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The Science Cloud to launch hybrid cloud platform

1 August 2016

Helix Nebula – The Science Cloud (HNSciCloud) – has launched a €5.3 million tenderto establish a European hybrid cloud platform. The purpose of the platform is to support the deployment of high-performance computing and big-data capabilities for scientific research.

Günther H Oettinger, Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, commented: 'The European Cloud Initiative will unlock the value of big data by providing world-class supercomputing capability, high-speed connectivity and leading-edge data and software services for science, industry, and the public sector.'

Cloud deployments have seen a significant increase in recent years because they provide the opportunity for scientists to accelerate their research efforts without the need to build or manage a private compute cluster – a job that requires significant investment and data centre expertise.

This pre-commercial procurement tender covers R&D services relevant to the design, development and pilot use of an innovative platform to support hybrid cloud environments. The HNSciCloud pre-commercial procurement project is funded by 10 of Europe's top research organisations including The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and by the European Commission.

The new cloud platform must address the many challenges involved with providing a combination of services at the Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) level, integrated with an environment that supports the full life cycles of diverse scientific workflows.

The platform will include compute and storage, network connectivity, and service payment models. The cloud environment must be able to support a variety of virtual machines and container configurations to support researchers working with datasets in the petabyte range. In addition, the cloud should also provide a high-end network capacity, with common identity and access management procedures.

The platform will serve scientists and engineers working in high-energy physics, astronomy, the life sciences including biomedical research, and the photon/neutron science in which the ten procurers operate. These procurers will be the first customers of the platform, and will integrate their in-house resources with the procured cloud services.

During the pilot phase, the hybrid cloud platform will provide on-demand and elastic services to geographically distributed users. This will include access to data produced by research organisations and hosted on the platform.

The platform must serve stakeholders beyond the initial procurers, reaching out to the private sector to offer innovative services that unlock the potential of research data. This will open up new possibilities for economic growth and contribute to the establishment of the European Cloud Initiative.

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