CLAIRE welcomes the move by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to take decisive action for driving key technological areas forward. Von der Leyen has made action on artificial intelligence (AI) a top priority, which is much needed in light of the societal and economic impact of AI technology and the massive investments elsewhere, notably in China and the United States.

Only 20 months ago, hundreds of experts in artificial intelligence across all of Europe set up CLAIRE to harness ideas and insights on how Europe can take a leading role in research and innovation in artificial intelligence. Considering how AI technologies increasingly define how we work, live and solve problems as individuals and societies, this is of crucial importance to citizens across Europe. Since then, CLAIRE has grown to represent more than 350 AI research labs and organizations, representing more than 21,000 researchers and staff from across all of Europe.

"We are delighted to see that the plan outlined in the Commission’s white paper is in strong agreement with the vision for European excellence in AI pursued by CLAIRE from the beginning," says Holger Hoos, Professor of Machine Learning at Leiden University, The Netherlands and one of CLAIRE’s founders. "In its new plan, the Commission argues for investment into all areas of AI, across all of Europe, while ensuring a human-centered focus of AI technology. This is precisely what CLAIRE has been advocating since its inception in June 2018. The Commission also embraces AI for Good (including the use of AI towards meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals) and AI for All – both of which are prominent focus areas for CLAIRE,“ continues Prof. Hoos.

CLAIRE applauds the von der Leyen Commission for its focus on human-centered, trustworthy AI and ethical boundaries, and on mobilizing AI competence across all of Europe. The white paper recognizes the need for a broad network of AI research centers and larger-scale facilities, focusing on strategic application sectors, ranging from agriculture to energy and financial services. Even more importantly, it calls for the creation of a European AI hub – “a lighthouse center of AI research and innovation” that will attract talents from all over the world.

“He concept of a hub, inspired by the widely recognized success of CERN, has been one of the key elements of the CLAIRE vision since we unveiled it in June 2018,” says Prof. Philipp Slusallek, scientific director at the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI) and co-initiator of CLAIRE. “This lighthouse will bring together top researchers from across Europe and around the world,” continues professor Slusallek. “It will become a focal point for large-scale research initiatives (e.g., in robotics or autonomous transportation), and a widely visible symbol for European excellence and ambition in artificial intelligence.”
The Commission strongly argues that “the EU must act as one.” This is not only true for its member states but also applies to the European AI research community. Instead of highlighting differences in methodology and techniques, it becomes essential to focus on “excellence across all of AI” by bringing communities together and combining their expertise for jointly realizing the many promises of AI for Europe. This part of the CLAIRE vision is now strongly supported by the white paper.

The Commission's approach also addresses the need for a regulatory framework for AI in Europe.

“We very much agree with the risk-based approach to a regulation adopted in the white paper, especially for the highly sensitive applications of AI discussed by the Commission,” says Prof. Jeroen van den Hoven from Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands, one of CLAIRE's leading experts on ethical, legal and social aspects of AI. “It’s also very good to see a clear acknowledgment that, given how fast AI is evolving, the regulatory framework needs to leave room to account for future developments. Overall, this looks like a measured and well-reflected approach to the tricky issue of regulation.”

“It’s encouraging to see concrete, short-term action in the Commission's plan, in addition to a consultative approach on how to move forward,” says Dr. Morten Irgens from Oslo Metropolitan University, co-founder of CLAIRE, “but more short-term action is needed to stay competitive with other major players. CLAIRE has put together concrete ideas and proposals on what to do in this regard. We are also committed to providing the Commission with detailed input and feedback on its white paper from our broad community of AI experts over the coming weeks.”

“As the world's largest network for scientists, laboratories and institutes in AI, CLAIRE is a great resource with substantial combined competence. Its bottom-up, community-driven approach nicely complements the top-down process put into place by the European Commission,” adds Prof. Hoos. “Europe is home to many of the world’s best AI researchers. A bold and ambitious push, a Europe-wide initiative, will bring together those experts, connect them better with each other and with those who want to use artificial intelligence to address important problems, such as climate change. It’s very good to see not only the Commission's ambitions in this regard but also the close alignment between its plan and the direction advocated by AI experts across Europe. Let’s now work closely together to realize this ambition.”

wissenschaftliche Ansprechpartner:
Prof. Dr. Philipp Slusallek
CLAIRE-Co-Initiator, Site Manager DFKI Saarbrücken
German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI)
Phone: +49 681 85775 5377
E-mail: Philipp.Slusallek@dfki.de

Dr. Silke Balzert-Walter
Head of CLAIRE Office Germany
German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI)
Phone: +49 681 85775 2107
E-mail: Silke.Balzert@dfki.de

URL zur Pressemitteilung: https://claire-ai.org
Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, in conversation with Hans De Canck, Manager of the AI Experience Centre and CLAIRE office in Brussels.

CLAIRE