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Schavan: "New Computing Power Guarantees Top Research"

Minister acknowledges creation of European supercomputer partnership PACE

Available computing power is becoming more of a factor for success in both science and industry: whether we're dealing with the climate, genetic material or engineering issues – researchers are relying more and more on computing power to stay on top of the international competition. European scientists and engineers can now turn to a new resource when it comes to supercomputing: with the signing of a declaration of intent to create a European supercomputer network, top representatives from research institutions in 15 countries have established the basis for a leading international supercomputer infrastructure.

"The European science community are pooling their competencies in the field of supercomputing", said Federal Research Minister Annette Schavan on Tuesday in Berlin in praise of the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by the top representatives of the European computer centres in the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The Minister had already been involved in promoting the creation of the Partnership for Advanced Computing in Europe (PACE).

"I am delighted that we have laid the groundwork for the birth of PACE together with our European partners during Germany's EU Council Presidency", said the Minister. "It lends scientific computing using supercomputers a European dimension." The planned computer network is proof that Europe can only succeed if it works together. "Research and innovation play a key role here." Schavan emphasised the commitment shown by the scientific community in establishing this globally unique computer infrastructure through the close coordination of technical and scientific competencies. The Minister: "With this, we have made an important step towards strengthening the European Research Area".

The central idea behind the new supercomputer centre is joint usage of the capacities of more than one supercomputer. "It will give rise to a joint network with different locations, linked together via the most modern network technology", said the Minister. The best part of the costs, estimated at around € 400 million, is to be met by the 15 countries whose computer centres are involved in the project. The rest will be provided by the European Union through the 7th Research Framework Programme.

The aim is to provide scientists in Europe with optimal access to supercomputers.

The PACE consortium is made up of Germany, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Finland, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey. The head of the consortium is the German Gauss Centre for Supercomputing. GCS brings the activities of the three German supercomputer centres in Jülich, Stuttgart and Garching together. The spokesperson for this national alliance is Professor Achim Bachem, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Research Centre Jülich. The Gauss Centre currently provides scientists in Germany and Europe with around 90 teraflops of computing power in total.

"Science and industry need computing power of the highest quality", said Bachem at the meeting in Berlin. "Supercomputers have become an essential tool for all of the sciences. In future, giant leaps in knowledge will only be possible with the help of complex simulations." Alongside theory and experiment, simulations have long been regarded as the decisive third pillar in international world-class research.

Last year BMBF took the initiative to increase the efficiency of national supercomputer centres in Germany through networking and better coordination. The result of this initiative was the creation of the Gauss Centre for Supercomputing on 13 April 2007. This in turn created the basis for a joint presence in Europe, culminating in the creation of a globally pioneering supercomputer centre spread between a number of different locations.

Further information on European research policy and Germany's EU Council Presidency can be found online at www.bmbf.de and www.eu2007.de, respectively.