Asia Leads in Industrial Robot Adoption. Why Do Europe and the U.S. Lag Behind?

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Robots are key tools for boosting productivity and living standards, and companies around the world are putting them to use. But while Korea is the world’s largest adopter, with 710 robots per 10,000 workers, the United States sits at seventh, with 200 robots. Why does the United States lag behind?

As Rob Atkinson writes for BRINK News, one of the most important things governments can do is implement policies that spur faster, deeper, and wider adoption of robots—not just in manufacturing, but across the economy. Many of the leading nations have established national goals and strategies to support robotics innovation and robot adoption, including proactive tax incentives for investing in robots. In contrast, the United States lacks a national robotics strategy.
Culture may also play a role, as many of the leading nations have distinctly positive views of robots, e.g., Japan has an annual “Robot Award,” while the dominant narrative in the United States is that robots are unsafe job killers. The West will have to overcome its irrational fear of automation if it hopes to boost its productivity and competitiveness.