

CAIRNE welcomes large-scale AI investments, CERN for AI

CAIRNE applauds the European Commission’s announcement of a private-public investment in Artificial Intelligence “akin to a CERN for AI” but calls for a clearer commitment to establishing an AI centre in the spirit of CERN.

Ursula von der Leyen announced a €50 billion investment by the European Commission, with the ambition of raising another €150 billion in private capital to establish a “public-private partnership, akin to a CERN for AI”. In this time of geopolitical uncertainty and upheaval, this is an important step towards European technological sovereignty and prosperity.

CLAIRE (now CAIRNE) was launched seven years ago with a clear and ambitious mission. From the start, it prominently included the establishment of a CERN for AI—an independent research and innovation hub modelled after CERN, the fabulously successful research centre for particle physics in Switzerland.

CERN’s model is for a research and innovation centre with world-class infrastructure, substantial funding and visiting scholar programmes. It does not have a large permanent staff. Instead, scientists visit for weeks, months or years to collaborate with the best minds in the world before returning to their home institutions, bringing back pioneering ideas and invaluable connections. This model not only brings together a critical mass of top talent and resources, as American companies have done successfully, but it also ensures knowledge dissemination across Europe, strengthening research and innovation agendas continent-wide.

CAIRNE applauds the increased level of ambition now shown by the European Commission. All three key elements of the [CAIRNE \(formerly CLAIRE\) Vision](#), first published in 2018, are now addressed in the form of the Commission’s funding for the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NoEs) in AI, the AI factories, and finally, the AI gigafactories. Whether these investments can ensure the global competitiveness of “AI made in Europe” now crucially depends on the extent to which they will be focussed on creating and supporting critical mass in terms of AI resources and expertise. For this, it is important to concentrate talent and infrastructure as is done at CERN, under the leadership of researchers and innovators, in close cooperation between academia and industry.

Europe needs a centre where the best researchers and innovators from the entire European AI community come together to pioneer world-leading AI research in collaboration with businesses and public organisations. To achieve the level of independence and agility required for its success, such an organisation should be designed, built and operated like CERN. However, so far, it is unclear if that is the intention of the Commission’s proposal. What has been announced is a public-private partnership for a European investment fund called InvestAI, not a blueprint for a CERN for AI. €20 billion of this fund will then be used to establish four AI gigafactories.

The idea of a CERN for AI has now been widely accepted. What remains to be done is to realise this idea in a way that ensures its global success. This is more important than ever, considering what’s at stake: our future.

About CAIRNE

The Confederation of Laboratories for Artificial Intelligence Research in Europe ([CAIRNE](#)), was established by the European AI community to strengthen European excellence in AI research and innovation, with a focus on human-centred AI. Launched as CLAIRE on June 18, 2018, with a vision supported by over 600 AI researchers, CAIRNE officially incorporated as an international non-profit association (AISBL) in 2020. CAIRNE's mission is to promote European AI, foster cross-border collaboration, and position Europe as a global leader in AI innovation. The [CAIRNE Network](#) now includes over 500 research groups and companies, covering 27,000 employees across 39 countries. CAIRNE also maintains offices across Europe in The Hague, Saarbrücken, Prague, Rome, Brussels, Paris, Oslo and Zürich.

To find more relevant information, including the Vision, recommendations to the EC, and the proposal for a Moonshot in Artificial Intelligence developed with euRobotics, please visit <https://cairne.eu/documentation/>.

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