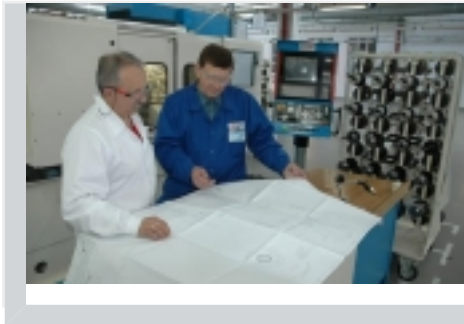


## First Polish Cluster Competence Centre.

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The year 2008 promises to be a year of clustering in Poland. Even a superficial look at the Polish market confirms that a dynamic process of clusters coming into existence has started. A cluster is essentially a group of competitors working together. So far few entrepreneurs have realized what clusters were all about. What's more, in a study carried out by CONNECTIONPOINT.pl entrepreneurs who were either entering a cluster or already operate as part of it have a problem pointing out the aims of cluster presence.

The 90% of entrepreneurs who expressed their readiness to act within the cluster framework, quoted being supported by EU funds as their main motivation. This means that Polish entrepreneurs and the boards of directors of the cluster treat building the cluster as an opportunity to have some extra money. But there are already some well organized in Poland e.g. the Aviation Valley and ICT Pomerania. It's easy to point to fresh initiatives based on best practice: NT Hills in Bielsko-Biała, Łódź Media Cluster, Kujawsko-pomorski e-cluster, as well as the new Silesian IT cluster. They support not just the process of evolving an efficient business network, but they also raise innovation among individual active companies, which increases their ability to face competition on the global market.

A mental block is described as the biggest obstacle facing the development of clusters in Poland. A lack of confidence among all cluster members could turn the entire process of clustering into setting up temporary organizations to obtain large amounts of money from RPO and POIG funds.

To face all the barriers the first Polish Cluster Competence Centre - CONNECTIONPOINT.pl was set up. Its aim is to be the main moderator of the nation-wide process of clustering in Poland. "We will perform this role providing comprehensive support for cluster managers and cluster members from the very start. We provide consulting based on long-lasting business experience of CONNECTIONPOINT.pl partners: Maciej Stachowiak and Marcin Jabłoński who developed the first and the biggest Polish ICT cluster ICT Pomerania. At the same time they are involved in their own business as entrepreneurs. Our activities go beyond consulting. After the Budapest meeting organized by the INTERCLUSTER organization we launched the European communication platform ([www.connectionpoint.eu](http://www.connectionpoint.eu)) which is dedicated to all clusters and organizations which want to establish an efficient communication network for launching cross-cluster cooperation. It means simply running an efficient communication network linking thousands of European companies" the organizers say.

The next step will be launching a nation-wide comprehensive educational campaign to inform local authorities, entrepreneurs, scientists and ordinary people about the aims and benefits of cluster activities. At the same time CONNECTIONPOINT.pl is holding talks to start the first Polish postgraduates in the area of cluster management.

"All activities must lead to an improvement on the Polish cluster scene. That's why we want to launch close cooperation with PARP, PAIiIZ, Polish and foreign embassies and all Polish and foreign organizations dealing with business development. We present our communication platform during the pre meeting organized by Paris Chambre de Commerce et Industrie in Paris on January 25th" organizer Marcin Jabłoński explains.

CONNECTIONPOINT.pl may be a new initiative, but it cooperates with the Regional Development Agency in Toruń, NT Hills cluster in Bielsko-Biała, Elbląg Municipality, Silesian IT cluster and Multimedia Cluster in Łódź. A lot of cooperation proposals keep coming from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, France, Slovakia and Hungary.

