[£8m EU-backed boost to roll out initiative to drive groundbreaking research to support the manufacturing industry](#)

Backed by £4m of EU funding, Swansea University's ASTUTE 2020 scheme will help to establish more research collaborations between participating Welsh universities and companies to address future manufacturing challenges and opportunities. The aim is to drive productivity and growth within the industry by developing new sustainable technologies and higher-value, competitive goods and services for the global market.

The project is already delivering in north and west Wales and the south Wales valleys. The additional EU funding will enable ASTUTE 2020 to be rolled out to support businesses across the rest of Wales, including Cardiff, Newport, the Vale of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire, Powys, Flintshire and Wrexham. The remainder of the funding will come from participating Welsh universities.

Professor Drakeford said:

> "Investing in our manufacturing sector to drive innovation and develop pioneering technologies and products will lead to increased competitiveness within the industry and new employment opportunities."

Professor Johann Sienz, ASTUTE 2020's operation director, said:

> "We are delighted to be expanding the ASTUTE 2020 applied research which will enable transformational and sustainable growth across Wales in manufacturing industries. Focussed upon developing and adopting future manufacturing technologies, we are looking forward to collaborating with more companies aiming to stimulate and drive business growth in the region."

To date, more than 30 companies have been involved with research collaborations through ASTUTE 2020, covering manufacturing component areas such as medical equipment, automotive and aerospace.

One such collaboration has been with the Aluminium Lighting Company (ALC), which has led to the development of a state-of-the-art electronic device, which can collect performance and maintenance data on lighting columns, such as those along roads, more efficiently and safely.

Currently, the performance and structural condition of lighting columns is

assessed by visual and physical inspection, which can be time consuming and can cause service disruptions on roads, train lines, and to pedestrians. The new device will enable the remote monitoring of lighting columns and condition and maintenance assessment, without the need for regular physical inspections. Such a device could become an integral part of ALC's future products and could be retro-fitted to existing lighting columns.

Craig Williams, ALC's managing director, said:

> "The ASTUTE 2020 programme means we can access specialist knowledge that we do not have. Working with Swansea University we are looking to apply concepts of artificial intelligence, machine learning and neural networking in developing and refining our exciting new product and service."

ASTUTE 2020 is a £22.6m all-Wales scheme delivered in partnership between the Swansea, Aberystwyth, Cardiff and South Wales universities and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.