CLAIRE Confederation of Laboratories for
Artificial Intelligence Research in Europe

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CLAIRE receives broad mandate and funding
for shaping "AI made in Europe"

The European Commission has taken a major step towards strengthening AI research in Europe by allocating 50 million Euros of seed funding, intended to prepare the ground for much larger investments in the near future. This is critically necessary to keep Europe competitive with countries such as the USA, China and Canada, which are investing substantially higher amounts into AI research and innovation.

Four proposals coordinated by members of CLAIRE

Four of the five proposals selected for funding under ICT-48-2020 were coordinated by members of CLAIRE (Confederation of Laboratories for Artificial Intelligence Research in Europe, claire-ai.org), the world's largest network of AI research groups and institutions. These proposals include TAILOR, Humane-AI-Net and AI4Media, which will form large and diverse networks of centres of excellence in AI research, as well as VISION, which will coordinate between these and one additional network selected for funding, in order to position Europe for leadership in human-centred, trustworthy AI. This resounding success in a highly competitive process further strengthens CLAIRE's leading role in shaping the European AI ecosystem.

TAILOR – network of research centres for foundations of trustworthy AI

TAILOR, led by Prof. Fredrik Heintz from the University of Linköping (Sweden), who also serves as a member of the CLAIRE leadership team, will create a network of research excellence centres on the Foundations of Trustworthy AI. Spanning all of Europe, this network will develop an ambitious research and innovation roadmap for trustworthy AI, leveraging European strengths across all of AI, with particular focus on the integration of learning, reasoning and optimisation techniques. TAILOR will prepare the ground for AI research that addresses grand challenges in health, mobility and resource management.

-- Building on the work already done by CLAIRE, the TAILOR project will hit the ground running, says Prof. Heintz.
-- Together, we will develop the scientific foundations, the knowledge, insights, and solutions that Europe needs to develop competitive AI solutions to meet the grand challenges of our time. A new generation of AI techniques and systems will lay the foundation for trustworthy systems and products made in Europe.

HumanE-AI-Net – research on AI systems that enhance human intelligence

HumanE-AI-Net, which also includes members of ELLIS (European Laboratory for Learning and Intelligent Systems), is led by Prof. Paul Lukowicz from DFKI (German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence, one of the founding members of CLAIRE). HumanE-AI-Net will develop the scientific foundations and technological breakthroughs needed to build AI systems that enhance human intelligence rather than replacing it.

-- It is critical to shape the AI revolution in a direction that is beneficial to humans both individually and societally, and that adheres to European ethical values and social, cultural, legal, and democratic norms, says Prof. Lukowicz.
-- Human-centred AI, as advocated by CLAIRE and an increasing number of other organisations, will create a unique innovation ecosystem that provides a manyfold return on investment for the European economy and society.

AI4Media – AI for media and society

AI4Media, led by Dr. Yiannis Kompatsiaris, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (Greece) and a prominent member of CLAIRE, will create a network of research excellence centres focussed on the media sector. With members across all of Europe, AI4Media will deliver advances in AI technology to serve this key sector and ensure that ethical, trustworthy AI, guided by European values, will become a globally recognised gold standard.

-- Building on an active network of academics and businesses working in the area of media convergence and social media, the AI4Media project is ready to pursue its mission, says Dr. Kompatsiaris.
-- Together, we have the vision of a European brand of AI that the EU can and must contribute to the world, by developing the scientific foundations and solutions to meet the grand challenges of our time, especially in relation to media, society and democracy.

VISION – coordination across Europe to achieve critical mass

VISION has been selected to coordinate between the new networks of centres of excellence in AI as well as with the European Commission. Led by Prof. Holger Hoos from Leiden University (The Netherlands) and chair of the executive board of CLAIRE, this project is fundamentally based on the vision and goals of CLAIRE.

-- Europe is set to become a global leader in human-centred, trustworthy AI, says Prof. Hoos.
-- But in order to get there, we need to bring its AI communities together, to achieve much closer collaboration, and to thus create critical mass in AI research and innovation.
-- CLAIRE was created with this in mind, and I am delighted that we have now received an official mandate from the European Commission to coordinate this important effort.

-- It is important to mobilise all resources the European AI research ecosystem has to offer, adds Prof. Ana Paiva from the University of Lisbon (Portugal), member of the leadership teams of CLAIRE and TAILOR.
-- While, unfortunately, the limited funding through ICT-48-2020 goes to only part of that ecosystem, the TAILOR, HumanE-AI-Net, AI4Media and VISION proposals have been designed to draw upon expertise beyond the new networks of centres of excellence.

-- CLAIRE has worked hard towards realising a bold and ambitious vision for AI made in Europe, says Marc Schoenauer from Inria (France), one of the key contributors to the French AI strategy,
-- And with that, of course, comes a broad and inclusive approach. Our plans for VISION, TAILOR, HumanE-AI-Net and AI4Media, in which we are strongly involved, clearly reflect that. We will indeed draw on the talent and expertise of all excellent AI researchers in Europe, including those not involved in the proposals selected for funding under ICT-48-2020.

Ensuring the success of "AI made in Europe"

On 19 February, the European Commission released a whitepaper that outlined a plan adopting all key parts of the vision for excellence in AI unveiled by CLAIRE in June 2018 (see press release from 20 February, claire-ai.org/claire-press-release-11). Now, the resounding success in ICT-48-2020 confirms CLAIRE's leading role in defining and implementing Europe's vision for excellence in AI research and innovation.

-- This is a great success for CLAIRE and a recognition of the excellent work the network is doing. It is now of crucial importance that the European Commission fully embeds AI into the implementation of its recently published Industrial Strategy, through dedicated funding programs such as HORIZON EUROPE, says Robert-Jan Smits, President of the Eindhoven University of Technology and former Director General of Research & Innovation at the European Commission.

-- The CLAIRE vision, whose core elements have now been embraced by the Commission, provides not only inspiration for further, decisive action on funding AI research and innovation, adds Dr. Josef Urban, principal researcher at the Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics (CIIRC)*, -- but also proposes a number of concrete mechanisms to ensure the success of "AI made in Europe".*

About CLAIRE

CLAIRE (Confederation of Laboratories for Artificial Intelligence Research in Europe, claire-ai.org) is an organisation created by the European AI community that seeks to strengthen European excellence in AI research and innovation, with a strong focus on human-centred AI. CLAIRE aims to establish a world-wide brand recognition for "AI made in Europe" (at the level of CERN), and to position Europe in control of its own future.
CLAIRE was launched in June 2018 and now has the support of more than 3,300 people, most of them scientists, technologists, and researchers in Artificial Intelligence. The supporters represent the vast majority of Europe's AI community, spanning academia and industry, research and innovation. Among the supporters are more than 140 fellows from various key scientific associations. CLAIRE has opened administrative offices in The Hague, Saarbrücken, Prague and Rome, with additional offices to be opened this year in Brussels, Oslo, Paris and Zürich. Furthermore, nine advisory groups with 48 members from 18 countries have been established, covering all areas of AI, along with the topics of ethical, legal and social implications of AI.

CLAIRE's membership network consists of over 350 research groups and research institutions, covering jointly more than 20,000 employees in 34 countries. In addition, CLAIRE is in the process of setting up an industry network, in order to foster close links between non-profit research and impactful industrial applications.

The CLAIRE vision for excellence in European AI has received official letters of support from the governments of nine European countries, from 28 scientific associations across all of Europe, from the European Association for Artificial Intelligence (EurAI, which is the key European association for AI researchers), from the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI, the key international association for AI), and from the European Space Agency (ESA).

CLAIRE is also actively liaising, on an ongoing basis, with other important organisations, including ELLIS, the HumanE AI consortium, the Big Data Value Association, euRobotics and AI4EU, and cooperates closely with ESA.

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