PRESS RELEASE

On the Cloud – VENUS-C Open Call for new Pilots

ROME, Italy 11 January 2011 - Cloud computing has gained fertile ground in enterprise with businesses looking to drive down costs. Small businesses and start-ups have started to tap into the Cloud to increase productivity, build business, reach wider markets and create entirely new ways to engage with customers. Now the Cloud is creating waves in science circles, where it could ultimately accelerate global scientific exploration, discovery and results.

VENUS-C (**V**irtual Multidisciplinary **E**nviro**N**ments **US**ing **C**loud Infrastructures, www.venus-c.eu) is a pioneering project for the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme that draws its strength from a joint co-operation between industry and scientific user communities. The aim is to develop, test and deploy an industry-quality Cloud computing service to empower researchers through the easy deployment of end-user services. The VENUS-C platform is underpinned by Windows Azure and its European data centres, the Engineering Group data centre along with resources from the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH, Sweden) and the Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BSC, Spain).

Current VENUS-C user scenarios include bioinformatics, systems biology, drug discovery, civil engineering, civil protection and emergencies, and data for science. To expand this user community, gather additional requirements for the VENUS- platform, test and validate it, VENUS-C has launched an Open Call to fund between 10 and 20 new pilot prototypes with applications suited to the Cloud. The Call is open to European public and private research organisations involved in Research and Technology Development (RTD) from the 27 Member States and the 13 Associated Countries and will run from 11 January to 11 April 2011.

While Cloud computing has reached a stable level, it still remains at the cutting edge. What will be the next generation of scientific applications taking advantage of the Cloud? Where will the new, smart ideas come from by letting scientists be scientists? "It's early days for the Cloud but exciting times lie ahead. The Open Call is an ideal opportunity not only to bring on board new users of the Cloud but also help answer these important questions. Industry and resource partners in VENUS-C aim to demonstrate that you do not need to be a scientist to be ambassadors of scientific innovation," remarked Andrea Manieri, Engineering Group and VENUS-C co-ordinator.

"Clouds can revolutionise e-science. Researchers can have a good idea on their way to work in the morning, and when they arrive immediately grab the computer resources they need to pursue it," said Paul Watson, a professor of computer science at Newcastle University, UK, where he has helped develop a Science-as-a-Service platform called e-Science Central. "Science will progress at a faster rate as it takes less time to go from idea to realisation. What is needed is a high-level Cloud platform designed specifically to make life easier for scientists," concluded Watson.

Open Call Focus

The Open Call targets a spectrum of application areas, spanning the Arts & Humanities, Engineering, Health & Life Sciences, Economics and Financial Services, Natural Sciences, as well as Maths, Biology, Chemistry and Physics with application characteristics such as dynamic scaling requirements, peak demands and ubiquitous availability. Specifically VENUS-C aims to bring on

board research groups that have operational and scientifically productive application software already running on platforms, whether commodity clusters, HPC clusters, grids or clouds.

VENUS-C will work closely with the new pilots to determine what features and capabilities of Cloud computing environments are needed to support the type of computing exemplified by the selected pilots. To this end, the pilots will have access to the compute and storage resources of VENUS-C providers and seed funds to catalyse take-off. A total of €400,000 will be equally divided among successful candidates. VENUS-C will also provide technical support to address specific needs and enable users through innovative web-based and physical training. The pilot prototypes will have access to the VENUS-C infrastructure from **July 2011** until **May 2012** with a one-year extension to the Azure and other platforms until **May 2013**. Visibility will be ensured through focused VENUS-C dissemination activities. Successful candidates will join VENUS-C as subcontractors. The work developed during the scheme will remain part of the proposer's Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

Evaluation

The proposals will be evaluated by a co-ordinated team forming part of the VENUS-C project together with an External Scientific Board, comprising experts recruited from the international distributed computing arena.

Important Dates

- Open Call Launch: **Tuesday 11 January 2011**
- Open Call closes: **Monday 11 April 2011**.
- Evaluation notification: **Monday 2 May 2011**.

Procedure

The Open Call documentation contains the Application Form and details on the procedures, expectations and evaluation, the full list of scientific areas, eligible countries, and an FAQ. Open Call Proposals can be submitted on line (www.venus-c.eu) or via email (contact@venus-c.eu) after downloading and completing the Application Form. VENUS-C is committed to selecting the best possible pilots. Please feel free to contact us via email (contact@venus-c.eu) for any assistance.

About VENUS-C

VENUS-C is co-funded by the GÉANT and e-Infrastructure Unit, DG Information Society and Media of the European Commission, as one of six European Distributed Computing Infrastructures (DCIs). Microsoft invests in Azure resources and manpower through Redmond and its European research centres. The 14 partners in VENUS-C are: Engineering (Italy), project co-ordinator, Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BSC, Spain), Centre for Computational and Systems Biology (CoSBI, Italy), Collaboratorio (Italy), European Chapter of the Open Grid Forum (OGF.eeig, UK), European Microsoft Innovation Center (EMIC, Germany), Microsoft Innovation Center – Greece, Microsoft Research Ltd (UK), National Research Council of Italy (CNR, Italy), Newcastle University (UK), Royal Institute of Technology (KTH, Sweden), Technion (Israel), the Technical University of Valencia (Spain) and the University of the Aegean (Greece).

Source: VENUS-C (www.venus-c.eu)