EU to double investment in mansion-sized supercomputers

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A part of the Tera 100, one of Europe's most powerful supercomputers, is seen in Bruyeres-Le Chatel, near Paris, on Februrary 2. The EU said Wednesday it will double its investment in supercomputers, high-performance machines the size of a mansion that can cost more than 100 million euros ($130 million) each to build.

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The European Commission said it will raise its investment from 630 million euros to 1.2 billion by 2020.

"High Performance Computing (HPC) is a crucial enabler for European industry and for more jobs in Europe," said Neelie Kroes, the Dutch European Union commissioner responsible for fostering the digital economy.

"It's investments like HPC that deliver innovations improving daily life," she added.

As large as 1,000 square metres (10,800 square feet), supercomputers are used by governments to run forensics or health service systems, as well as in the private sector, for example in the automotive and aviation industries.

Hospitals in Germany use HPC to avoid last-minute decisions during childbirth or diagnose disease.

The Commission says use of HPC has saved the European car industry up to 40 billion euros by cutting development time.

The world's largest super computers are more powerful than 130,000 laptops combined, needing spaces the size of entire office floors to act as vast chillers, and maintenance on them can cost another 20 million euros per year.

Europe's biggest are a French system known as Curie and a German known as Hermes.

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