

Subject : press release: “Europe supports photonics technology access centre to leverage industrial product innovation”

Press kit for general press

European access centre “ACTMOST” facilitates industrial product innovation through micro-photonics technologies

Photonics is one of the key-technologies that support our present-day information society. It exploits the unique properties of light to produce durable, energy friendly, innovative products that improve the quality of our lives. Today already photonic components find widespread applications in the domain of information and communication technology. Optical fibers for example form the backbone of our high-speed internet and photonic components are vital parts in displays, projectors, DVDs, digital cameras, laser scanners and printers. Photonic technologies recently penetrated the renewable energy sector with solar cells and highly-efficient LED-based lighting replacing the classic light bulb. Currently photonics is conquering the safety and security systems market with low-cost night vision systems, optical fingerprint sensors and retinal scanners. Market forecasts also predict a bright future for photonics in the medical world with new minimally-invasive optical diagnostic tools and with micro-photonics chips for health monitoring. The European Commission therefore recently identified photonics as a Key Enabling Technology for the 21st century. (Information on the photonics market in Europe and in the world can be found in the text box)

The development however of cutting-edge micro-photonics components and their integration in new products can be very complex. Indeed, photonics-driven innovation often requires a complete and expensive high-technology supply chain operated by top-experts. In many cases companies, and in particular small- and medium-sized enterprises, do not have direct access to such infrastructure. To overcome this show-stopper for industrial innovation in Europe 14 high-tech research laboratories from 6 European member states have joined forces and created a unique "one-stop-shop-solution-provider" for micro-photonics technologies.

“We have called our European centre “ACTMOST” “, says Hugo Thienpont from the Brussels Photonics Team who is the coordinator of this initiative. “ACTMOST stands for Access Centre To Micro-Optics Expertise, Services and Technologies. Our main goal is to pro-actively provide European companies with timely, cost-effective, and investment-free access to professional, cutting-edge micro-photonics technologies and knowledge to support the development of new products. The technology support that we can provide encompasses the entire food-chain of micro-photonics: from optical design, to measurement, prototyping, replication and packaging, all the way to proof-of-concept demonstration and reliability testing. We aim at providing complete solutions for companies through focused collaborations and through hands-on training of industry staff in the highly advanced laboratories of the ACTMOST technology partners”.

Thienpont adds: “Important to remark is that the support we will provide to industry is –under certain conditions and up to a certain level- financially fully subsidized by the European Commission. With this cost-efficient and risk free support we aim at lowering the barriers for industry to start working with us and validate micro-photonics solutions for product innovation. ACTMOST will be a major driving force to

sustainably support European industry in keeping a leading position in micro-optic and micro-photonics enhanced products, strengthening the competitiveness of Europe and creating new jobs.

To inform European companies about all the opportunities it has to offer ACTMOST will organize its first “Workshop for Industry” on December 3rd 2010 in Brussels, Belgium. ACTMOST will start serving European companies from January 2011 onward. More information can be found on www.actmost.eu.

* Photonics Market in Europe and the world.

According to the European Technology Platform “Photonics 21” that represents the European photonics industry, research institutions, and universities, the global photonics market in 2008 was estimated to be around €270 billion, of which Europe took €55 billion. This corresponds to a share of more than 20% of the worldwide production volume in the photonics industry. In Europe more than 5000 companies are involved in photonics, most of them SMEs. The core sectors are lighting, production technology, medical technology, defense photonics and optical components and systems with market shares ranging from 25 to 45 %. Photonics companies themselves employ about 290.000 people in Europe.

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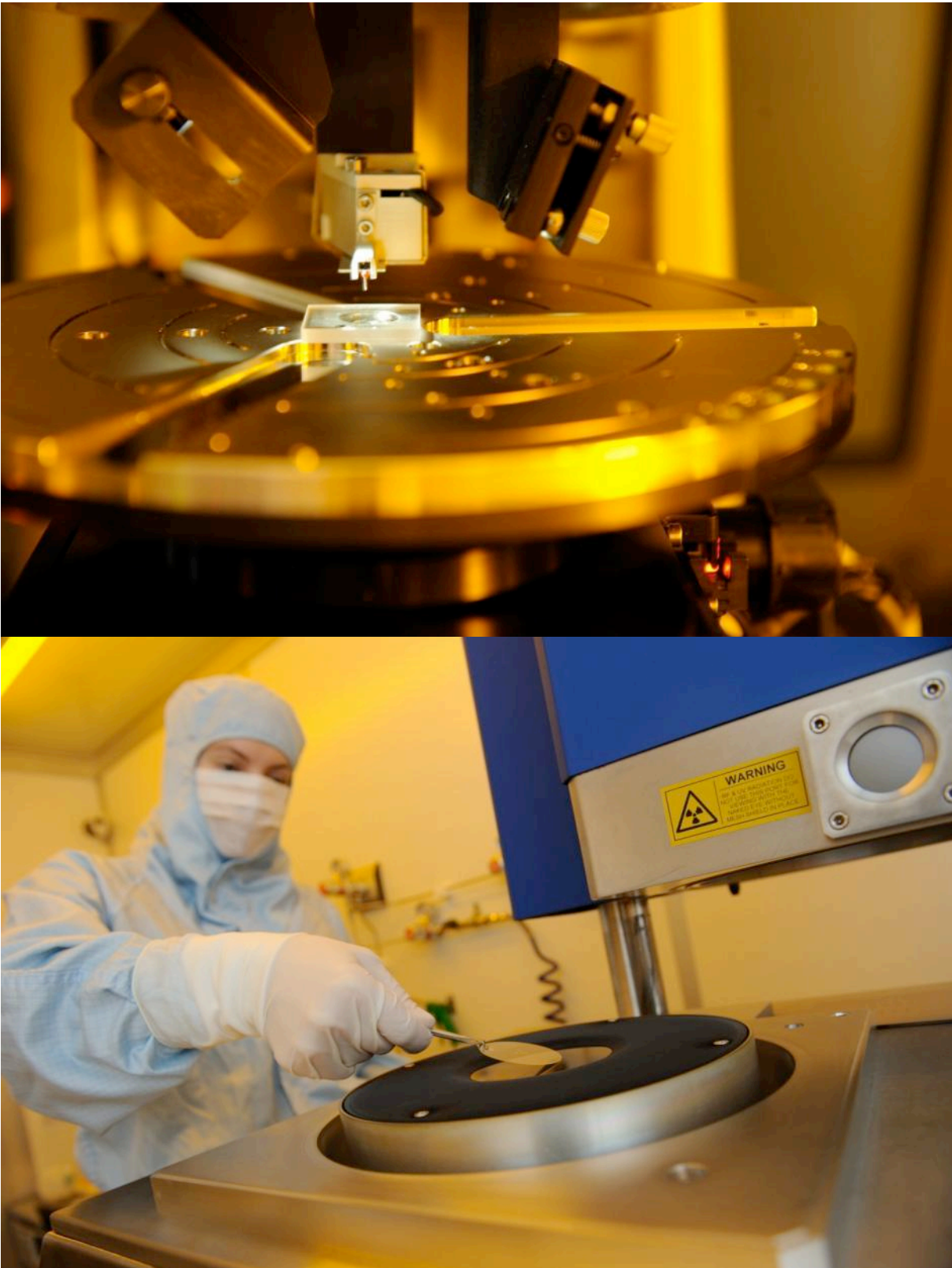
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Caption: ACTMOST aims at supporting European companies with cutting-edge micro-photonic technologies for product innovation and will also open up its facilities for hands-on training of company staff





Additional photos can be downloaded from www.actmost.eu