

Energy and IT cluster in Halden appointed as Norwegian Centre of Expertise

At 12 noon on Thursday 11 June, it was announced that the Halden Centre of Expertise (Halden CoE) has received official status as a Norwegian Centre of Expertise (NCE). The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, *Magnhild Meltveit Kleppa*, and State Secretary in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, *Øyvind Slåke*, made the announcement at an awards ceremony at the Grand Hotel in Oslo.

Nine such centres have already been established and a further three were appointed today. The Research Council of Norway, Innovation Norway and SIVA (the Industrial Development Corporation of Norway) are responsible for selecting cluster development projects for NCE status. The NCE programme was established to boost innovation in the most expansive and internationally-oriented trade and industries in Norway. A number of criteria must be fulfilled in order to achieve NCE status, including ones related to world class cutting-edge expertise, international focus and growth potential in trade and industry.

The Halden cluster has a strong international focus, based on the cluster's long tradition of extensive international R&D and business activities. This started in 1958, through the establishment of the OECD project in Halden, which was run by the Institute for Energy Technology. Around 200 international power companies and public bodies in over 20 countries are now part of the business cluster's network. The cluster has taken part in developing the Norwegian energy market and has supplied most of the business-critical IT systems used in financial and physical power trading.

The cluster has proven international market penetration, including supplying energy exchanges to a number of countries, such as France, Germany, USA, Canada, Korea, the Philippines, Australia, Portugal/Spain, South Africa and Ireland. The cluster's innovative strength has been demonstrated through the delivery of the first energy exchange, the world's first exchange for Kyoto quotas and the world's first actor systems for market-based energy and quota trading, something that meant Halden CoE was awarded the Rosing Prize for Green IT in 2008. These activities have resulted in business growth through expansion, and international corporations establishing themselves in Halden, such as NASDAQ OMX, which is one of the world's biggest stock exchange companies, and Tieto, which is one of Scandinavia's biggest IT companies and has extensive business tied to the power sector.

"It is an extremely difficult process to qualify as an NCE. The award is a powerful recognition of the work that the Halden cluster and our industry partners have performed, and is a seal of quality from the Research Council of Norway, Innovation Norway and SIVA. The aim of the NCE - Energy and Emissions Trading, is to use significantly more of the Halden cluster's potential through closer, more coordinated cooperation between industry, research and education. We will continue to build on the solid foundation we have developed and create a world class centre of expertise," says Knut H. Johansen, CEO of Navita Systems and chairman of the steering committee at the Halden Centre of Expertise, which will now be the Norwegian Centre of Expertise - Energy and Emissions Trading.

"The potential for growth in the market area is tied to all the changes taking place in energy and climate policies, where the aim is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and to introduce more renewable energy production and efficient energy use. In order to achieve these political targets it is absolutely vital that we have effective market systems with proper investment incentives. There is enormous potential here for innovation and growth," says Dieter Hirdes, who is project manager for the new national centre of expertise.

Behind the initiative is a consortium consisting of IT and technology companies in the Halden region (including NASDAQ OMX, Nexans, Navita Systems, SAAB Microwave Systems, Tieto and moreCom), industry partners from the power sector (Statkraft, Fortum Markets, Østfold Energi, Det Norske Veritas, DnBNOR Markets, etc.) and education and research bodies in the Østfold/Follo region (IFE, Østfold University College, Østfold Research and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences). The initiative is also well supported by public bodies, including Halden municipality, which has granted money for two professorships. The centre will be led by Oslofjord Innovation - Incubator Halden, with Dieter Hirdes as the head of the centre.

In addition to aims relating to green business, the centre aims to establish more educational opportunities at master's and doctoral levels, within both IT and energy trading. A simulation and scenario centre will form the basis of many of the research activities. The project also includes plans for the construction of a new business and education centre, covering around 8000 m² near Østfold University College at Remmen. This will be a visible, concrete framework for the idea of making the Østfold region and world leading centre for the development of green energy.

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