

HUNGARY: The first "Accredited Innovation Cluster" titles awarded

BUDAPEST: Nine, export-oriented and innovative applicants were the first ones to be awarded the so-called „Accredited Innovation Cluster” title by the Pole Accreditation Board and the National Development Agency in September 2008. This policy concept bears resemblance to the Norwegian “næringsklynger” approach, and other similar initiatives throughout Europe, the main objective of which is to strengthen regional production and foster innovation by enhancing co-operation among the key players in the respective region and priority sector.

As the “development poles”, based on the largest cities in Hungary’s seven statistical-planning regions – the recipients of EU Structural and other funds – are the cornerstones of Hungarian development policy, several related policy areas – such as innovation policy – are tightly linked to them. Therefore, the accreditation of the first nine innovation clusters marks the end of the first stage of the so-called Pole Programme.

This programme is linked to the „pole” cities of the seven Hungarian regions, and it aims at identifying and later on supporting and strengthening bottom-up, self-organised groups of co-operating innovative, export-oriented companies in the vicinity of the given „pole” city, and associated with the same industrial sector.

Cluster accreditation a basis for funding

The goal of this first stage of accreditation was not immediate, direct financial support; the objective of awarding the „Accredited Innovation Cluster” title is to serve as a basis for funding in a wide range of support measures under national, and EU-funded schemes (most notably several Operational Programmes of the New Hungary Development Plan 2007-13), as there will be specific measures (with a total allocation of several million EUR) solely for the purpose of funding and strengthening accredited clusters.

The objective of the accreditation process, carried out by an office and a board specifically charged with this task, was to identify the most competitive clusters, the performance and efficient cooperation of which had been proven during the course of at least one year.

160 SMEs involved

The first accredited innovation clusters altogether involve 160 SMEs, representing 77% of the total membership. A wide range of science and technology higher education institutions (HEIs), and institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is also involved directly or indirectly in the various co-operations.

By 2010, the accredited innovation clusters are expected to develop up to 100 new innovative products and services, primarily in the most export-oriented and innovative sectors of the Hungarian economy, such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, ICT, but also some of the traditional industries with the potential of entering international markets.

To learn more about the Hungarian Innovation Clusters, contact [Innovation Norway's office in Budapest](#)