EU unveils supercomputer plan to rival China

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The EU wants to boost its supercomputer capacity

The EU unveiled plans Thursday to raise one billion euros to build

superfast computers that catch up with China and others to boost Europe's economy, make medical advances and fight hacking.

China overtook the United States in numbers and performance for supercomputers in a ranking last November, followed by non-EU Switzerland and Japan in third and fourth place.

"It is a tough race and today the EU is lagging behind: we do not have any supercomputers in the world's top ten," said Andrus Ansip, the European Commisssion vice president for the digital single market.

The European Commission, the EU executive, said it would contribute around 486 million euros ($580 million) for a "High Performance Computing (EuroHPC) infrastructure", that would then be matched by EU nations.

"We want to give European researchers and companies world-leading supercomputer capacity by 2020," Ansip said in a statement.

Brussels says it will help develop artificial intelligence and applications to improve health, security and engineering, plus help forecast hurricane routes and simulate earthquakes.

European scientists and industry risk yielding secrets or sensitive information as they increasingly process data outside the EU to perform tasks in the absence of the best supercomputers, the commission said.

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