

Press release
16 July 2019, The Hague

The call from 3000 scientists to create a European research centre for Artificial Intelligence gets backing from governments and industry

– Artificial intelligence and related technologies will change our lives, says Holger Hoos, professor at Leiden University and one of the initiators of the Confederation of Laboratories of Artificial Intelligence in Europe, an organisation better known as CLAIRE.

One year ago this week, CLAIRE was launched with an ambitious vision for Europe. This vision is for Europe leading the world in the area of Artificial Intelligence in all parts of its value chain, from basic research, through applied research and innovation, to value creation.

– Europe needs to develop a closely linked network of centres of excellence in order to achieve this, says Dr. Hoos.

– But more than anything, Europe needs a strong, substantial research hub in AI, research centre that will serve as a scientific beacon, a driver of pan-European missions, and a meeting place for the world's best minds. Europe needs a symbol of excellence at the level of what physicists have with CERN.

Over the last year, the international drive to take a leadership role in research and innovation in AI has intensified. A year ago, 24 European nations signed an agreement to invest and cooperate in this field, and the European Commission published a strategy that estimates an investment target across the continent of about 20 billion Europa a year, established a high-level expert group on AI, and asked all EU member states to establish national AI strategies.

– It's time to turn words into action; the question is what kind of action, says Dr. Philipp Slusallek, Research Director at DFKI, the world's largest research institute dedicated to Artificial Intelligence.

– The commitments we see in the various national strategies across Europe are mostly vague. The Commission is looking for answers. But the scientific community has spoken through CLAIRE. It is time for Europe to establish a large, powerful research and innovation centre.

At the one-year mark of the launch, CLAIRE and its vision are supported by more than 3000 people, most of them scientists, technologists, and researchers in Artificial Intelligence. Nine advisory groups with 49 members from 19 countries have been established, covering all areas of AI, including ethical, legal and social implications. Over the course of this year, CLAIRE has also developed a membership network of over 300 groups and institutions, covering jointly over 17,000 employees in 33 countries. Following up its commitment to foster close links between foundational, non-profit research in AI and impactful industrial applications, CLAIRE is now setting up an industry network and a communication platform for its members. This makes CLAIRE one of the world's largest research networks in AI, if not the largest. CLAIRE operates across all of Europe.

– The collaboration with CLAIRE is essential to the strategy for ESA's Earth Observation Programme, says Josef Aschbacher, Director of Earth Observation at the European Space Agency.

– Congratulations to CLAIRE on reaching this important milestone and for your strong ambitions for European AI that we applaud.

In order to support its mission, CLAIRE has opened administrative offices in The Hague, Saarbrücken, Prague, and Rome, with additional offices to be opened in the near future in Oslo, Paris and Zürich.

– CLAIRE believes the AI talent across all of Europe should be mobilised, regardless of infrastructure and national funding capacity, says Dr. Morten Irgens, Vice Rector at Oslo Metropolitan University.

– Europe has an amazing talent pool. Bibliometric analyses show that Europe has the strongest and most diverse group of AI researchers in the world. Tapping into this source of knowledge should be low-hanging fruit for Europe.

– I believe that the role of CLAIRE for Europe in this process is irreplaceable, says Dr. Maria Bielikova, professor at the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, chair of the Board of governors slovak.AI, member of EU High-Level Expert Group on AI, and ACM and IEEE senior member.

– CLAIRE can help and already helps in motivating AI experts to work together. Small countries like Slovakia have great scientists, and I believe that a realisation of CLAIRE's vision will mobilise this talent pool to contribute to stronger Europe, so that Europe will take advantage of the best brains in Europe.

CLAIRE's vision is supported across Europe and across all areas of Artificial Intelligence. CLAIRE has received official letters of support from the governments of five European countries, from 28 scientific associations across all of Europe, from the European Association of AI societies (EurAI), from the European Space Agency (ESA) and from the international Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI). CLAIRE is also actively liaising, on an ongoing basis, with other important organizations, including ELLIS, the HumanE AI consortium, the Big Data Value Association, euRobotics and AI4EU, as well as ESA. CLAIRE is actively coordinating community efforts in the context of the forthcoming EU ICT-48-2020 call "Towards a vibrant European network of AI excellence centres". And CLAIRE is providing input to the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on AI.

Dr. Wolfgang Bibel, one of Europe's most renowned AI scientists, is clear about CLAIRE:

– I am excited to see a decades-old dream of the European AI community now possibly come true.

About CLAIRE

Launched in June 2018, CLAIRE's mission is to bring about this change, by mobilising the European AI community and its stakeholders, and by guiding European and national decision-makers in their efforts and investments towards ensuring European excellence in human-centred AI. CLAIRE's vision is supported by over 3000 individual AI experts and stakeholders, as well as by a large number of Europe's leading organisations in AI research, including DFKI (Germany), the largest AI research institute in the world, as well as three of Europe's largest research organisations with a major focus on AI; Fondazione Bruno Kessler (Italy), Inria (France) and TNO (Netherlands). CLAIRE has already received official letters of support from 5 European governments; it is also supported by all internationally active national AI associations in Europe, the European AI Association (EurAI), and the world's premier organization of AI researchers, the Association for Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI). To realise its vision, CLAIRE has recently formed a pan-European network of over 300 AI research groups and institutes with over 17,000 employees.