

Although not solemnly responsible for improving Greece's competitiveness, the Greek Development Ministry's Special Secretariat of Competitiveness oversees a range of projects and incentive programs that have started making a difference.

Businesses looking to invest in Greece may be put off by the relatively small market and red tape, but as Eleftherios Stavropoulos, Special Secretary of Competitiveness points out, there are many financial incentives in the green economy, tourism, services, and manufacturing, all backed by highly skilled human capital and advanced research and technology.

He highlights the operational pro-



Eleftherios Stavropoulos,
*Special Secretary
for Competitiveness*

gram "Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship" headed by Mr. Stavropoulos, a €3.2 billion framework for the period 2007-13 co-financed by EU structural funds to improve competitiveness of enterprises and industry through innovation. "Our goal is to accelerate the transition to a knowledge-based economy, to develop healthy, sustainable entrepreneurship, and to make Greece a more attractive place for developing business activities, with respect for the environment," says Mr. Stavropoulos.

The current international financial crisis shows the Greek economy's need to invest in innovation and human resources to bring it up to the EU-25

» Competitive spirit

average, says Mr. Stavropoulos. "More than half of our program will focus on research and technology by SMEs, as well as placing researchers and PhD candidates academics in SMEs to do their research work in a real business environment, and in supporting the creation of clusters of SMEs, VCs, research centers and universities in areas such as renewable energy, biotechnology, and agro food technology."

Corallia cluster, launched in early 2007, is a flagship initiative funded by the public and private sectors with EU backing. It is aimed at developing the microelectronics sector through the development of cluster that benefit from new synergies in R&D and between local and foreign industries, universities, and research centers.

Bringing businesses together at the Microelectronics Innovation Centre in Athens' new financial center of Marousi, Corallia has already achieved significant economies of scale says Mr. Stavropoulos, pointing to a 110% increase of exports, 93% increase of specialized personnel and a 213% increase of patents. A strong proof of the validity of the Greek plans.

Greece now has 12 research centers and more than 56 research institutes. The country also has five poles of competitiveness spread across the country covering ICT technology, biofuels, foods and textiles,

the environment, biotechnology, medical technologies and energy.

Seven technological parks have also been set up next to the country's leading universities.

Mr. Stavropoulos says that Greece can best improve its international position by strengthening links with global markets and international, integrated manufacturing systems, and through international alliances between agencies and businesses. This will also involve boosting exports, becoming part of international energy networks, and the creation of an attractive environment for investment and activities to upgrade industry. He also points to the need to differentiate the country's tourist product and to ensure the quality of new and existing tourist infrastructures and activities, while improving the international image of the country as a holiday destination. □



GREEK MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT

SPECIAL SECRETARIAT
FOR COMPETITIVENESS

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
«COMPETITIVENESS AND
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