

## VINNVÄXT

### GROWTH IN THE REGIONS THROUGH DYNAMIC INNOVATION SYSTEMS

**Future competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-based economy requires faster renewal. Growth is based on innovations based on top-level competence, exchange of knowledge and learning in collaboration between companies, research and public organisations.**

VINNOVA aims to promote sustainable development and growth for industry, society and people through development of efficient innovation systems and financing of problem-oriented research. Sweden's innovation capacity is decisive for the country's economic growth and well-being. One urgent task thus becomes to develop efficient and internationally competitive innovation systems in the regions, based on top-level competence.

Innovation systems are systems consisting of links and support structures which facilitate the path from idea to commercial products. It is these systems which VINNOVA intends to support at regional level in this programme. Experience and research shows that geographic proximity and density brings competitive advantages as regards collaboration, learning, access to competence and collaboration in development and business exploitation. Regions which realise this, and have the ability to renew themselves can consciously develop their competitive advantages. Increased growth and international competitiveness in the regions thus contributes to the global growth level in the country.

Given this background, VINNOVA has created the VINNVÄXT programme and has carried out two nomination exercises since 2002. The aim of the programme is to achieve efficient collaboration in each region between companies, research, politics and public organisations (Triple Helix). The goal is to develop dynamic innovation systems in functional regions which are able to give the region international competitiveness through specific growth areas. This will be done through both *strategic measures* for developing an efficient innovation system and through *financing problem-oriented research and development*.

51 functional regions applied during the first nomination session in 2002. VINNOVA received 23 applications during the second session in 2004. A total of eight regions have been selected as winners in VINNVÄXT. These regions will be awarded up to Euro 1,1 million per year by VINNOVA, to develop their growth schemes. The regions will invest an equal amount. VINNOVA also offers process support and training, and has continuous contact with the winners. The goal is that the winners should become internationally competitive in their fields, within a space of ten years.

The design of the programme is based on practical experience from 10 countries in 3 continents. The competition aspect is an important strategy and has been appreciated by just about all the applicants. The foundation can be found in Porter's pioneering thoughts about competition and Etzkowitz's work on Triple Helix collaboration. It should be specially emphasised that VINNVÄXT intends to strengthen the functional regions which are already strong or are well on the way to becoming strong. One requirement is a Triple Helix leader who wants to jointly develop a strategic idea with large growth potential, and which is based on an area of regional strength.

To sum up, it can be said that VINNVÄXT has mobilised a large number of regions in Sweden, and made them take hold of and focus their growth ambitions. This has also generated high levels of enthusiasm and optimism. This has been encouraged by VINNVÄXT, not least, which has been engaged in the processes which have not been given partial financing. Most of them now continue by themselves, but at a lower rate.

**For more information please contact the programme management:**

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## **About the winners:**

### **ProcessIT Innovations, Luleå/Umeå**

ProcessIT Innovations specialise in meeting the needs of the mining, steel and paper industries, above all, for future process and IT support. Processes are operated in collaboration with the process and engineering industries, the two universities in Luleå and Umeå, and IT product companies in the counties of Västerbotten and Norrbotten. Their activities generate considerable growth thanks to major, coordinated efforts by all interested parties, including national and local government organisations in the region.

### **Biotechnology developments in the West of Sweden**

The West of Sweden and Göteborg regions have two biotechnology clusters which are already at the leading edge of developments. One of their fields is biomaterial/cell therapy. The other field is the treatment of cardio-vascular metabolism such as diabetes, obesity and strokes. They want to create a solid foundation here, for long-term growth of biotechnology in the region, with benefits for both medical care and employment. This is a question of transforming academic leading edge research into commercial innovations which can be applied in medical care.

### **Triple Steelix, Bergslagen province**

Triple Steelix in the Bergslagen area, are world-leaders in their niche. Using the steel industry as their base a cluster of companies has developed, which specialises in steel manufacture, mechanical engineering, machining and knowledge-based services. Together with the university colleges, they have focused on developing their competence in materials, steel manufacture, nanotechnology, industrial IT, environment, more efficient use of energy etc. Backing Triple Steelix, you will find companies such as Sandvik, Outokumpu and SSAB.

### **Fiber Optic Valley, Hudiksvall**

Fiber Optic Valley is Sweden's largest project for amassing competence and manufacturing in preparation for a future scenario when optical fibres will be the material of choice for all cables in the IT communication field. The Mitthögskolan university college houses research in collaboration with Acreo Fiberlab and Ericsson Network in Hudiksvall. There is also a test bed in Hudiksvall, where medical care professionals use a fibre optical network for medical communication with patients.

### **Livets Nya Verktyg, Linköping/Norrköping**

Livets Nya Verktyg is in charge of regional development of individualised solutions for best possible health in the Östergötland region. Growth is generated by preventive care, individual care, personal health and sport. About 60 companies are backing the scheme, including SAAB, the municipalities in the county, the Öststam regional federation, trade unions, Linköping University and research companies.

### **Uppsala Bio**

The biotechnology sector in Uppsala has a unique position in the world of biotechnology research. Successful innovations in pharmaceuticals, diagnostics and medical technology have been developed here. Internationally renowned brands such as Pharmacia and two Nobel prizewinners have had a positive effect on the opportunities available to the region for marketing the innovations in an international sphere.

### **Innovation i Gränsland, Scania Province**

Innovation i Gränsland is an innovation system for foodstuffs in Scania Province.

The strategic idea is to raise the return on investment in agribusiness and to create the "health food of the future", with high added value. Creativity and innovation value come from a background of multidisciplinary, border-crossing research. They will promote competence development in the focus areas of food and health. Priority areas are functional foods and good-tasting, nutritious food in schools and hospitals.

### **Robot Valley, the Mälaren lake valley**

Robot Valley's visions are to become the leaders in the fields of research, development and manufacture of industrial robots, field robotics and robotics for medical and health care. The key to success has been an environment where factors such as strong research, qualified education and industry generate synergies, and where innovation and company start-ups are encouraged. They have succeeded in mobilising groups of interested people from the entire region. Large companies such as Atlas Copco, Volvo and ABB are among those who back the initiative. This autumn, the first full university robotics education course will start.

