

# Production of Medical/Healthcare Equipment



Most companies manufacturing medical devices are export-oriented; over 60 per cent of total medical equipment production is exported. Exports from this sector doubled in the period from 2003 to 2008; companies have extended their activities to the countries of the European Union as well as to the United States, South-east Asia and Russia. The demand for high value added products such as electronics and IT has steadily grown.

One of the most remarkable success stories is the Linet company, the world-class producer of healthcare beds established in 1990 on a green field and, nowadays, one of the five leading producers of hospital and social care beds in the world. Due to its top-quality products and original innovations, it belongs to the world elite. About 86 per cent of Linet production is sold in more than 70 countries worldwide. The BTL Company, the original Czech producer and distributor of medical devices and now a part of the BTL holding, is among the top Czech exporters of medical equipment. It has its own subsidiaries in 11 countries and supplies its products through a distributors' network to over 80 countries worldwide. It lies among the world's five largest manufacturers of physiotherapy equipment.

The Czech medical device industry is supported by a network of science institutes and technical universities, whose specialized departments or even whole faculties fully concentrate on research and education in the field of biomedical and clinical technology and related areas. Many foreign companies take advantage of this network and transfer their development and production facilities for healthcare equipment to the Czech Republic. The unique technological centre of the Japanese Olympus in Pířerov, a region

with a long tradition of production of medical devices, develops and produces healthcare instruments, primarily in the area of non-invasive surgery. The total investment of Olympus in the Czech Republic totals half a billion crowns.

The Czech Republic set biotechnologies among its priority areas in the long-term, the fundamental direction of research and development. There are dozens of companies involved in this segment and the first Czech biotechnology cluster, Water Treatment Alliance, was established in Brno. The growing importance of biotechnologies and top quality research is reflected, for example, by the planned construction of the International Clinical Research Centre (ICRC) in Brno, supported by the government of the CR, one of the best university hospitals in the USA and a winner of the Nobel Prize for medicine – the Mayo Clinic. The Mayo Clinic is considered to be a world leader in many areas and the partnership with St. Anne's Hospital in Brno reflects the growing international importance of Czech scientists.

Unique in Europe, ICRC should become a clinical and research education centre specializing in cardio and neurovascular diseases, disorders of internal organs, neurology and, to some extent, oncology. The ICRC Brno, together with the Bohunice university campus and the School of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacology, represent an opportunity for the Czech Republic to establish the first centre of this type not only in the CEE countries but also in Europe as a whole. The project is a good example of interconnection between medical research and applications in biotechnologies, medical equipment and the pharmaceutical industry.



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In July 2008, the CzechTrade agency supported the establishment of an export-oriented association called First Czech Health Alliance, associating a total of 54 companies from the healthcare sector involved in projecting hospitals and other healthcare facilities, the production of medical equipment and service.

The CzechTrade agency also assisted in the establishment of the CzechBio association of biotechnology companies in the CR in 2008, the first "state-of-the-art" association of biotechnology companies associating 29 biotechnology companies, renowned research institutions and Universities operating in the Czech Republic. The establishment of the association was initiated by the Institute of Biotechnology AV ČR, whose key motivation for setting up a "biotechnological platform" was the fragmentation of the biotechnology sector in the CR and an effort to facilitate communication among those potentially interested in cooperation.

The Czech Health & Safety Alliance is another association which was set up with the support of the CzechTrade agency. Czech Health & Safety Alliance is an export association of Czech enterprises and institutions involved in the research into and the development and production of special means intended for lifesaving and health protection in the event of natural disasters, industrial accidents, epidemics and consequences of the use of CBRNE means. The alliance's activity is focused on the sphere of health care, defence and safety.



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