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## EIT Manufacturing Central Further Expands Its Innovation Ecosystem: 5-HT is New Cooperation Partner

With 5-HT Digital Hub Chemistry & Health, the innovation community wins over a well-connected cooperation partner in order to integrate start-up companies, SMEs and corporate groups from the Metropolitan Region Rhine-Neckar to benefit from pan-European funding programmes. The aim is to make the production and manufacturing industries future-proof.

“5-HT is very well-connected, both with start-ups and SMEs and with the big chemical, pharmaceutical, and industrial players in the region,” Dr. Christian Bölling, Managing Director of [EIT Manufacturing Central gGmbH](#) describes the new cooperation partner. “The chemical-pharmaceutical industry is subject to strong pressure with regard to innovation in the face of intense competition. Digitisation and the circular economy have changed the way they produce. They need to act.”

Stefan Kohl, Managing Director of 5-HT: “We continue to drive digitisation in the areas of chemistry, health, and sustainability forward by connecting start-ups and digital talent with established companies, helping both sides to better realise the mutual needs and requirements. That’s why the 5-HT Digital Hub and EIT Manufacturing are such a good fit. Together, we will take innovation projects to the finish line even faster.”

### Europe: Driver, Not Driven

EIT Manufacturing is an innovation community supported by the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) (EIT), a body of the European Union. The aim is to bring together European representatives from the production and manufacturing industries within innovation ecosystems in order to increase the added value of their products, processes, and services. EIT Manufacturing is already connected with more than 60 organisations (companies, research institutes, and universities); 18 of these partners/members are being looked after by EIT Manufacturing Central. The Co-location Centre is headquartered in Darmstadt.

“Europe is the cradle of industry and the Industrial Revolution,” says Bölling. “We want to achieve that in production and manufacturing technology, Europe will also be the cradle and the home of Industrial Innovation. It’s about the future of man and machine.” In 2017, 28,531,905 people were employed in this sector in Europe, in 1,964,946 predominantly small and mid-sized companies (source: Eurostat).

“Innovation has many facets. We are talking about the *Knowledge Triangle* consisting of Business Creation, Education, and Innovation,” says Bölling, citing funding cases from the EITM programme: “We are coaching start-ups and scale-ups, getting them into contact with investors, we promote further education on the job via Master School formats, we cooperate with learning factories all over Europe, we identify future technologies that are relevant for production, and we create specific topical hotspots made up of researchers, developers, and users.”



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### Education: the Key to Success

With 5-HT, EIT Manufacturing Central's network in Germany has now grown to five cooperation partners. Also **Provdadis Hochschule (Provdadis School of International Management and Technology)**, belonging to the Infraseriv Höchst group, is closely connected with the chemical-pharmaceutical industry.

"Provdadis has been our partner since 2020. In addition to their industrial focus and their geographical proximity, what we find particularly compelling about them is their competence in designing transformation processes via educational measures, and the way they support start-ups," Bölling explains. "Starting this summer, joint seminars are planned to take place at the School. Business Administration students will then be able to develop business plans for tech start-ups from our portfolio. Making innovative production technology future-proof is closely linked to having convincing business models."

"What makes *Provdadis* and EIT Manufacturing cooperation partners is our common goal: we want to design industry in a way that will make it future-proof," says Professor Dr. Hannes Utikal, Head of the Centre for Industry and Sustainability at the Provdadis School of International Management and Technology. "An important leitmotiv for us consists in supporting the process industry on their way to becoming carbon neutral. It's about keeping the industry competitive while further reducing their environmental footprint."

### Cooperation Characterised by Digitisation

For the technology and start-up centre **HUB31**, whose cooperation agreement was signed in 2020, location and content focus are compelling advantages. "Darmstadt is a city of science and a city of digitisation. Here, we have a local ecosystem which thanks to its technological orientation is very interesting for EIT Manufacturing," says Dr. Wolfgang Kniejski, who as a Senior Business Creation Manager with EIT Manufacturing Central plays a decisive role in expanding the partner network.

A good case in point is IT-Seal GmbH, headquartered at HUB31. This young company is focussed on fostering a sustainable security culture and conducting Security Awareness Trainings. It is among the most successful cybersecurity start-ups in Germany. "We offer technology-oriented start-up companies and freelancers fully equipped offices, spaces for co-working and workshops as well as founder coaching and concrete support. Right now, some 40 founder teams are using our services," says Prof. Dr. Klaus-Michael Ahrend, Director of HUB31. Backing the technology and start-up centre are the City of Darmstadt and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce Darmstadt Rhein Main Neckar.

"The proximity to HUB31 was one reason to also choose this location. The offices of EIT Manufacturing and HUB31 are both located on the Hilpertstrasse Campus premises," Bölling adds.

### Megatrend With Opportunities, Risks, and the Need for Counselling

With **DIGIHUB Südbaden**, funded by the *Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Wohnungsbau Baden-Württemberg* [State Ministry for Business, Labour, and Housing for the State of Baden-Württemberg] within its "Wirtschaft 4.0" initiative [business 4.0], EIT Manufacturing covers the entire southwestern part of Germany. The cooperation partners in this project support small and mid-sized companies from the regions of *Südlicher Oberrhein* and *Hochrhein* in mastering the challenges of digital transformation. Focus topics include Smart Production, sensor technology for IoT/CPS, and IT security. DIGIHUB Südbaden is a network in itself. Its



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interaction-minded locations include the *Kreativpark Lokhalle* in Freiburg, the Offenburg University of Applied Sciences, *Innocel Innovations-Center* in Lörrach, and *BadenCampus* in Breisach.

“Digitisation is a megatrend which quite naturally also has an impact on the production and manufacturing industries. What we observe is a change away from mechatronic systems towards value adding networks. Production data is used by means of Artificial Intelligence to analyse and control production processes. This opens up new possibilities, but it also raises questions, especially for small companies with only limited access to research, R&D, and innovation. This is exactly the point of leverage for DIGIHUB Südbaden,” Bölling says.

“We want to have a wide-reaching effect, reaching as many companies as possible from all industries,” Dr. Julia Mohrbacher from project partner *Oberrhein* explains. “We can show them, for instance, how digitisation can contribute to cost efficiency, and how they can implement their digital strategy.”

### Vision: A Completely Interconnected World

The **Smart Systems Hub** in Dresden is one of only twelve Locations of Excellence in Germany which the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) has named as “Digital Innovation Hubs”. A cooperation partner of EIT Manufacturing Central since 2020, Smart Systems Hub develops easy-to-integrate IoT system solutions. With huge success: by now, this hub is considered to be Europe’s biggest one-stop shop for IoT.

“For us, choosing a new cooperation partner is always also a question of location. Dresden can give a lot of good answers,” says Kniejski. Looking at the statistics shows: Dresden has 19 research and development institutes. More than 30 high-tech start-ups are being founded in the city each year. Of the many Dresden companies, about 1,300 are active in the software sector. About 350 companies can be said to perform micro-/nano-electronics production.

“Big companies are quite aware that sustainable business success depends on effective and holistic Industry 4.0 strategies. But what about mid-sized companies? They, too, will have to take the step towards Industry 4.0,” says Michael Kaiser, Managing Director of Smart Systems Hub. “Our vision is the completely interconnected world. For this, we create access to technologies, we accompany innovation processes, and we connect relevant stakeholders from our ecosystem with more than 450 partners.”

### Outlook

With five cooperation partners, EIT Manufacturing Central is already interconnected well in Germany. For 2021, the Co-location Centre will focus on expanding the network abroad. “With the Rubicon Centre in Cork, Ireland offers many points of contact for our business development,” says Bölling. “Also interesting are the Netherlands, most of all RoboValley in Delft, Brainport Industries in Eindhoven and The Unknown Group in Den Haag. In Poland, we already have a successfully established hub with the Lukasiewicz Centre in Warsaw, and we also want to expand our network towards Łódź, Katowice and Krakow.”

### Background information

The [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) (EIT) strengthens Europe’s ability to innovate by powering solutions to pressing global challenges and by nurturing entrepreneurial talent to create sustainable growth and skilled jobs in Europe. The EIT is an EU body which is an integral part of Horizon Europe, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. The Institute supports the development of dynamic pan-European



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partnerships – EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities – among leading companies, research labs and universities.

[EIT Manufacturing](#) is supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union. It is one of eight innovation communities within EIT. The others are EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health, EIT InnoEnergy, EIT Raw Materials, and EIT Urban Mobility. EIT Manufacturing's main goal is to bring European stakeholders focused on manufacturing together in innovation ecosystems that add unique value to European products, processes and services and inspire the creation of globally competitive and sustainable manufacturing. EIT Manufacturing brings together more than 60 organizations (universities, research institutes and business) including for example: Volkswagen, Volvo, Darmstadt University of Technology, the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), RISE, Siemens, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Philips, Procter & Gamble, Whirlpool Europe, Fraunhofer, INESC TEC and LMS-Laboratory for Manufacturing Systems & Automation.

[EIT Manufacturing Central GmbH](#) is one of the five Co-location Centers (CLC) of EIT Manufacturing, located in Darmstadt, Germany. CLC Central covers Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Ireland and Poland, the latter being classified as a RIS country with modest manufacturing innovation activity. CLC Central works in close cooperation with its 18 full members from industry, research, and academia: Accell Group, ArcelorMittal, CONTACT Software, Festo, Kuka, Siemens, Stryker, P&G, Philips, Volkswagen, BIBA, DFKI, Fraunhofer, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, TU Braunschweig, TU Darmstadt, TU Delft, and UC Dublin. Furthermore, CLC Central relies on a growing network of ecosystem partners, namely DIGIHUB Südbaden (Freiburg, Germany), 5-HT (Mannheim), HUB31 (Darmstadt, Germany), Provadis School of International Management and Technology (Frankfurt, Germany), and Smart Systems Hub (Dresden, Germany).

## **EIT Manufacturing — Making Innovation Happen!**

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