

THE

FRAUNHOFER INNOVATION PLATFORM

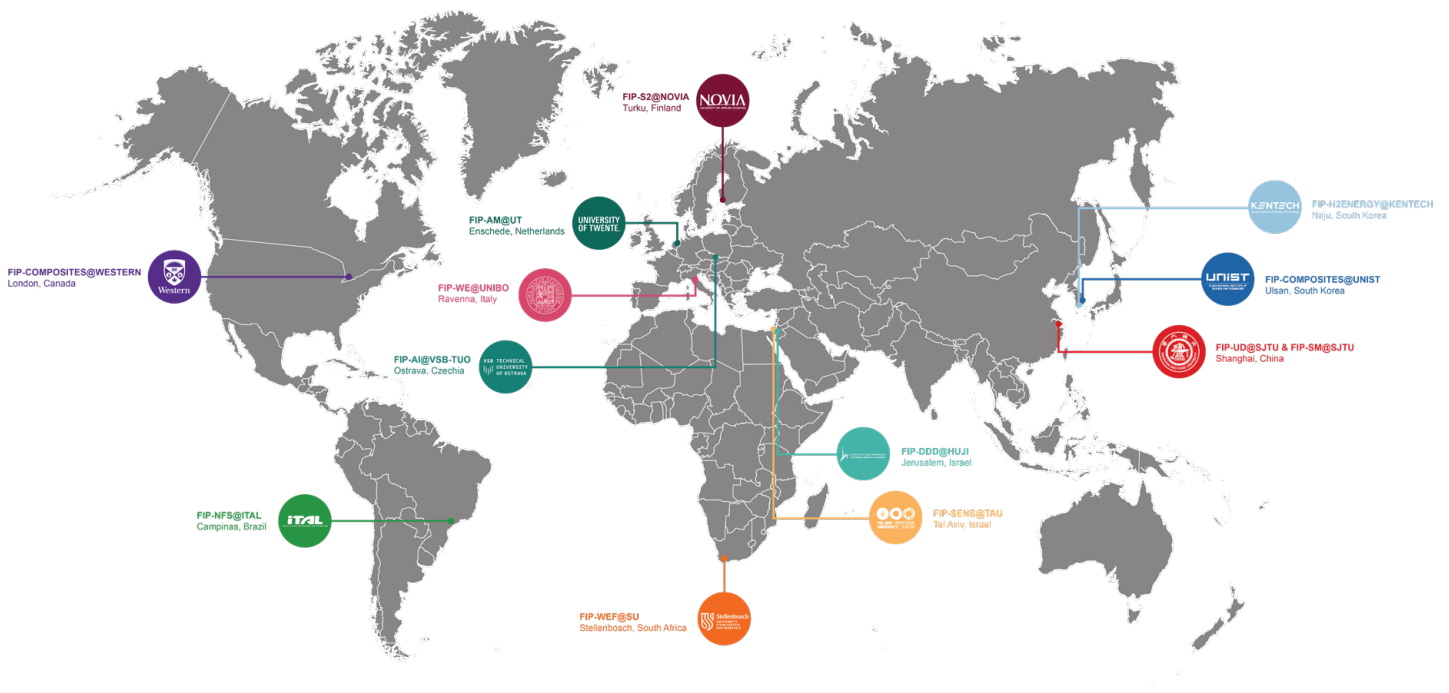
PURPOSE TO INDUSTRY

A Fraunhofer Innovation Platform (FIP) offers a unique framework for co-operation between one of the German Fraunhofer Institutes and an international partner organisation. It allows for the combination of cutting-edge research by the international university with Fraunhofer research focused on practical application. Together, the partners are able to provide a unique source of knowledge and competencies as well as a one-stop shop for clients that want to profit from this knowledge.

Through the FIP, the university and Fraunhofer Institute assist their clients to enhance their performance by improving existing products, developing entirely new offshoots, and cutting costs in areas such as manufacturing and distribution. This benefits local companies that want to stay one step ahead by continuously seeking out improvements and launching new products.

The FIP also offers market analysis, feasibility and profitability studies as well as innovation consulting services.

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The partners involved in the FIP carefully monitor technological trends and market developments to assist clients in anticipating a trend and releasing new products onto the market before anyone else. The FIP team and especially the Fraunhofer researchers are familiar with the conditions and constraints that companies encounter on a daily basis, and they understand what is important, often because they have worked in industry themselves. In cases in which organisations have a fairly concrete idea of the challenges that they are facing, and they find that FIP's offer might contribute to the solution, they can simply approach us directly. FIP seminars, events and participation in trade fairs also provide an opportunity to get in touch with the FIP. For example, the Fraunhofer Innovation Platform for Advanced Manufacturing at the University of Twente in the Netherlands (FIP-AM@UT) recently participated in the AM for Production Event in 's-Hertogenbosch, where it presented its capabilities in helping Dutch manufacturers integrate additive manufacturing into their process chains. At this event,

FIP-AM@UT were able to generate a number of connections to companies interested in exploring how AM could be implemented to help meet their future production goals. This is just one of the many ways in which FIPs, like the FIP-AM@UT, reach out to potential clients and industry as whole, in and outside their regions. The objective of such outreach is to support industry in their chosen technical domains as well demonstrate presence in their region and beyond.

Once contact has been made, the potential client is invited to an initial consultation which is both free and without obligation. The goal of this initial discussion is to establish what the objectives would be for a potential co-operative venture and what the budget and schedule might look like. Representatives from the university as well as the Fraunhofer Institute can participate to represent all of the FIP competencies. This is followed by contract negotiations and the signing of an agreement. Usually, the university partner will lead this process. Thus, clients have one local access point to

the knowledge and services of both partners. Afterwards, the research and development work starts with both the university and Fraunhofer contributing their knowledge via the FIP framework.

The scope and scale of co-operation with the FIP is flexible, depending on the specific needs of each particular client. Data and information from clients are always treated in the strictest confidentiality.

A FIP can also be a partner in publicly funded projects with multiple partners. Co-operation of competitors from the same industry can create an independent, pre-competitive environment that allows synergies to be exploited. ■