



PRESS RELATIONS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE,
CONTINUING EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OF THE STATE OF RHINELAND-PALATINATE

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Legally responsible for content

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Science/ Research

Medical cluster proposal from Mainz proves successful in the final round of Germany's Leading-Edge Cluster competition

Rhineland-Palatinate is once again a step ahead: The Cluster of Individualized Immune Intervention (CI3), organized and coordinated in Mainz, won through the Leading-Edge Cluster competition being held by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Together with other projects, the cluster was successful in the third and final round of the competition as its concept fully convinced the international jury.

In addition to Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and the Mainz University Medical Center, the cluster's participating institutions from the Rhine-Main metropolitan region include the Institute of Translational Oncology (TRON), the Mainz Institute of Microtechnology (IMM), the Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research, the Institute of Molecular Biology (IMB) as well as companies such as Boehringer Ingelheim, Abbott, GENterprise Genomics, and Ganymed. Stakeholders in the areas of science and business from the state of Hesse also play an important role in the cluster. "Once again we were able to prove that our elite researchers are not only among the best in Germany, but also can compete at the highest levels internationally," said Doris Ahnen, Rhineland-Palatinate's Minister of Education, Science, Continuing Education, and Cultural Affairs, with a smile. According to Ahnen, by deciding in favor of this cross-state joint proposal from universities, non-university research institutions, and companies, the jury has selected a cluster with enormous potential.



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Thanks to this leading-edge cluster, patients can now look forward with greater anticipation to the development of customized therapies and affordable medicines to combat various common diseases. At the same time, the projects, which can now be carried out in collaboration with the research network, will help to create new jobs in the Rhine-Main region. The Mainz Institute of Translational Oncology GmbH (TRON), which promotes the research and development of opportunities for the application of translational oncology and aims at disseminating the existing expertise in this field to companies and research institutions, will act as the central hub linking the theoretical research conducted at the Mainz University Medical Center and its implementation through the companies participating in the cluster.

The new cluster's objective is to develop individualized products for immunotherapy and diagnostics. With the help of individually tailored therapies, more accurately targeted and low-impact forms of treatment should become possible, for example, in combating cancer, autoimmune diseases, and infections.

Thanks to the federal competition, the cluster participants will be able undertake projects costing more than €80 million for up to five years. Half of the funding is provided by the German Ministry of Education and Science, while co-financing will be made available by private investors and other stakeholders from the industry. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate's Ministry of Education, Science, Continuing Education, and Cultural Affairs has already made available nearly €700,000 for the development of a professional cluster management board. In the next five years, the states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Hesse will collaborate to support the work conducted by this board.

Today's success, comments Doris Ahnen, is testimony to the fact that the numerous measures in the past to promote top level research in Rhineland-Palatinate have paid off. One example is the 2008 Research Initiative that guaranteed the state's four institutions of higher education additional research funding from 2008 to 2011 to the amount of €64 million. It contributed significantly to helping these institutes more clearly demonstrate their individual strengths and profiles, thereby making them more competitive. As a continuation of this development, the Knowledge Creates Future special fund will provide additional funding to the tune of €254 million, guaranteed until 2016.



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Apart from major pharmaceutical companies in the region such as Boehringer Ingelheim and Abbott, young and innovative biotech enterprises in and around Mainz, most of which are spin-offs from the University Medical Center of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, have also helped develop the cluster and are at its core, as Eveline Lemke, Minister of Economics in Rhineland-Palatinate, pointed out. "The great success in the Leading-Edge Cluster competition is an impressive endorsement of our support in what was a difficult initial stage as we secured laboratories, venture capital as well as R&D funding. With the €40 million of grants and national funding coupled with the commitment on the part of the companies and investors, there is a good chance that innovative and individualized active substances and vaccines in the fields of immunology and oncology could well be first developed to a marketable status in Mainz. Furthermore, with the help of qualified personnel, these products could also be manufactured right here in Mainz," commented Minister Lemke with satisfaction, while congratulating the winning cluster on its success.