

'JEDI' calls on Europe to find innovation force

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An association of firms and research centres in France and Germany said Friday they intend to spur technological innovation by emulating the US agency used to fund development of defence technologies.

Calling themselves the Joint European Disruptive Initiative (JEDI), the association intends within three months to launch its first appeal for projects to finance.

"JEDI is a financing tool for breakthrough innovations," said a spokesman.

"Follower strategies, of being number two or three, is becoming less and less interesting ... there is a bonus for being first," he said, indicating that Europe can't be content following the United States and China.

JEDI is inspired by DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which is an agency of the US Defense Department that funds the development of technologies that have military applications.

But projects that DARPA funds can also spur innovation in the civilian sector. It funded the development of a computer network called Arpanet from which the internet developed.

JEDI, however, will target developing civilian technologies, with four main areas of research: reducing carbon emissions, health, digitalisation and space.

The association includes the head of the France's CNRS national scientific research centre as the president of the Fraunhofer Society, Europe's largest application-oriented research organisation. The chief executive of Airbus Defence and Space is also a member.

JEDI plans to tap into government funding as well as private donors to support research projects.

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