

## Case Study

management skills, strategic development, technical capability and export skills.

There is also a range of programmes to support research activities, from the development of new products and services with clear marketability, to blue sky research of emerging technologies. In the area of research and development one of Northern Ireland's greatest strengths is the calibre of its universities. Invest NI actively encourages the transfer of knowledge from universities to industry and supports the commercialisation of university research. It also has close links with both the Queen's University of Belfast and the University of Ulster.

### Encouraging international trading and inward investment

Increases in Northern Ireland's wealth will depend on export growth. Exporting companies generally demonstrate higher levels of innovation, invest more in training and pay higher wages and salaries. Inward investment also plays a vital role in strengthening the Northern Ireland economy by introducing new skills, technologies and export markets and strengthening local supply chains.

#### International trading

Invest NI's Passport to Export suite of services and programmes helps businesses access world markets. It is organised into five different areas: workshops to build export skills and knowledge; market research; in-market support; market visits and graduate placement programmes.

Every year a calendar of trade missions is organised to overseas markets. These visits help both new and experienced exporters. Practical support includes briefings before the missions and mentoring in the market.

In the 2006-07 financial year alone, £290 million of new export orders were won as a result of companies taking part in Invest NI's trade activities. Invest NI-backed companies now account for nearly 90 per cent of Northern Ireland's exports.

#### Inward investment

Invest NI's inward investment efforts are concentrated on the innovation-based sectors of internationally traded services, particularly financial services, telecoms, information and communications, technology, software development, business process outsourcing and contact centre sectors.

Recent figures have shown that in the UK, Belfast is second only to London in its success in attracting foreign investment projects. Belfast's strong performance is matched by Northern Ireland's performance as a whole, with the region achieving top ranking for financial services software investment projects in the UK.

Invest NI does not influence investors in their choice of location. The decision to locate in a particular area is driven by commercial considerations. However, understandably investors prefer locations with large labour pools, excellent infrastructure and close proximity to universities or centres of excellence. This makes Belfast an attractive option for them. ►



Dr. Conor Hanley, co-founder and CEO of NovaUCD-firm BiancaMed

### BiancaMed

Invest NI recently supported Dublin based technology company, BiancaMed, to set up a research and development centre at the Queen's University, Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT).

BiancaMed's core product is a unique wireless sensor that can detect breathing and heart rate up to a distance of two metres. The company received assistance through Invest NI's Compete programme, which supports the commercialisation of research.

Speaking on behalf of BiancaMed, CEO, Dr Conor Hanley said: "BiancaMed decided to locate its R&D centre in Belfast because of the cluster of world class companies in telecommunications and health technology there, and the availability of high calibre researchers and engineers. The opportunity to work closely with world-renowned research teams in ECIT to develop the technology, and the support from Invest NI were also important factors in attracting the company to Belfast."