



Research and innovation, involving collaboration between businesses and knowledge providers, and utilising EU funding, is one of the motors that will drive sustainable development in Ireland. This was the clear message given by a panel of industry practitioners, Enterprise Ireland, and an eminent academic from the University of Strathclyde at a research and development-themed seminar held in Intel Shannon last week.

The seminar, which was organised by Shannon Chamber in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland and Supply Network Shannon, succinctly demonstrated how Irish companies can access significant research and development funding for technology, product and process development, which will ultimately generate new products, improve their competitiveness and in turn, their bottom lines.

“Traditional manufacturing is dead,” said Professor Umit Bititci from the Department of Manufacturing and Engineering Management, Strathclyde University, stressing that Irish businesses need to be positioning themselves in the high-value adaptive manufacturing space. The future is about continuous manufacturing where, for example, personalised medicine will become the norm, not the exception,” he said, adding that crowdsourcing will replace outsourcing in the development of new products and designs.

“That’s why businesses need to develop capability in multi-party research, which combines the knowledge and capability of industrialists and academics,” said Liam Brown of Enterprise Ireland and one of the national contact points for the EU’s Framework Programme 7, which is investing in excess of €50 billion in trans-national collaborative research and development projects between 2007 and 2013. Irish companies and academics are already involved in this level of research, but we need greater involvement in the years ahead,” stated Mr Brown, urging Irish companies to contact their development agencies to understand how they can get involved in what he describes as “the most generous R&D programme in the world.”

The seminar, whilst addressing higher-level research, did not omit the research funding needs of companies who are at early stage development.

Enterprise Ireland’s innovation vouchers, which are valued at €5,000 and issued three times a year, are structured to meet the research requirements of businesses with less than fifty

employees and an annual turnover of less than €10million. Manufacturing and internationally traded services companies, who wish to collaborate with third level institutions to undertake project-specific research can also access innovation partnership funding in the order of €150,000 to €350,000.

As Shannon Chamber's chief executive, Helen Downes stated: "Irish businesses can thrive in the years ahead, once they position themselves to avail of the range of innovation funding available, domestically and at an EU level. Europe still looks favourably on Irish business. The primary conditions attaining to R&D funding is that there are deliverables in the form of new technologies and new products. It's a win-win for Ireland and Europe."

Full information on R&D supports is available at www.enterprise-ireland.com or by contacting Liam Brown at Enterprise Ireland, Westpark, Shannon – Tel: 061 777047; email: liam.brown@enterprise-ireland.com

Shannon Chamber's next business workshop, entitled 'Listen to Your Business', which is being run in conjunction with Almir Business Limited, will be held on Thursday, 14 April in the Park Inn Hotel in Shannon. Full details from Shannon Chamber at 061 708341 and email: asheehan@shannonchamber.ie

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