

## **ACTMOST**

### **ACCESS TO MICRO-OPTICS EXPERTISE, SERVICE & TECHNOLOGIES**

**Grant Agreement number: 257056**

#### **Deliverable Report**

#### **Work Package 1**

<b>D1.8 Final Press Release</b>
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## 1. Deliverable Objectives

The deliverable “Final press release on ACTMOST” is part of WP 1 on “Awareness, Exploitation, and Spreading of Excellence”. With this press release we want to inform the specialized and the general press of the main achievements of the ACTMOST consortium and of its positive impact on industry. In particular we want to send out the message that the innovation support model, as tested during the ACTMOST experience, is an efficient and effective tool to support European SMEs, that it has been very well received by the companies, and that it should form the basis for new actions to support SMEs that use key-enabling technologies for their product innovation.

This press released will be sent out right after the final review meeting and the acceptance of the deliverables by the project reviewers and the project officer.

## 2. Press Release

### *New “plug-and-play” innovation support model for European SMEs successfully tested and set to expand*

*Pilot initiative targeted at the dynamic European photonics sector demonstrates capacity to leverage every euro of EU funding into 15 euro of additional company revenues and accelerate the drive for new job creation in the EU*

**Brussels, [20 November 2013]** – The Brussels Photonics Team (B-Phot) at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), co-ordinator of the EU-funded ACTMOST project comprising a European consortium of 14 high-tech research laboratories from 6 European member states, today announced the successful completion of the three-year pilot initiative aimed at demonstrating the merits of a fresh new approach to supporting innovation excellence in European SMEs.

The ACTMOST innovation support model is unique in a European context for three reasons designed to address specific obstacles for SMEs as follows:

- **Minimal Paperwork** - companies availing of support are treated as “customers” and not “partners” of the EU project, and are therefore removed from most of the administration work which is completed on their behalf
- **Fast Decisions and Results** – support is aimed at accelerating time-to-market for innovation projects which are in the early stages of commercial-readiness; a typical project is only 6-9 months duration from start to finish
- **Matching Free Expertise to Business Need** – companies are supported with expertise – free to SMEs – and not grants, based on their business need and not just technology availability, through access to the full spectrum of ready-made supply chains of the best in European research

Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises are the driving force behind technological and economic innovation in Europe. They draw their business acumen from product focus, flexibility and quick time-to-market. But SMEs are also acutely vulnerable when exposed to innovation roadblocks. This is particularly true for companies operating in the rapidly

growing photonics sector, where product innovation is based on cutting-edge light technology and on highly-advanced manufacturing processes.

To keep European SMEs at the forefront of photonics product innovation the European Commission supported the creation of a transnational Access Centre To Micro-Optics expertise, Services and Technologies. *“ACTMOST is a European consortium of 14 high-tech research laboratories from 6 European member states”* says Hugo Thienpont, coordinator of the innovation initiative and professor at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. *“We kicked-off in 2010 with the goal to become the “one-stop-shop photonics solution provider” for European companies. Our goal was to test a paradigm-shifting innovation model that would allow removing all innovation barriers for SMEs by providing them with free access to our technology platforms and to our photonics experts.”*

Thienpont’s initiative received 1.2 Million Euro funding from the European Commission and started serving European companies on January 2011 for a test period of 30 months. With €600K project budget the ACTMOST consortium successfully supported 29 companies from a variety of photonics-enabled industrial sectors such as biomedicine and smart structures. *“The innovation support we received from the ACTMOST consortium was key to the successful development of our PeiraTM900 handheld imaging device that measures subcutaneous tumors for oncological research”* says Hans Nicasy, CEO of the Belgian scientific instruments company Peira.

Eric Lindner, operation manager at FBGS Technologies, Germany, adds: *“ACTMOST has also been an effective support for my company to assess new optical fiber sensor technologies in a timely manner and to get access to the best European experts in the field.”*

The European consortium also removed innovation roadblocks in other application areas such as miniature cameras for tablet PCs and mobile phones. *“Our access to ACTMOST’s wafer-scale packaging and integration facilities made it possible to leverage our early proof-of-concept tuneable micro-lens to a mass-producible component in only 9 months”* declares Frederic Berier, CTO of the optical engineering company EVOSENS, France.

Thienpont comments: *“ACTMOST’s “user satisfaction” and “quality of service” received excellent ratings, showing that the new innovation instrument is very well received by the supported European companies. Industry appreciates in particular the single-stop-shop character of the solution-providing access centre, the centralized entry point, the quick guidance to experts, the fast and professional support, the intellectual property policy, and the low administrative overhead. Also the “technology-support-instead-of-money” approach is very well received and effectively lowers companies’ barriers to start with photonics-driven product innovation.”*

A first estimate of ACTMOST’s impact, based on the business plans of the 29 companies that received support, indicates that this new innovation model has the potential to turn €1 of EU funding into €15 of additional company revenue per year, as soon as the new products will be successfully marketed. Thus the €600K EU funding is expected to create €9M of additional company revenues per year and 45 new jobs. This estimate straightforwardly illustrates what can be achieved with the new EC-supported innovation instrument.

*“The ACTMOST pilot project has unmistakably demonstrated its great value-for-money,”* Thienpont concludes, *“It clearly fills the gap of R&D innovation schemes for which currently*

*there are no support instruments at the European level. It is perfectly suited to support the photonics sector, but can equally-well be applied to other key-enabling technologies such as biotechnology or nanotechnology. It is especially suited for SMEs, who need fast, business-driven, practical, and free-of-charge support to accelerate innovation or technology take-up, rather than quantum-leap research, to stay ahead of competition.”*

Recently the European Commission decided to continue photonics innovation support for European SMEs through this successful model and increased its financial support to €8M.

For more information: [www.actmost.eu](http://www.actmost.eu)

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\* 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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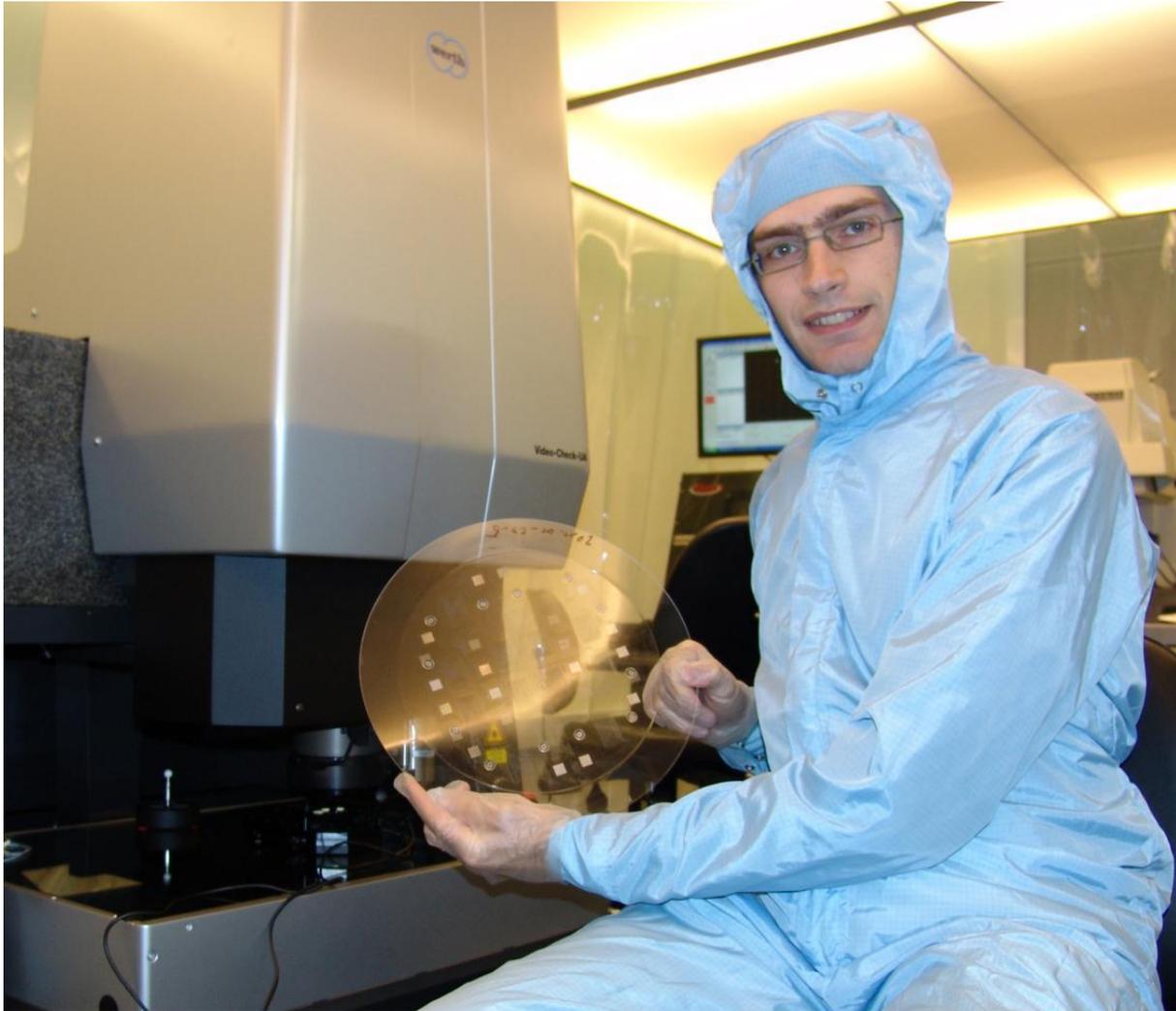
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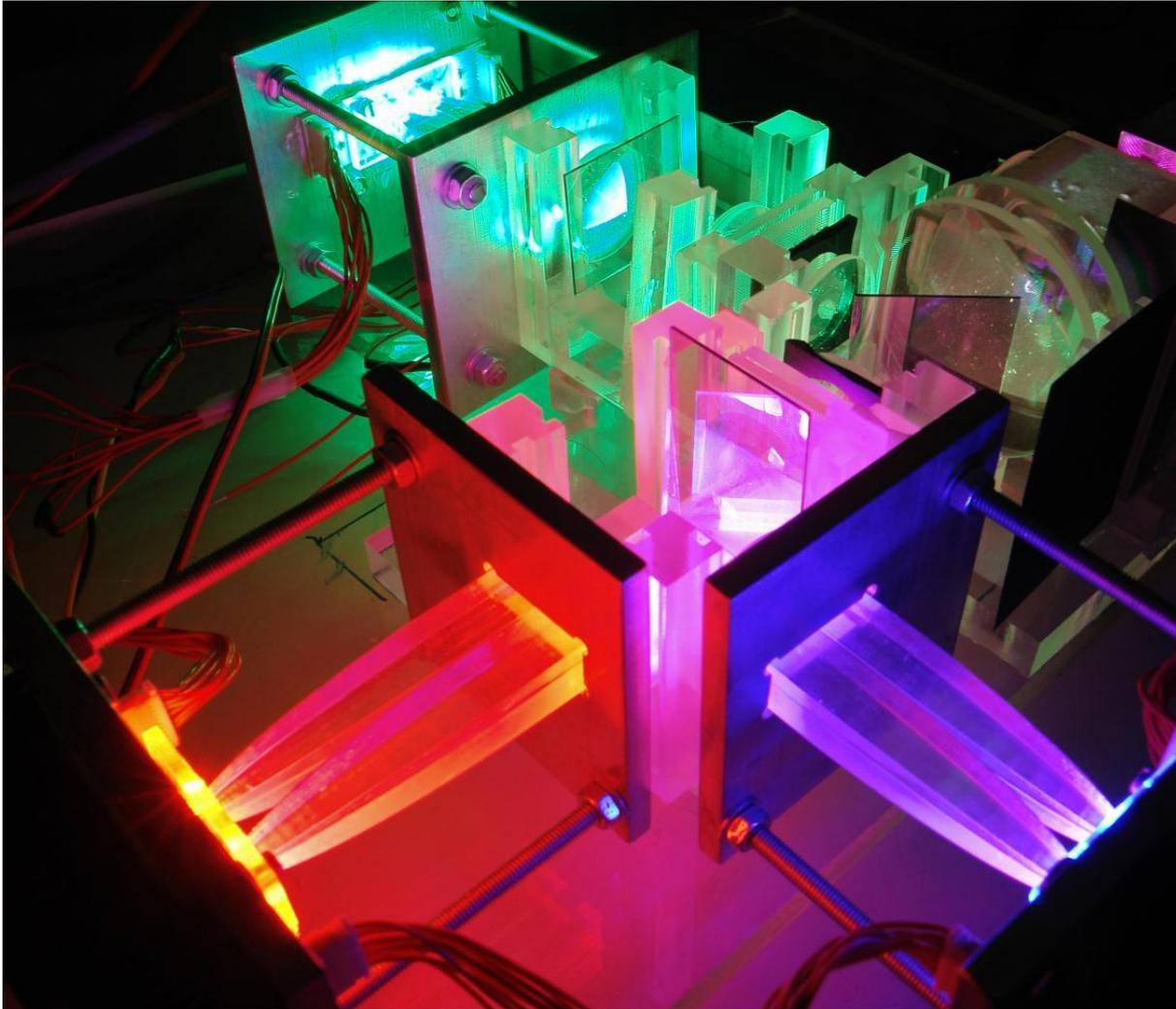
Logo:



Photos:







Caption: ACTMOST successfully supported European companies with cutting-edge micro-photonics technologies for product innovation



Additional photos can be downloaded from [www.actmost.eu](http://www.actmost.eu)