

## Research Alliance: Focusing on Digital Transformation

**ForDigital: Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and the University of Mannheim Investigate and Shape Digitization – Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts Funds Research With €900,000 Over the Course of Three Years**

Industry 4.0, cloud computing and social media make obvious that information and communication technologies are developing at an incredible pace. How all this affects the economy, society and individuals is part of the research alliance “Digitization: Transformation of socio-economic processes”, ForDigital in short, of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and the University of Mannheim. The aim is to better understand the mechanisms of digital transformation and create innovative information and communication technology solutions. The initiative funded by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts (MWK) brings together scientists of both institutions and other partners. ForDigital officially started with a kick-off event on July 5, 2016.

“Digitization offers new diverse opportunities for economy and society, and for our professional and private lives. In order to fully reach the potential of digitization, it has to be researched and shaped from different perspectives. “In ForDigital, the partners combine social, economic and technological research questions in an ideal way,” says Professor Oliver Kraft, Vice President for Research at KIT. Professor Rosemarie Tracy, Prorector for Research, Equal Opportunities and Young Researchers at the University of Mannheim explains: “The purpose of the joint research is to produce high-quality publications, strengthen the areas of expertise of both institutions and support young researchers.”

The research alliance examines both risks and opportunities. “An unlimited offer of real-time information and increasing flexibility through modern information and communication technologies are among the major advantages of digitization. At the same time, we must recognize challenges and potential risks,” says Alexander Mädche, business informatics professor and spokesman for the alliance from KIT. Professor Armin Heinzl, spokesman from the University of Mannheim, adds: “With the alliance we would like to facilitate the transition from the analog to the digital world for companies and society, without disregarding fundamental phenomena such as privacy, data security and

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technostress.” Further spokesmen for the alliance are Professor Christof Weinhardt of KIT and Professor Florian Stahl of the University of Mannheim.

A key issue for ForDigital is the digital transformation of the economy. This includes digital infrastructures, and the digitization of business processes, products and services. The focus will also be on individuals and society, for instance the potential and changes with regard to health and well-being, the generation of positive user experiences, legal aspects, and economic and social consequences.

With the scientific exchange between all institutions, ForDigital wants to lay the foundation for long-term cooperation and efficient research in the region. The aim of the research alliance is also to acquire external funds across locations. Associated partners of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and the University of Mannheim are the Center for European Economic Research (ZEW), the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS), the Central Institute of Mental Health (ZI), the FIZ Karlsruhe – Leibniz Institute for Information Infrastructure, the FZI Research Center for Information Technology and the Fraunhofer Institute of Optronics, System Technologies and Image Exploitation (IOSB).

ForDigital is an open research platform. In addition to the researchers included in the application, it is generally possible for all scientists from KIT and the University of Mannheim as well as the associated research institutions to submit cooperation suggestions across locations.

The MWK supports ForDigital with €300,000 per year, over the course of three years. The partners contribute a total of €200,000 each year and add infrastructure.

Link to the project page: <http://www.fordigital.org/>

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**Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) pools its three core tasks of research, higher education, and innovation in a mission. With about 9,300 employees and 25,000 students, KIT is one of the big institutions of research and higher education in natural sciences and engineering in Europe.**

**KIT: The Research University in the Helmholtz Association**

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