

Microsoft invests in EuroScience

February 3 2005

At the Government Leaders Forum today, Microsoft Chairman and Chief Software Architect Bill Gates announced the EuroScience Initiative in his keynote to over 500 government leaders and public officials. The initiative aims to accelerate fundamental innovation in science and computing through the pursuit of novel avenues of research by Microsoft and key research bodies across Europe, driving scientific discoveries into outcomes with economic and social value.

Founded in 1991, Microsoft Research is dedicated to conducting both basic and applied research in computer science and software engineering. Its goals are to enhance the user experience on computing devices, reduce the cost of writing and maintaining software, and invent novel computing technologies. Microsoft Research employs more than 700 people in six labs on three continents, focusing on more than 55 areas of computing.

The EuroScience Initiative is a multi-year programme for collaborative research at the intersection of computing and the sciences, focused on new computing paradigms, computational science and intelligent environments. Investing a broad range of resources and expertise from Microsoft Research over multiple years, working in collaboration with universities, partners and government through new forms of public-private partnerships, the initiative aims to encourage increased innovation and productivity in support of the Lisbon Agenda goals to drive growth and job creation in Europe's knowledge-based economy. The Initiative also encompasses a range of activities contributing to Europe's intellectual capital, including fellowships, scholarships, an

award programme and a series of scientific workshops.

"By bringing computing technology and the sciences closer together, the EuroScience initiative will accelerate progress in key areas such as the life and physical sciences, engineering and agriculture," said Gates.

Microsoft Research Centres of Excellence

An important part of the EuroScience programme is investment by Microsoft Research in a network of centres of excellence (CoEs) tied to key research institutions and groups in Europe that have created a hub of knowledge in a particular research area.

The first of these, whose opening was also announced today, is a centre for Computational and Systems Biology, created as a joint venture between Microsoft, the Italian local and central governments, and the University of Trento. At the Trento centre, researchers will focus on creating the next generation of computational tools to enable biologists and others working in the life sciences to better understand and predict complex processes in biological systems, which could lead to new and faster insights into the origin of disease, new therapies and better vaccines.

"This initiative will support the establishment of new kinds of converged scientific research," said Letizia Moratti, Italian Minister of Education, University and Research. "The Trento centre has the potential to bolster new economic growth in the Trentino region and beyond, as well as underpin traditional industries such as agriculture and agriscience."

Additional Microsoft Research CoEs will be established in the coming months. Discussions are underway with select research institutes in France, Germany and the UK.

EuroScience Research Programmes

The EuroScience Initiative has three research programmes at its core: New computing paradigms, addressing fundamental problems in computer science by exploring and applying lessons drawn from nature, chemistry and biology. This research programme explores new ways to take computing beyond its current forms.

Computational science, aiming to create, in collaboration with the scientific community, a new generation of computational tools for accelerating advances in science through enhancing the day-to-day productivity of scientists.

Intelligent environments, research into new applications for the emerging world of 'ambient intelligence' where sensors, wireless networks and interactive, embedded computing are invisibly and seamlessly woven into people's everyday life and the social environments in which they live.

Microsoft is already working with universities and research centres across Europe to initiate projects within these programmes. Participating universities include University College London, Leipzig University, the University of Southampton, the Technical University of Berlin, the University of York and plans to significantly extend the existing collaboration with INRIA, the French National Institute for Research in Computer Science.

"The EuroScience Initiative represents a continuation of Microsoft's longstanding commitment to innovation in Europe," said Jean-Philippe Courtois, CEO of Microsoft Europe, Middle East and Africa. "By promoting investment, broad participation and critical advances in the EuroScience research priorities, we feel certain that the scientific community, European industry and government will -- in partnership -- help release Europe's full potential."

Developing Europe's Intellectual Capital

To support the vital role of scientific research and innovation in building Europe's knowledge-based economy, the EuroScience Initiative also

includes a Career Development Fellowship Programme. Through this fellowship, up to ten promising post-doctoral scientists who are establishing a track record of world-leading research in emerging science and technology will receive support, including funding up to 250,000 euro.

In addition to the Career Development Fellowship Programme, the EuroScience Initiative includes three further programmes to help develop and support Europe's intellectual capital:

European PhD Scholarship Programme. Up to 30 awards will be made each year for some of Europe's brightest scholars to undertake scientific training in European institutions who want to do research at the intersection of computing and the sciences.

European Scientist of the Year Award. EuroScience will sponsor this award to recognise the achievements of an individual who has made a fundamentally important contribution to science and society in Europe.

Scientific workshops. An annual workshop series established to bring together students, researchers, government and industry to discuss key scientific and societal issues and topics arising from the EuroScience initiative's research agenda.

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