Beat: Miscellaneous

UK to set up Alan Turing Institute to lead big data research

-, 20.03.2014, 01:35 Time

USPA News - A research institute specializing in big data and algorithm research will be set up by the British government and named after World War II code-breaker Alan Turing, Exchequer Chancellor George Osborne announced during Wednesday`s budget speech. The UK`s Department for Business, Innovation & Skills said the `Alan Turing Institute for Data Science` will benefit from a government investment of £42 million ($69.4 million) over the first five years, aimed at strengthening the the country`s objective to be a world leader in the analysis and application of big data.

"It will also ensure that the UK is at the forefront of data-science in a rapidly moving, globally competitive area, enabling first-class research in an environment that brings together theory and practical application," the Department said. "Once operational, this will be a world-leading institute, attracting the best talent and investment from across the globe. It will provide a fitting memorial to Alan Turing." In an annual budget speech to the lower house of parliament, Osborne paid tribute to Turing, crediting him for having done more than "almost any other single person" to win World War II. He also expressed regret over Turing`s conviction for homosexuality, saying the code-breaker was persecuted by the country he helped save. "Now, in his honor, we will found the Alan Turing Institute to ensure Britain leads the way again in the use of big data and algorithm research," Osborne told parliament. "I am determined that our country is going to out-compete, out-smart and out-do the rest of the world." Turing, who is widely considered to be the father of modern computing, is credited with saving thousands of lives by shortening World War II through his code breaking skills that helped accelerate Allied efforts to read German Naval messages enciphered with the Enigma machine. Historians believe these efforts shortened the world`s deadliest conflict in history by up to two years. But the mathematician was later arrested and convicted of `gross indecency` in 1952 after admitting he had a sexual relationship with a 19-year-old man he had reported to police for stealing from his home. Turing faced being sentenced to jail but was offered probation if he agreed to undergo chemical castration, which made him impotent and caused him to develop breasts. The conviction, which overshadowed his later life, led to the removal of his security clearance and meant he was no longer able to work for British intelligence agency GCHQ where he had continued to work following his service during World War II. Turing eventually killed himself in 1954 by eating an apple laced with cyanide. Following years of campaigning and a request from Justice Secretary Chris Grayling, Queen Elizabeth II in December 2013 granted a posthumous pardon to Turing under the Royal Prerogative of Mercy, even though Turing`s case did not meet the official requirements. It followed an official government apology from then-British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in September 2009. "Dr. Turing deserves to be remembered and recognized for his fantastic contribution to the war effort and his legacy to science," Grayling said at the time. Prime Minister David Cameron also welcomed the pardon, calling Turing a "remarkable man" whose actions and "substantial scientific achievements" saved countless lives.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2023/uk-to-set-up-alan-turing-institute-to-lead-big-data-research.html

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