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Breaking News:

European Countries Sign HPC Pact

BERLIN, April 17 -- European supercomputing made a great leap forward today after more than a dozen countries signed a pact to create a pan-European infrastructure for high-performance computing.

These countries, which include Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the new initiative, "Partnership for Advanced Computing in Europe" (PACE), to foster and develop this strategic area. This initiative aims to strengthen European science, engineering and supercomputer technologies.

"High-performance computing and network-related services have become essential, not optional, to the aspirations of research communities," commented Dr. Thibaut Lery, science officer of the European Science Foundation (ESF), who was attending the signing ceremony in Berlin. "Investment in research and development in this area is a key driver of innovation and should be used as a cornerstone for European productivity and knowledge growth."

The pact came in parallel with the ESF's initiated Forward Look program LINCEI, which is aimed at enabling Europe's scientific community, in interaction with policy makers, to develop a vision on how computational sciences will evolve in the coming 10 to 20 years. Based on a scenario of how this field will evolve and on the needs of the scientific community, a strategy will be presented at the end this year aiming at structuring software and hardware support and development at the European level.

Dr. Annette Schavan, Germany's Federal Minister of Research and Education, and Ulf Dahlsten, director of Emerging Technologies and Infrastructures, EU Information Society and Media Directorate-General, along with the representatives from the members of the partnership, attended the signing ceremony at the Foyer of Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research).

The central idea behind the new supercomputer center+ is joint usage of the capacities of more than one supercomputer. The best part of the costs, estimated at around €400 million (\$543 million), is to be met by the 15 countries whose computer centers 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 multi-national partnership was spun from a report by the body of experts known as the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) compiled for the European Commission in autumn 2006. In the report, it recommends the creation of a supercomputer infrastructure of the highest quality.

At its meeting in Lisbon, Spain, in March 2000 the European Council, facing the challenges posed by globalization and the emergence of the knowledge-based economy, declared its intention to turn the European Union into the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010. High-performance computing, advanced networking and the associated grid technologies are perceived as key strategic areas to achieve this goal.

For more information, visit www.esf.org/infrastructure.

Source: *European Science Foundation*



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