Tánaiste announces seven industry research initiatives to benefit key sectors
Ireland Inc reaches milestone in transition to a smarter, greener economy

Issued: 11th May 2009

An Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Mary Coughlan T.D today announced details of the initial seven industry groups to form research initiatives under the Competence Centres programme. Focused on research with a direct impact on industry, these centres are a joint initiative of Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland and a key element of Government plans to build a smarter, greener economy. Government funding is being provided of up to €1 million per initiative for this initial research phase.

The seven research initiatives cover ICT, involving nanotechnology, microelectronics and IT innovation; manufacturing using composite materials, manufacturing process technologies and energy efficiency in factories; and new technologies in bio-energy and bio-refining.

64 companies were involved in the planning for these Competence Centres including multinationals like Medtronic, Intel, Xilinx, Seagate, Analog Devices Ltd, Bombardier Aerospace and De Puy and Irish companies such as Creganna, AER Ltd, ÉireComposites Teo, Proxy Biomedical, S3, Aerogen, and Redmere.
It is expected that when fully operational, a further 200 companies in Ireland will be directly associated with the Competence Centres.

Making the announcement the Tánaiste said;
"Creating employment through knowledge and innovation in our existing companies is a key Government priority as outlined in our strategy 'Building Ireland's Smart Economy'. The Competence Centre initiatives will use collaborative research to address the challenges of making Irish manufacturing more competitive, and exploit the opportunities in the emerging energy, green technologies and IT sectors".

The Competence Centre initiatives will carry out market-focussed strategic R&D for the benefit of industry and will be resourced by highly qualified researchers.

Third level research institutions are currently being invited to submit applications to host a Competence Centre and as part of the arrangement a technology leader with a background in managing research and development projects will be employed to spear-head the development of each centre.

Welcoming the announcement, the Minister for Science, Technology, Innovation and Natural Resources Conor Lenihan T.D said;
"Bringing together companies with similar research needs and teaming them with highly-qualified researchers to produce marketable products and services is a highly efficient way of conducting industrial research. This collaborative approach to creating and managing intellectual property will not only benefit the companies involved but will deliver a competitive advantage to Irish industry, reinforcing Ireland's reputation as a flexible and innovative country".

The Competence Centres programme was launched in March 2007 as one of the key initiatives of the Government's Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006 - 2013.

ENDS

For more information contact:

Grace Labanyi, Communications Officer Enterprise Ireland – Tel: 087 3286404
and visit www.competencecentres.ie

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

The seven industry initiatives are;

Competence Centre in Applied Nanotechnology (**CCAN**) – this group of companies will focus on 3 main areas of research;

1) opportunities for nanotechnology to advance the ICT industry in Ireland looking at solutions to increase storage and memory of nano-electronic devices,
2) how nanotechnology can be used in the medical device industry to improve things like drug delivery and diagnostic equipment and
3) opportunities where ICT and medical devices converge –e.g. a device to deliver pain relief which can be embedded in a person's body and then controlled using wireless technology.

Microelectronics Competence Centre Ireland (**MCCI**) – the vision of this group is to advance leading edge research in solid state circuits with the aim of securing Ireland's position as the location of choice for fabless semiconductor companies and multinational integrated device manufacturers. The MCCI is a sub-set of a wider group called MIDAS Ireland (Microelectronic Industry Design Association) which is a joint industry and academic organisation that defines and develops the future direction of Integrated Circuit design in Ireland. The MIDAS group are supportive of the MCCI as the member companies - which includes Chipright, ChipSensors, CreVinn, Intel, ON Semi, Powervation, Redmere and S3 - expect to benefit from membership and involvement with the Centre once it has become operational.

Composites Competence Centre (**C3)** – research will focus on producing lightweight, high-performance polymers that can be used to reduce weight and therefore increase efficiency in the aerospace, construction and energy generation sectors. Examples of use include wind turbine blades and ocean energy generators which need to withstand harsh environments.

Innovation for Ireland's Energy Efficiency I2E2 – research will reduce on a sustainable basis, both the cost, and the associated environmental impact, of energy use by manufacturing companies. The research will include areas of manufacturing facilities, heat recovery, utility generation and use, combined heat and power, energy management systems, intelligent energy use and alternative fuels.

Irish Centre for Manufacturing Research ICMR – research focus will include skills development and productivity improvement including research into the way people learn and retain skills applicable in a high technology environment, optimisation and simulation, metrology and process control. The innovations will enable the Irish manufacturing industry to improve competitiveness via breakthroughs in cost reduction, service levels and customer responsiveness, output and productivity, cycle time and time to market, flexibility and work force development, waste reduction and product quality.

BioEnergy and BioRefinery Competence Centre BBCC – The industry group has identified 3 central research themes;

1) the process technology that powers the conversion of bio feed-stocks into useable products and energy,
2) biomethane production from grass, and
3) investigating the potential of algae as a source of bio-energy.

Innovation Value Institute Consortium Competence Centre IVIC^3 - the mission is to develop a unified and validated approach for managing IT and IT-innovation so that organisations can consistently realise value from their IT investments and practices and continuously achieve competitive advantage through the use of IT with a particular focus on 'green computing' and 'service innovation'.