

Day of Photonics 21 October 2016

Declaration

The 21st century will be the century of the photon – much as the 20th century was the century of the electron.

Photonics is the science and technology of the control of photons that has enabled fundamental advances in research that have enabled most advances in the understanding of the universe and that underlie most industrial processes as well as consumer products such as smart phones.

Photonics offers numerous niche market opportunities with high margin potential in biophotonics as well as in specialized research and industrial equipment where Latvia has demonstrated success.

Latvia is particularly strong in photonics with several research centers, an able cadre of specialists numbering about 700 and a vibrant cluster of SMEs generating annual sales in excess of € 130 million, employs over 1,700 with an annual growth rate of 18%.

The global growth market for photonics components and equipment is over € 500 billion. Photonics, recognized by the European Commission as a Key Enabling Technology, also represents about 10% of the EU labor force.

Latvia has enormous unrealized potential in photonics. Some products in the pipeline have market potential in the hundreds of millions. Numerous niche markets are accessible to Latvian manufacturers.

More intensive collaboration between research and production can unlock the potential for the photonics cluster in Latvia. The potential is present to achieve aggregate sales from the cluster in excess of € 500 million with high value added, high margin products in niche markets suitable to Latvia's size and strategic location. Photonics is one of the few fields where Latvia has such high growth potential in high value added markets.

Horizon 2020 and other European Union funding programs have an ex ante conditionality that funded research must be linked to the smart specialization of the region. Latvia's smart specialization strategy at present makes no mention of photonics impacting funding opportunities of potential critical importance to Latvia's future economic development.

We urge the Latvian government to reconsider the smart specialization strategy of Latvia and to more explicitly include photonics to enable research and industry to take more full advantage of the opportunity that photonics represents.

Signed – participants in Day of Photonics