep industrial heritage, combined with world-leading academic output, positions Europe as a primary source of the Physical AI technologies that the world — and especially China — urgently needs.

China is the world's largest consumer of industrial robots and the fastest-growing market for healthcare and service robotics. Its government has made Physical AI and intelligent manufacturing a strategic national priority, committing hundreds of billions of dollars in policy support, infrastructure, and procurement. For Swiss and European Physical AI and Robotics companies, China represents not just a market — it represents a scale-up and commercialisation environment of unparalleled magnitude.

The FTE® Capital Markets Summit at Lake Zurich — across two flagship sessions on 17–18 March and 26–27 March 2026 — brings together Swiss and European Physical AI and Robotics innovators with the family offices, institutional investors, and Chinese ecosystem partners needed to accelerate their global ambitions. This Research Note serves as a strategic briefing for companies and investors considering participation.

The Physical AI & Robotics Opportunity: Scale, Momentum & China

The global robotics and Physical AI market is entering a structural growth phase unlike anything seen since the original automation wave of the 1980s. Several converging forces are making this a defining decade for the sector:

Global Market Drivers

- Global robotics market projected at USD 260B+ by 2030
- Foundation models enabling generalised robot intelligence for the first time
- Labour shortages in manufacturing driving automation at unprecedented scale
- Ageing populations creating massive demand for surgical & care robotics
- AI chip architectures enabling real-time edge inference in physical systems
- Autonomous systems becoming critical logistics and defence infrastructure

China-Specific Dynamics

- CN China installs more industrial robots annually than the rest of world combined
- 'Made in China 2025' & 'New Generation AI Plan' drive state-backed demand
- USD 1T+ committed to intelligent manufacturing infrastructure to 2030
- Surgical robotics market in China growing at 25%+ CAGR
- Chinese OEMs actively seeking European technology licensing & JV partners
- World-class robotics research hubs in Shenzhen, Beijing, Shanghai & Qingdao

The intersection of Physical AI with healthcare is of particular strategic significance for the FTE® Summit's audience. Surgical robotics, rehabilitation exoskeletons, AI-guided diagnostics platforms, and autonomous care systems are converging into a new category of medtech that China is investing in heavily — creating direct synergies with the Summit's existing Longevity and Biotech community.

Europe's Physical AI Ecosystem: World-Class and Ready to Scale

Switzerland and Europe are not merely observers of the Physical AI revolution — they are among its primary architects. The European ecosystem combines several interlocking strengths that give it a durable competitive advantage in global Physical AI markets:

Why European Physical AI Companies Are Uniquely Positioned for China

European Physical AI companies bring three attributes that Chinese partners and investors consistently prize above all others: precision engineering heritage (Switzerland and Germany in particular have no peer globally in precision mechanical systems), regulatory credibility (CE-marked and ISO-certified products carry exceptional weight in Chinese hospital and industrial procurement), and deep-science differentiation (ETH Zurich, EPFL, TU Munich, and the Fraunhofer Institutes produce Physical AI research of global significance that is directly

commercialisable). These attributes are extraordinarily difficult for Chinese domestic players to replicate quickly — making European technology highly sought-after for licensing, joint development, and co-investment.

Sector Spotlights: Five Physical AI Categories Primed for China Market Entry

The following five Physical AI sub-sectors represent the strongest strategic alignment between European innovation capability and Chinese market demand. Each is a priority focus area for the FTE® Capital Markets Summit's investor and partner community.

🦾 Surgical & Medical Robotics

Precision-engineered systems redefining the operating theatre and rehabilitation

Europe leads globally in surgical robotics precision and safety engineering. Swiss and German companies have pioneered robotic-assisted surgery, orthopaedic navigation, and neurorehabilitation exoskeletons. China's surgical robotics market is growing at over 25% CAGR, driven by government procurement mandates for tier-1 and tier-2 hospitals, and an acute shortage of specialist surgeons. Chinese hospital groups and medtech companies are actively seeking European surgical robotics partners for licensing, distribution, and co-development — with China's NMPA having introduced accelerated pathways for innovative medical devices.

Representative European Companies:

ANYbotics (Zurich) — autonomous inspection robotics; Stäubli Robotics (Switzerland) — surgical & industrial precision robots; medineering (Munich) — endoscopic robotic systems; CSEM (Neuchâtel) — precision sensor & AI systems for medical robotics

🏭 Industrial & Manufacturing Robotics

Intelligent automation systems for the factories of the next decade

ABB, headquartered in Zurich, is one of the world's two dominant industrial robotics companies and already deeply embedded in China's manufacturing infrastructure. Beyond the global champions, a generation of Swiss and European start-ups and mid-caps are developing next-generation collaborative robots (cobots), AI-driven quality control systems, and intelligent material handling platforms that address the precise bottlenecks China's manufacturing sector is racing to solve. With labour costs rising rapidly in coastal China and the government pushing hard for domestic manufacturing upgrades, the demand for European industrial robotics intelligence has never been greater.

Representative European Companies:

ABB Robotics (Zurich) — global industrial robotics leader; Universal Robots (Denmark) — cobot market pioneer; Schunk (Germany) — gripper & clamping systems; Roboze (Italy) — advanced manufacturing robotics; Wandelbots (Dresden) — robot programming AI

🤖 Humanoid Robots & Embodied AI

The emerging category that will define the next phase of the Physical AI revolution

Humanoid robotics — machines designed to operate in human environments and perform human-like tasks — has moved from science fiction to commercial reality with extraordinary speed. While US companies such as Figure and Boston Dynamics have led headlines, European research institutions including ETH Zurich and EPFL are producing fundamental advances in locomotion, manipulation, and embodied intelligence that underpin the entire sector. China has made humanoid robots a national strategic priority, with Unitree, UBTECH, and state-backed programmes racing to deploy humanoids across logistics, manufacturing, and elder care — actively seeking European foundational technology partners.

Representative European Companies:

ETH Zurich (spin-offs incl. ANYbotics) — legged robotics & locomotion AI; EPFL Biorobotics Lab — biomimetic robotic systems; Magazino (Munich) — autonomous logistics robotics; Franka Emika (Munich) — dexterous manipulation robots; Agility Robotics (European R&D partnerships)

Autonomous Systems & Drones

Intelligent aerial and ground vehicles transforming logistics, inspection, and defence

European companies have built globally recognised positions in autonomous drone systems, particularly in precision agriculture, infrastructure inspection, and search and rescue applications. Switzerland's Wingtra, senseFly (acquired by AgEagle), and Auterion represent a cluster of world-class drone intelligence companies with strong IP. China is simultaneously the world's largest drone manufacturer and one of its largest drone operators — with DJI commanding global markets — but actively seeks European autonomous systems intelligence for applications where European regulatory standards and safety certifications are prerequisites, particularly in logistics, utilities, and smart city infrastructure.

Representative European Companies:

Wingtra (Zurich) — fixed-wing VTOL survey drones; Auterion (Zurich) — open-source autonomous vehicle OS; senseFly (Lausanne, now AgEagle) — precision drone mapping; Flyability (Lausanne) — indoor inspection drones; Volocopter (Germany) — urban air mobility

AI Chips & Edge Computing for Physical Systems

The silicon intelligence layer enabling real-time decision-making in physical AI systems

The ability to run sophisticated AI inference at the edge — inside robots, drones, medical devices, and industrial machinery — is the fundamental enabling layer of Physical AI. European semiconductor and AI chip companies, while smaller than US or Taiwanese counterparts, hold significant specialist positions in neuromorphic computing, ultra-low-power inference, and safety-certified embedded AI. Switzerland is home to several deep-tech semiconductor companies operating at the frontier of this space, supported by ETH Zurich's world-class integrated systems research. China's drive for semiconductor self-sufficiency, combined with its voracious demand for edge AI in physical systems, creates compelling licensing and partnership opportunities for European AI chip innovators.

Representative European Companies:

Zurich Instruments (Switzerland) — precision test & measurement for quantum/AI systems; CSEM (Switzerland) — AI chip design & embedded intelligence; GreenWaves Technologies (France) — ultra-low-power AI processors; Prophesee (France) — neuromorphic event-based vision sensors; Axelera AI (Netherlands) — AI inference chips

The China Gateway: BioCities & the BCD Ecosystem

The FTE® Capital Markets Summit's connectivity to the Chinese market is anchored by the participation of Elie Haddad, CEO of BioCities at BCD Holdings. While BioCities' primary focus is the integrated biomedical innovation ecosystem of Bio City Qingdao, the BCD platform's relevance to Physical AI companies is significant and direct.

Qingdao — ranked 33rd globally for scientific research, with 29 universities and 9 national key laboratories — is also a major node in China's robotics and intelligent manufacturing ecosystem. The city hosts advanced manufacturing clusters, government-backed robotics R&D programmes, and proximity to the industrial heartland of Shandong Province. Bio City Qingdao's integrated R&D cluster, hospital infrastructure, and government relationships provide Physical AI companies — particularly those in surgical robotics, medical AI hardware, and autonomous care systems — with a credible and well-connected soft landing in China. Elie Haddad's network across Chinese government bodies, state-linked investors, and the APAC institutional investor community provides FTE® Summit participants with access that would otherwise take years to build independently.

The FTE® Capital Markets Summit: Structure & Format

The FTE® Capital Markets Summit is one of Europe's most focused and high-calibre gatherings for deep technology capital formation. Hosted on the shores of Lake Zurich — Switzerland's global financial heartland — the Summit convenes founders, C-suite executives, institutional investors, family offices, and ecosystem partners in an intimate, curated format designed to generate substantive dialogue and actionable connections.

Summit Dates & Format — March 2026

Session I: 17–18 March 2026 | Lake Zurich, Switzerland
Session II: 26–27 March 2026 | Lake Zurich, Switzerland

Format: Keynote presentations | Expert panels | Curated roundtables
One-on-one investor meetings | Networking dinners

Attendance: By invitation — qualified investors, institutional delegates & company executives

The dual-session structure allows a first cohort of companies and investors to establish relationships and initial frameworks, with the second session providing a structured follow-up for

deeper due diligence, term-sheet discussions, and partnership formalisation. Physical AI and Robotics companies attending both sessions benefit from an accelerated engagement cycle that would typically take many months through conventional channels.

Who Should Attend: Target Profile

The FTE® Summit's Physical AI and Robotics programme is designed for Swiss and European companies at the frontier of intelligent physical systems — at any stage from deep-tech spinout to commercial-scale business. The Summit is equally relevant for institutional investors and family offices seeking curated exposure to European Physical AI assets with Asia market optionality.

Investment Profile

- Surgical & medical robotics
- Rehabilitation & care exoskeletons
- Humanoid & service robots
- Industrial cobots & automation
- Autonomous drones & vehicles
- AI chips & edge inference
- Computer vision & perception
- Robot software & OS platforms

China Demand Drivers

- China's USD 1T+ intelligent manufacturing drive
- 25%+ CAGR surgical robotics market
- Humanoid robots — national strategic priority
- State procurement for autonomous logistics
- Elder care robot demand from ageing population
- Semiconductor self-sufficiency mandate
- Smart city & industrial IoT infrastructure
- Hospital automation & AI surgery programmes

Partnership Structures

- Technology licensing
- Joint ventures with Chinese OEMs
- Co-development agreements
- Distribution & commercialisation partnerships
- Equity co-investment (PE & family office)
- Government-backed procurement partnerships
- R&D collaboration with Chinese universities
- APAC market entry via BioCities ecosystem

The Investor Case: Why Physical AI Now

A Generational Investment Opportunity — With a Chinese Scale-Up Dimension

Physical AI represents the convergence of several long-duration secular trends: the automation of manufacturing, the transformation of healthcare delivery, the rise of autonomous logistics, and the commoditisation of AI inference at the edge. European companies at the frontier of these trends are building genuinely defensible positions — through patents, regulatory

certifications, precision manufacturing know-how, and deep academic partnerships — that are extraordinarily difficult to replicate. Family offices and institutional investors accessing these companies at growth stage, with a China market partnership overlay, are positioned to benefit from both the European technology premium and the Chinese scale multiplier.

The FTE® Capital Markets Summit provides institutional investors and family offices with a structured, curated pathway to evaluate Physical AI opportunities across all five sub-sectors — with the added dimension of China market access facilitated by the BioCities ecosystem. Investors attending the Summit benefit from pre-screened company presentations, one-on-one meeting programmes, and expert panel sessions covering sector dynamics, valuation frameworks, and cross-border deal structuring.

What Attending Companies & Investors Can Expect

Key Outcomes for Summit Participants

→ Direct engagement with institutional investors and family offices actively deploying into Physical AI
→ Facilitated introductions to Chinese ecosystem partners via the BioCities / BCD Holdings network
→ One-on-one structured meeting programme with pre-qualified investors and strategic partners
→ Expert panel participation: Physical AI & Robotics — Europe's Edge in the China Market
→ Cross-sector dialogue with the Summit's Longevity & Biotech community (surgical robotics, AI medtech)
→ Briefings on China market entry — regulatory, commercial, and partnership considerations
→ Networking dinners at Lake Zurich — where the most consequential relationships are formed
→ Post-Summit facilitation: follow-up introductions and ecosystem connectivity support

Call to Action: Register Now

The Physical AI and Robotics sector is entering its most consequential decade. The companies that establish Chinese market partnerships in the next two to three years will define the competitive landscape for a generation. For Swiss and European Physical AI and Robotics companies, the FTE® Capital Markets Summit at Lake Zurich in March 2026 is the most efficient, credible, and well-connected pathway to that market available today.

If your company is developing intelligent physical systems — whether surgical robots, industrial automation, humanoid machines, autonomous drones, or the AI silicon that powers them — and you are serious about accessing capital and the Chinese market at scale, we invite you to register now.

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST NOW

All Physical AI and Robotics companies wishing to meet the Partners of the FTE® Capital Markets Summit and be considered for introduction to Chinese investors and the BioCities ecosystem are invited to register immediately.

Places are strictly limited and allocated on a first-come, qualified basis.

www.ftecapitalmarkets.com

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