Published on *Digital Agenda for Europe* (http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda)

Author: Max Lemke [1], published on 18/06/2013
Commission is contributing € 77 million from its Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) to an innovation initiative for the manufacturing sector aiming at strengthening the competitiveness of European high-tech small and medium size enterprises
Share this

Last week you could read in the press that the Commission is contributing € 77 million from its Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) to an innovation initiative for the manufacturing sector aiming at strengthening the competitiveness of European high-tech small and medium size enterprises (Commission Press Release [2]).

The I4MS [3]initiative - ICT for Manufacturing SMEs – starts on 1 July. Through it, we want to connect innovators across value chains in manufacturing and engineering to better profit from newest advances in ICT. For users, that means reducing their risk in being an early adopter of innovative ICT. For suppliers, that means helping the to advance innovative prototypes towards a successful product.

To make this concept less abstract, let me give an example: Modelling and simulation technologies are established tools in large companies in manufacturing and engineering, often provided by world-leading companies from Europe including many SMEs. Large companies, like the automotive and aerospace manufacturers and their suppliers, have their own HPC (High Performance Computing) resources dedicated to simulation applications. SME users in small manufacturing businesses scattered across Europe until now were often not able to exploit these technologies for optimising the design and production of their products, because they could not get affordable access to tools, expertise, and computing resources. This is where the three I4MS projects FORTISSIMO, CloudSME and CloudFlow (around 35% of I4MS) step in. The primary goal of about 80 cloud-based simulation experiments carried out by these projects is to pilot affordable one-stop pay-per-use simulation services for SMEs, which include Cloud-based HPC resources. Value chains in experiments typically include users, tool- and HPC resource providers, as well as experts.

The ICT technologies addressed by the other four large I4MS projects are advanced robot solutions, intelligent sensor-based equipment and innovative laser applications. Projects and their experiments are implemented with the help of pan-European networks of competence centres, providing the knowledge and support for partnering across value chains and beyond national and regional borders.

In total about 200 SMEs will take part in I4MS with more than 150 innovation experiments over the next 3 years. Only less than half of the experiments have been defined at the time of launch. **There is plenty of opportunity for interested companies to apply** for being part of the action. This can be done through responding to Open Calls [4] issued by projects starting from end of this year. The first Competitive call for HPC-Cloud-based Application Experiments for the FORTISSIMO project is now Open. For further information visit the I4MS website [5] or Fortissimo Project [6].

The I4MS initiative is a first pilot for wider integration of research and innovation under Horizon 2020. It is part of the Public Private Partnership 'Factories of the Future' [7](PPP FoF) launched in November 2008 within the European Economic Recovery Plan to respond to the global economic crisis. In that context, this week key stakeholders from industry and academia are discussing at the "Imagine FOF2020 [8]" event in Geneva the progress and future challenges related to ICT.

- Components & Systems [9]

Source URL:
http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/blog/i4ms-boost-competitiveness-smes-manufacturing-sector?page=0

Links
[1] http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/users/lemkema
[2] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-533_en.htm
[3] http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/computing/home-i4ms_en.html
[4] http://i4ms.eu/open_calls/open_calls.php
[5] http://i4ms.eu/open_calls/open_calls_detail.php?post_id=4
[6] http://www.fortissimo-project.eu/calls
[7] http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/factories-of-the-future_en.html
[8] http://www.innolab-swiss.eu/cde.html
[9] http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/science-and-technology/components-systems