Working with European technology leaders to launch first consumer testbed for 5G technology

The University of Southampton is leading a consortium of industry pioneers to launch a 5G testbed for urban scale trials of next generation internet services across European cities.

The consortium, known as the FLAME project, will test 5G technology with consumers for the first time in a real-life environment, with 100's of people taking part in trials throughout 2018. 5G is expected to transform next generation networks by providing faster access to media and new services such as augmented reality.

FLAME will initially launch in the smart-cities of Bristol and Barcelona, with plans to expand to further locations across Europe over the course of the project's three-year lifespan. The programme will allow players from creative industries, telecommunications industries and smart cities to run 5G trials on an urban scale that improve experience for consumers, reduce the complexity of media service development and reduce the cost of delivering personalised on-demand content.

The project's coordinator Michael Boniface, Technical Director at the University of Southampton IT Innovation Centre, said: "FLAME's urban scale 5G testbeds provide unique opportunities to explore the acceptance, viability and performance of 5G networks. By focusing on media services the benefits of 5G can be experienced by consumers whether they are having fun, learning or just exploring the world.

"Success depends on establishing transformative media ecosystems that benefit everyone from consumers and content providers through to the operators of communications, transport and building infrastructures. The launch of FLAME's testbed for urban scale trials is a major milestone in the evolution and adoption of 5G."

At the heart of FLAME is a ground-breaking service delivery platform that uses software-defined infrastructures being rolled out across smart-cities. The platform's advanced networking and service management capabilities allows media services to be dynamically placed and connected in locations where consumers' need them.

Dirk Trossen, FLAME's Technical Manager and Senior Principal Engineer at InterDigital Europe, said: "FLAME's unique technologies set this test bed apart from previous efforts. It will provide first insights into the possible transformation of media services through deep integration with the programmable compute and networking infrastructure at city scale."

"The strong combination of development, deployment and exploitation through standards as well as consumer-facing trials allows for building a strong European competence in main 5G technology areas from software-defined networking over network function virtualization to flexible service routing over such programmable Layer 2 transport networks."

The initial trials, starting Mar-18, focus on new media production and delivery workflows enhancing audience generated content for broadcasters, augmented reality gaming, personalised augmented reality city tours, and personalised access to mobile media.

FLAME's Engagement Manager, Monique Calisti, Executive Director and Partner at Martel Innovate, said "With funding available for third parties to pursue experiments on the FLAME platform, our ambition is to create an exciting, creative and vibrant future media internet ecosystem. Through the FLAME's open calls European innovators will be given the unique opportunity to conduct experiments in real-life experimental infrastructures and gain insight into the performance, acceptance and viability of their solutions."

The University of Southampton is leading a consortium of 12 partners across six countries to launch FLAME as part of Horizon 2020, the largest ever European funding programme for research and innovation.

The partners include:
-   InterDigital Europe
-   Atos Spain
-   i2CAT
-   University of Bristol
-   Nextworks
-   Martel Innovate
-   VRT
-   The Walt Disney Company
-   ETH Zurich
-   Institut Municipal d'Informatica de Barcelona
-   Bristol is Open

For more information:
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H2020 FLAME Project, www.ict-flame.eu

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Notes to editors

1) Michael Boniface, Technical Director at the University of Southampton IT Innovation Centre, is available for interview. Please contact the media relations team at the University of Southampton to request an interview.

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