

Successful launch of SECPHO, the Southern European cluster in optics and photonics

Terrassa (Barcelona) May 2009. It has recently been founded formally the Southern European Cluster in Photonics and Optics, branded as SECPHO. This constitution represents the fulfilment of intense work initiated by companies about nine months ago.

SECPHO is committed to improve the competitiveness in optics and photonics Spanish sector by reaching major growth and profitability. The leadership of this initiative is not only propelled by companies but on R+D centres related to this sector.

SECPHO represents a broad range of companies, which uses in different manners the behaviour and properties of light. Cluster's product portfolio include optical systems used in photographic and video cameras, optical instrumentation (for example microscopes, telescopes, metrology instrumentation and ophthalmic optics) and the latest sensors based on optoelectronics devices, new light sources (LEDs, OLEDs, etc), lasers, optical fibres and photonics' new applications, linked to quantum light aspects.

The Spanish sector involves more than 110 enterprises, with total revenues near to 1.300 M € and reaching more than 7.000 jobs.

SECPHO is an embryonic cluster, very connected to high added value technology, experiencing powerful growth rates in last years and envisioning continued growth on future. If we take a quick look at members participating in the cluster, we may list Easy-Laser, Ficosa, Hamamatsu, Indra, Lamp, Macsa, Monocrom, Radiantis and Sensofar, also some universities like UPC (Polytechnic University of Catalonia) through CD6 (Research Centre for Sensor, Instrument and Systems Development).

Therefore, SECPHO considers very valuable the participation of optics and photonics research centres, carrying out two really important functions, to attract new researchers (acting as a pool of knowledge) and developing new technological applications to transfer them to the industry or by creating cutting edge technology spin-offs.

One main challenge of SECPHO is to increase research & development projects between companies and knowledge providers (technological centres, investigation institutes, universities, etc.) through the implementation of activities which will enable the identification of companies' technological challenges, to subsequently carry out innovative solutions based on optics and photonics technologies.

To properly build up this initiative, it has been prepared the strategic plan of this cluster with the support of the Catalanian government and the Spanish Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade.

This plan describes specifically SECPHO's engagement to increase the competitiveness in optics and photonics Spanish sector, and recommend executing the Action Plan, which identify the key areas to develop:

- Collaborative R+D projects
- Manufacturing improvement
- Commercialization and internationalization activities
- International Cluster visibility
- Companies strategy reinforcement
- Human resources specialization in optics and photonics
- Networking activities between cluster members and third parties
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Subsequently to the SECPHO foundation, it has been received more than 40 petitions from companies and research centres to join the cluster, thus SECPHO would quickly represent more than 50% of Spanish sector. In the next months is expected to collect new supports.