



fDi
FREE ZONES
OF THE YEAR
2017

Global Free Zones of the Year 2017 – Winners

THE UAE'S DMCC FREE ZONE HAS ACHIEVED A HAT-TRICK, WINNING GLOBAL FREE ZONE OF THE YEAR FOR THE THIRD TIME RUNNING. COMPATRIOT JEBEL ALI FREE ZONE IS RUNNER UP FOR THE SECOND YEAR, WITH OTHER AWARD WINNERS HAILING FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD. **CATHY MULLAN** REPORTS

Winners – global



"WINNING GLOBAL FREE ZONE OF THE YEAR FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW IS A TRIBUTE TO THE MORE THAN 13,700 COMPANIES THAT MAKE UP THE DMCC FREE ZONE AND CONTRIBUTE TO OUR SUCCESS EVERY DAY, DRIVING THE NEXT WAVE OF GROWTH AND INNOVATION"

Ahmed Bin Sulayem, executive chairman, DMCC

Winner – Global

DMCC Free Zone, United Arab Emirates

Reigning fDi Global Free Zone of the Year champion DMCC has won the coveted title for the third year running. Dubai's leading centre for global trade, which was also named regional winner for the Middle East, welcomed a range of new clients in 2016, including US-based drinks giant PepsiCo, Japan-based electronics manufacturer Panasonic and US-based fashion brand Levi Strauss.

Additionally, 125 of the zone's member companies expanded by more than 15%, adding nearly 20,000 square metres of occupied space. DMCC is creating grade A office spaces to entice investors. These include the recently opened One JLT tower, with 14 floors of energy-efficient space, and the Burj2020 district, which will boast residential, commercial and retail space for a global business community.

DMCC adopted a smart city strategy in 2016 to ensure the zone is offering its community the latest technology and connectivity in amenities. DMCC was the world's first free zone to offer electronic signature capabilities to its members, and since the end of 2016, more than 8000 contracts have been delivered using e-signatures.

Investors can also use the DMCC Business Apps Manager, which offers a range of connected apps for SMEs to ensure compliance with UAE regulations. The app manager includes tools for accounting, human resources, customer relationship management and scheduling.

The DMCC Disputes Centre, which was



"TO BE RANKED NUMBER ONE OUT OF 60 FREE ZONES AROUND THE WORLD IS A HUGE ACHIEVEMENT AND AFFIRMS ONCE AGAIN THAT THE DMCC FREE ZONE PROVIDES A TRULY CONNECTED MARKETPLACE"

Gautam Sashittal, CEO, DMCC

Winners



OVERALL WINNER

DMCC, UAE

Highly Commended

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

REGIONAL WINNERS

Winner – Africa

Tanger Med Zones, Morocco

Highly Commended – Africa

Ladol Free Zone, Nigeria

Winner – Asia-Pacific

Innovation Technology Park SEZ, Kazakhstan

Highly Commended – Asia-Pacific

Dahej Special Economic Zone, India

Winner – Europe

Katowice Special Economic Zone, Poland

Highly Commended – Europe

Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Poland

Winner – Americas

Zona Franca de Bogotá, Colombia

Highly Commended – Americas

Zona Franca Santander, Colombia

Winner – Middle East

DMCC, UAE

Highly Commended – Middle East

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

SME AWARDS

Winner – SMEs – Global

DMCC, UAE

Highly Commended – SMEs – Global

Łódź Special Economic Zone, Poland

Winner – SMEs – Asia-Pacific

Innovation Technology Park SEZ, Kazakhstan

Highly Commended – SMEs – Asia-Pacific

Kinhbac City Industrial Parks, Vietnam

Winner – SMEs – Europe

Łódź Special Economic Zone, Poland

Highly Commended – SMEs – Europe

Kaunas Free Economic Zone, Lithuania

Winner – SMEs – Americas

Zona Franca Romana, Dominican Republic

Highly Commended – SMEs – Americas

ZIP Porvenir, Honduras

Winner – SMEs – Middle East

DMCC, UAE

Highly Commended – SMEs – Middle East

Masdar City Free Zone, UAE

LARGE TENANTS AWARDS

Winner – Large Tenants – Global

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Global

Alabuga Special Economic Zone, Russia

Winner – Large Tenants – Africa

Ladol Free Zone, Nigeria

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Africa

Tanger Med Zones, Morocco

Winner – Large Tenants – Asia-Pacific

Gwangyang Bay Area FEZ, South Korea

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Asia-Pacific

Kinhbac City Industrial Parks, Vietnam

Winner – Large Tenants – Europe

Alabuga SEZ, Russia

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Europe

Free Zone Pirot, Serbia

Winner – Large Tenants – Americas

Manaus Free Zone, Brazil

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Americas

Ceará Free Trade Zone, Brazil

Winner – Large Tenants – Middle East

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

Highly commended – Large Tenants – Middle East

Hamriyah Free Zone, UAE

SPECIALISMS AWARDS

Aerospace Aegean Free Zone, Turkey

Financial and Professional Services Birmingham Enterprise Zone, UK

Logistics Freeport of Ventspils, Latvia

IT Innovation Technology Park SEZ, Kazakhstan

BPO Zona Franca de Bogota, Colombia

Automotive Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain

Chemicals Gwangyang Bay Area Free Economic Zone, South Korea

Medical Sector PIISA industrial Park, Dominican Republic

Oil and Gas Industry Oil & Gas Free Zone, Onne, Nigeria

R&D Tubitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone, Turkey

Metals SEZ Titanium Valley, Russia

Renewable Energy Masdar City Free Zone, UAE

Shipbuilding Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Poland

Knowledge Industries Yachay Free Zone, Ecuador

Plastics Klaipeda FEZ, Lithuania

Textiles Katunayake Export Processing Zone, Sri Lanka

EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARDS

Ones to watch Togliatti Industrial Zone, Russia

ZED; Mariel, Cuba; Lindora Park Free Zone, Cuba

Quick launch award Klaipeda FEZ, Lithuania

Reboot award Quindio Free Trade Zone, Colombia

expanded in the past year, offers pro bono legal services to member companies, as well as direct access via video link to the Dubai International Finance Centre small claims tribunal hearings. Investors have access to employment law training at subsidised rates, all of which contributed to the zone scooping the Global SME award.

Highly Commended

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

Highly commended for the Middle East region for the second year running, Jebel Ali Free Zone has also been highly commended globally in 2017. The zone boasted an annual growth rate of 7% in the five years to 2016, with 126 companies expanding in 2016 alone. Several new guidelines for investing companies

were introduced in 2016, such as allowing companies to re-domicile in the zone and operate there without having to establish a subsidiary.

A business centre was established in August 2016, exclusively to support SMEs. It boasts more than 1000 workstations in fully furnished offices, which share secretarial and office services and state-of-the-art meeting room facilities. Infrastructure developments abound, and a six-lane, two-way bridge is under construction to connect the north and south areas and ease traffic congestion on Dubai's Logistics Corridor. Plans are in place to build a multi-storey warehouse space to meet increased demand for Jebel Ali's facilities and for staff accommodation facilities, including more than 3500 rooms.

Winners – regional



Winner – Africa

Tanger Med Zones, Morocco

Tanger Med Zones has been named as Africa's Free Zone of the Year for the third year running. Located on the Strait of Gibraltar, investors are attracted to Tanger by the access to shipping routes through the strait, which is just 14 kilometres from Europe. Plans are in place to open a secondary zone in Ain Dailla – Tangier, which will boast 1200 hectares and have an industrial focus to complement the zone's existing industrial and logistics activities. In the last year, the

zone has expanded its technology services for investors, with tools such as the Tanger Med Zones virtual tour and a Gate Access mobile app that streamlines the flow of goods in and out of the zone. The zone also is active in promotion and has a presence at international fairs and exhibits to showcase its benefits to potential investors.

Highly Commended – Africa

Ladol Free Zone, Nigeria

Located on an island in the south-western Nigerian city of Lagos, Ladol Free Zone saw its occupied space increase by more than 7% between 2015 and 2016, during which time the number of people employed by companies there jumped by more than 62%. Ladol's goals include the promotion of sustainable business practices and the addition of \$12,000bn to the economy by 2030. It also aims to reduce business costs for multinational companies wishing to invest in Nigeria and the west Africa region.

The zone is home to Africa's largest shipyard, while also boasting the heaviest crane capacity in the region. An office for the Nigerian Export Processing Zone Authority is currently under construction, which will offer businesses better access to the authority and encourage investment from companies interested in exporting goods. Ladol has begun to develop an onsite 50-megawatt (MW) gas power plant, with the first 24MW coming online in the first phase. This will provide a reliable power source to investors, to the benefit of the west Africa region.

Winner – Asia-Pacific

Innovation Technology Park Special Economic Zone, Kazakhstan

Home to more than 160 companies in 2016 (a 3.8% increase on 2015), Innovation Technology Park SEZ is located just 28 kilometres from Almaty in southern Kazakhstan. Investors can take advantage of preferential tax rates, including 0% property, corporate income, social and land taxes. The zone's focus is on innovative companies, start-ups and SMEs in particular, which account for 100% of its tenants.

Plans are in place for the construction of a joint laboratory and research centre between Kazakh National Research Technical University and Pennsylvania State University. In the past year, several companies have expanded, including KT Cloud Lab, which took another hectare of land for the construction of a data centre. Investors enjoy good physical connectivity, with Almaty

International Airport and Almaty railway station located close by. Almaty railway station offers direct links to both China and Russia, affording investors the opportunity to import and export goods there.

Highly Commended – Asia-Pacific

Dahej Special Economic Zone, India

Dahej SEZ, situated on India's western coast, has access to rail, national highways, ports and an airport. With nearly 90 tenants, the zone also boasts a well-established internal infrastructure, including water and gas supplies and security services.

Infrastructure developments in the zone were ongoing in 2016, with the widening of major roads and the establishment of a parking area. Further developments are in the planning stages, including an approach road to the zone's port area. Dahej SEZ also revamped its website in 2016 to make it more user-friendly, with information on services provided by the zone, and links to trade bodies, such as the Indian Trade Portal and Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation.

Winner – Europe

Katowice Special Economic Zone, Poland

More than 63,000 people work in Katowice SEZ, which is located about 80 kilometres west of Kraków in southern Poland. The zone witnessed an increase of more than 16% in occupied space from 2015 to 2016, when 27 new permits for investment projects were issued. It expanded its offer by 269 hectares in this time, the majority of which was located in smaller cities and designed to attract SMEs.

Katowice SEZ offers a business accelerator programme, Kssenon, which includes the construction of modular industrial halls for SMEs and start-ups to rent. This is one of several examples of such projects throughout the zone, which resulted in an increase of nearly 13% in SME tenants between 2015 and 2016. The zone promotes itself as an investment destination by attending events such as the Polish-Chinese conference in Opole and the International Economic Forum in Tychy.

Highly Commended – Europe

Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Poland

Nearly 120 companies operate out of Pomeranian SEZ on northern Poland's coast between Gdynia and Gdansk, including Japan-based Bridgestone,

Methodology

fDi's Global Free Zones of the Year Awards 2017 acknowledge the most promising free zones across the world. For this year's awards, fDi invited free zones, government entities and investment promotion bodies to complete a short survey detailing their zone's attractiveness, facilities and incentives offered to investors. In total, 66 entries were received from free zones across the world.

A panel of judges from fDi was appointed and studied each location. Judges nominated their winning and runner-up locations in each region, as well as their top zones for SME and Large Tenant categories. In addition, some locations which were particularly outstanding have been acknowledged with honourable mentions and bespoke awards.

Weightings for results

	WEIGHTING
% increase in occupied space 2015-16	10
Number of SMEs 2016	1.25
% increase in SMEs 2015-26	2.5
Nominal increase in SMEs 2015-16	2.5
Number of large tenants 2016	1.25
% increase in large tenants 2015-16	2.5
Nominal increase in large tenants 2015-16	2.5
Total number of employees 2016	2.5
% increase in number of employees 2015-16	5
Nominal increase in employees 2015-16	5
Total scores of judges' results	65

Singapore-based Flextronics and France-based Lafarge Cement. Areas within the zone are located on the New Silk Road, a Chinese initiative designed to promote trade between China and Europe. Officials in the zone created an international economic relations department, tasked with organising economic missions to support the import and export of Polish goods. Besides investment areas, the zone offers office space and laboratories, and provides services to support the development of modern technologies. In 2016, Pomeranian SEZ collaborated with Free Economic Zone Brest in Belarus to attract companies in hi-tech sectors. Together, the zones worked on improving the transfer of knowledge between universities and businesses.

Winner – Americas

Zona Franca de Bogotá, Colombia

More than one-quarter of the companies in Colombia's Zona Franca de Bogotá are multinational corporations, and include major foreign investors such as Germany-based logistics company DHL, UK-based telecoms giant BT and Spain-based communications company ▶

"WORKING IN STRONG ALLIANCE WITH STAKEHOLDERS FROM LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, REZEKNE SEZ HAS BROUGHT UP A GENERATION OF FORWARD-THINKING PEOPLE AND BECOME A PLACE THAT DEVELOPS IN STEP WITH TIME"

Sandra Ezmale, CEO, Rezekne SEZ

Telefónica. The zone offers an internal transportation network, mobility programmes and amenities, such as a medical centre, dentist practice, beauty salon and convenience store to its investors' 30,000 employees. Investing companies can also use a local recruitment company to help them to effectively staff the operation. Zona Franca de Bogotá is in the process of achieving certification ISO28001, a standard in supply chain management which will enable its certification as an authorised economic operator with Colombian customs.

Highly Commended – Americas

Zona Franca Santander, Colombia

Fifteen companies were new to outsourcing and offshoring park Zona Franca Santander in 2016, making a total of 50 by the year's end, and representing growth of 16% in tenants between 2015 and 2016. The year also saw the completion of the design and structuring phase of the Zenith Tower project, which will provide 6689 square metres of rentable area when it is completed and enable the zone to meet its expansion targets. Companies can access the new employment information network, an online digital platform that assists with human resources and recruitment and is free to investors.

Winner – Middle East

DMCC, UAE (See Global award)

Highly Commended – Middle East

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE (See Global award)

Winners – SMEs



Winner – SMEs – Global

DMCC, UAE

In 2016, DMCC was home to nearly 9500 SMEs, which represented more than two-thirds of the total number of companies – an increase of nearly 15% since 2015. During 2016, DMCC added nearly 2323 square metres of co-working space to its offering of serviced office and desk space for SMEs. There are now 13 such centres across the zone, totalling more than 13,935 square metres in co-working space.

Highly Commended – SMEs – Global

Łódź Special Economic Zone, Poland

Łódź SEZ's Startup Spark programme gives chosen companies the opportunity to receive financial support and business

mentorship from dedicated project managers and mentors. Eight companies were chosen for the programme when it started in January 2017, and this will increase to 25. An additional SME-focused programme offers training vouchers for smaller companies, which refund 80% of the training costs.

Winner – SMEs – Asia-Pacific

Innovation Technology Park Special Economic Zone, Kazakhstan

All the companies in Innovation Technology Park SEZ are SMEs, testament to the zone's ability to nurture such firms. The Startup Kazakhstan programme was launched in 2016 to attract and support SMEs and start-up businesses from the country and the wider Commonwealth of Independent States region. Companies successful in the programme will become members of the zone, with the aim of having 30 hi-tech and innovative SMEs exporting more than half of their goods.

Highly Commended – SMEs – Asia-Pacific

Kinhbác City Industrial Parks, Vietnam

Kinhbác City Industrial Parks in northern Vietnam were home to 36 SME companies at the end of 2016. The parks focus on providing office space for SMEs, both for sale and rental, enabling them to become operational quickly and with less risk.

Winner – SMEs – Europe

Łódź Special Economic Zone, Poland (see Global SME award)

Highly Commended – SMEs – Europe

Kaunas Free Economic Zone, Lithuania

As of the end of 2016, more than 85% of the companies in Kaunas Free Economic Zone fell in the SME category. In 2017, the zone is focusing on the provision of additional office space to cater for such clients, offering smaller companies the chance to rent office space rather than face the cost of building their own. Changes to the terms of investment mean incentives that were previously available only to larger investors are now also available to SME companies.

Winner – SMEs – Americas

Zona Franca Romana, Dominican Republic

Located close to the Dominican Republic's southern coast, Zona Franca Romana is currently in the middle of a scheme to construct three state-of-the- ▶

art office buildings for SMEs and start-ups. One of the buildings, which will each offer 74-square-metre modules, was completed in 2016, with plans for the construction of the other two under way.

Highly Commended – SMEs – Americas

ZIP Porvenir, Honduras

Tenants occupy more than 46,451 square metres of space in ZIP Porvenir free zone, which lies 35 kilometres east of San Pedro Sula. The zone is actively converting larger industrial units to suit smaller SME companies, the first phase of which was completed in 2016. The second phase will continue into 2018, to provide spaces of between 372 and 743 square metres for SMEs and start-ups.

Winner – SMEs – Middle East

DMCC, UAE (see Global SME award)

Highly Commended – SMEs – Middle East

Masdar City Free Zone, UAE

Masdar City Free Zone, close to Abu Dhabi airport, welcomed 112 new SMEs in 2016. By the end of the year, 435 SMEs were based there, up almost 35% from 2015. The zone aims to become a leading location for SMEs and start-ups, with a range of benefits that include lower registration and licence fees, and lower rates for hot-desk rental.

Winners – Large Tenants



Winner – Large Tenants – Global

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

Nearly 1400 large tenants are resident in Jebel Ali Free Zone, part of Dubai in the UAE. In 2016, the zone established 110 units of pre-built warehouse and office spaces, meeting needs for storage and light industrial units. An additional multi-storey warehouse is in the planning stage. A five-storey car storage facility is also under development to bolster the growing automobile industry, which will have capacity to store 12,000 cars.

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Global

Alabuga Special Economic Zone, Russia

More than three-quarters of the companies located in Alabuga SEZ are large tenants. A second park, Alabuga-2 Petrochemistry, has been launched, and

the zone also offers build-to-suit options for industrial investors whereby space is rented and constructed by a company according to its needs. In 2016, the zone also bought in numerous infrastructure facilities, including heating, water and a four-star hotel.

Winner – Large Tenants – Africa

Ladol Free Zone, Nigeria

Ladol Free Zone, which describes itself as “the largest high-value industrial free zone in west Africa”, is home to major multinational tenants. South Korea-based Samsung Heavy Industries operates a floating production storage and offloading vessel at the zone, which is currently expanding its primary access channel to accommodate the largest ships in the world. This is set to increase investment opportunities in the zone.



Nigeria's Ladol Free Zone has attracted international players

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Africa

Tanger Med Zones, Morocco

Two new parks are planned at Tanger Med Zones. The first, a 1200-hectare park, Ain Daillia – Tangier, is composed of an industrial area focused on automotive, electronics and renewable energy; a textile industrial area, and a logistics hub. The second, Tetouan Shore Zone, includes Tanger Automotive City as well as two hectares reserved for a logistics platform.

Winner – Large Tenants – Asia-Pacific

Gwangyang Bay Area Free Economic Zone, South Korea

Nestled on the southern coast of South Korea, Gwangyang Bay Area Free Economic Zone offers tax incentives to manufacturing companies, including a five-year exemption for investments over \$10m. A new industrial zone, Sepoong General Industrial Complex, has been developed to attract foreign investors in particular, offering leases at competitive prices.

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Asia-Pacific

Kinhbac City Industrial Parks, Vietnam

Almost 200 large tenants call Kinhbac City Industrial Parks home, including big names such as Taiwan-based Foxconn, South Korea-based LG Display and Japan-based Canon. The parks have their own customs offices and warehouses, ideal for larger companies hoping to export their goods. The Trang Due-Hai Phong industrial park, part of ▶



Aegean Free Zone is the only zone in the world located in a space camp

Kinhbác City, is located on the sole economic belt between Vietnam and China, making trade with China easier.

Winner – Large Tenants – Europe

Alabuga Special Economic Zone, Russia (See Global Large Tenants award)

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Europe

Free Zone Pirot, Serbia

Free Zone Pirot in Serbia counts toymaker Irely and tyre manufacturer Tigar Tyres among its tenants. The zone attracts manufacturers wishing to export their goods, offering several support programmes for exporting. A logistics centre was established in 2016, with an intermodal terminal and warehousing and support facilities that allow haulers to transit goods from road to railway.

Winner – Large Tenants – Americas

Manaus Free Zone, Brazil

Located in the city of Manaus, at the confluence of the Negro and Amazon rivers, Manaus Free Zone boasts several multinational companies including South Korea-based Samsung, US-based Procter & Gamble and Japan-based Panasonic. The zone is planning to expand its industrial district, including improvements to the district's internal infrastructure.

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Americas

Ceará Free Trade Zone, Brazil

All 6500 employees at Ceará Free Trade Zone are employed by large industrial tenants, attracted by the facilities on offer. Investors have access to a modern seaport with capability to receive post-Panamax vessels; 6-kilometre long conveyor belts to transport iron ore and coal between the port and the zone; and infrastructure that includes highways, a natural gas distribution network and a water supply.

Winner – Large Tenants – Middle East

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE (See Global Large Tenants award)

Highly Commended – Large Tenants – Middle East

Hamriyah Free Zone, UAE

Located in Sharjah, eastern UAE, Hamriyah Free Zone counts more than 1500 large tenants among its resident companies. It is expanding the Logistics Village, which includes the construction of a double highway connecting the zone to the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road, a major 140-kilometre route

"WE ARE PROUD TO RECEIVE THESE AWARDS IN RECOGNITION OF OUR ACADEMIC COLLABORATION, WHICH SHOW THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE WITH STRONG STRATEGY"

Álvaro Muñoz Roldán, CEO, Zona Franca de Occidente

that connects the country's major cities. Plans are also in place to expand Hamriyah Port, and establish a container terminal and depot to boost its logistics capabilities and attract companies wishing to import and export goods.

Winners – Specialism Awards



Aerospace

Aegean Free Zone, Turkey

Aegean Free Zone, located on Turkey's Mediterranean coast on the outskirts of Izmir, is the only free zone in the world to boast a space camp, according to its awards submission. There are only three such camps across the globe. The zone offers investors state-of-the-art infrastructure and 0% corporate tax for manufacturing activities.

Financial and Professional Services

Birmingham Enterprise Zone, UK

Birmingham Enterprise Zone's EZ Relocations service, which provides an aftercare relocation service to investors, supported a recent investment from banking giant HSBC. The company relocated its UK headquarters from London to the zone, which is located in the city centre and is close to key clients and infrastructure. More than 90% of the UK market will be easily accessible once the High Speed 2 rail project is completed.

Logistics

Freeport of Ventspils, Latvia

The Freeport of Ventspils is home to logistics companies, including Belgium-based Noord Natie Ventspils Terminals and Sweden-based Stena Line, the latter having increased ferry traffic between the port and Sweden from eight to 12 times weekly, resulting in the employment of an additional ferry. Plans are in place to reconstruct the port's breakwaters, and to construct or rebuild access roads to the port and industrial territories. ▶

Winners – Editor's
Choice Awards



Ones to Watch

Togliatti Industrial Zone in south-west Russia has been named in this year's Ones to Watch category, having made impressive strides between 2015 and 2016. Development at the zone started at the beginning of 2015, and it is now home to 18 tenants. Collectively, these companies employed 2500 people at the end of 2016, an increase of nearly 9% from 2015. More than 162 hectares of land has been developed, fully equipped with necessary infrastructure, and in 2017 customs infrastructure will be added to the zone, allowing permanent customs control on the whole territory.

ZED Mariel in Cuba has seen huge rates of growth between 2015 and 2016. Occupied space in the zone increased 30%, SME tenant numbers by nearly 80%, large tenants by 300% (albeit from a low base) and the number of employees in the zone

increased nearly 115%, to just over 4000. Investors can enjoy a single window system, which coordinates the registration and licensing of new companies.

A first-time winner in fDI's Global Free Zones of the Year, **Lindora Park Free Zone** in Costa Rica boasts 11 Fortune500 companies within a radius of just over three kilometres. The zone is located close to the capital, San José, and offers investors flexible office rental spaces, which is particularly attractive to start-up companies.

Quick Launch Award

Investors wishing to establish an operation in Lithuania's **Klaipeda FEZ** can use the zone's Fast Factory Launch scheme. The scheme offers companies sites complete with necessary construction permits, and the ability to make minor edits to customise the site to an investor's needs. Outside of

Klaipeda, construction permits in Lithuania can take anywhere up to six months. Additionally, the Flexstart programme aims to allow investors to start operations in less than one month, with customisable pre-built manufacturing facilities. New offices are currently under construction to be offered to SMEs as part of the programme.

Reboot Award

Colombia's **Quindio Free Trade Zone** has won the reboot award thanks to its efforts to regenerate the zone and attract foreign investment, following a prolonged period of stagnation. As it has agreements with counterparts in other countries, Quindio Free Trade Zone's investors can enjoy the benefits of those zones. Quindio also works closely with local universities to develop specific and tailored training programmes to offer investors access to quality staff.

IT

Innovation Technology Park SEZ, Kazakhstan

A specialist IT district is planned for the Innovation Technology Park SEZ, which aims to host more than 60 IT companies in the smart industry, smart city and financial technology areas. Approximately 17,000 square metres of office space will be leasable in the first stage. Recent efforts have been made with the UK's Department of International Trade to create a laboratory production cluster in the zone.

BPO

Zona Franca de Bogotá, Colombia

A specialist outsourcing cluster has been developed at Zona Franca de Bogotá, the ZF Towers Technology and Services Park which is home to 32 outsourcing companies. The zone offers investors high connectivity, with 15 broadband operators on site and data centres complete with tier-three certification in design and construction. A bilingualism programme is in place to offer companies access to qualified staff.

Automotive

Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain

Located on Spain's north-western coast, Zona Franca de Vigo has cultured an automotive cluster that includes more than 130 auxiliary companies and employs more than 30,000 people. In the

two years to 2017, the zone has constructed two warehouses for automotive companies, adding 56,400 square metres to the available industrial space.

Chemicals

Gwangyang Bay Area Free Economic Zone, South Korea

Gwangyang Bay Area Free Economic Zone is known for its ability to attract chemicals companies, with a client list including France-based Air Liquide and Germany-based BASF. Foreign investors can access the recently developed Sepoong General Industrial Complex, which offers competitive lease rates.

Medical Sector

PIISA Industrial Park, Dominican Republic

Just 23 kilometres from the Dominican Republic capital Santo Domingo, PIISA Industrial Park offers the highest number of medical components companies in the country, with tenants including US-based AccuMed, US-based Baxter and Sweden-based Getinge. The zone runs a medical device training programme in collaboration with local education institutions, to educate students on the importance of the sector to the local economy.

Oil and Gas

Oil & Gas Free Zone, Onne, Nigeria

The Oil & Gas Free Zone in Onne on southern Nigeria's coast offers investors

in the sector a strategic location on the Niger Delta, which has one of the world's largest reserves of oil and gas. Companies enjoy a close proximity to deep offshore and ultra-deep offshore oil-producing locations, and the benefits of investing are regularly promoted in the zone's presence at oil and gas conferences and exhibitions.

R&D

Tubitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone, Turkey

Tubitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone was established 65 kilometres to the east of Istanbul in 1999 in a bid to improve opportunities for hi-tech companies in Turkey. The zone is focused on providing a research environment with hi-tech production capabilities. Investors enjoy 0% income tax on revenues from software R&D, while salaries for R&D personnel are exempt from all taxes.

Metals

SEZ Titanium Valley, Russia

Located 170 kilometres north of Yekaterinburg, SEZ Titanium Valley is home to a titanium cluster that encompasses all elements of the metalworking process, from forging to machining. The wealth of experience on offer gives potential investors many opportunities for collaboration, while enjoying a corporation tax rate of just 2%.

Renewable Energy

Masdar City Free Zone, UAE

Masdar City Free Zone is dedicated to the progression of renewable energies and sustainable technologies. Its Catalyst programme is the first technology start-up accelerator in the Middle East to focus exclusively on clean technology and sustainability, and aims to nurture companies and 'take innovation out of the laboratory'. A new R&D centre is planned, to help new innovations from Masdar Institute come to fruition.

Shipbuilding

Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Poland

Given the zone's location by the sea, Pomeranian SEZ's priority is to rebuild the Polish shipbuilding industry. To this end, the zone recently acquired Gdansk shipyard and preparations are under way to welcome investors. The first facility to allow the production and assembly of large-sized steel structures will be established by 2019, and the investment amount is expected to exceed \$77m. A marine technology foundation has also

been established to provide support for the research and development of marine technologies.

Knowledge Industries

Yachay Free Zone, Ecuador

Yachay Free Zone is located in northern Ecuador's Imbabura province and is home to some big names in the knowledge sector, including IBM and Microsoft. The zone is located in the first planned city in the country, the City of Knowledge Yachay, which was created to further the development of research, science and technological applications.

Plastics

Klaipeda FEZ, Lithuania

Nearly 120 companies are based in Klaipeda FEZ, on western Lithuania's coast, including Thailand-based PET pellet manufacturer Indorama (the largest globally) and NEO Group, the second largest pellet manufacturer in Europe. In 2016, NEO Group announced that it was planning to expand its operations to 460,000 tonnes per annum, given the booming PET production ecosystem at the zone.

"I AM DELIGHTED THAT THREE FREE ZONES IN MACEDONIA HAVE ALL WON BESPOKE AWARD FOR EXPANSIONS. THIS IS AN EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF MACEDONIA AND ITS ENTIRE ECONOMIC TEAM THAT WORK TIRELESSLY TO ATTRACT FDI"

Aleksandar Mladenovski, CEO, Technological Industrial Development Zones: Kicevo, Prilep and Skopje

Textiles

Katunayake Export Processing Zone, Sri Lanka

In the shadows of Bandaranaike International Airport, just 33 kilometres north of Sri Lanka's largest city Colombo, Katunayake Export Processing Zone boasts a reliable water supply and waste water treatment facility – necessary facilities for textile manufacturing. Such infrastructure has attracted a host of companies, including glove manufacturer ATG Ceylon and apparel company Brandix. ▶



FTZ Ceará. The perfect choice for your investment in Brazil.



NEW IDEAS, NEW ACHIEVEMENTS.

- Created in 2013
- Total area of 6.182,4 hectares
- An investment of U\$5.6 billions
- Home of Pecém Steel Mill, Praxair Gases Inc., Phoenix Inc. and Vale S.A.

- Next tenants: Ponte Nova Thermolectric and Granite and Ornamental Stone Companies
- Tax incentives for new tenants
- The best infrastructure in Brazil with a modern seaport
- Governmental partnership



Bespoke Awards



Innovation Ecosystem

Yachay Free Zone, Ecuador
Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain

Sustainability Efforts

Zona Franca Santander, Colombia
Manaus Free Zone, Brazil
Dahej SEZ, India

R&D Incentives

Tubitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone, Turkey
Masdar City Free Zone, UAE
Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain

Academic Collaboration

Starachowice SEZ, Poland
Zona Franca de Occidente, Colombia

Employee Amenities

MindspaceMadhapur, India

Expansions

Klaipeda FEZ, Lithuania
Rezekne SEZ, Latvia
Technological Industrial Development Zones – Kicevo
Technological Industrial Development Zones – Prilep
Technological Industrial Development Zones – Skopje
Panama Pacifico Special Economic Area, Panama

Manaus Free Zone, Brazil
Masdar City Free Zone, UAE
Aegean Free Zone, Turkey
Free Zone Subotica, Serbia
Free Zone Smederevo, Serbia
Free Zone Pirot, Serbia
Lipetsk SEZ, Russia
Pomeranian SEZ, Poland
Łódź SEZ, Poland
Katowice Free Zone, Poland
Alabuga SEZ, Russia

Facilities upgrades

Katowice SEZ, Poland
Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE
DMCC, UAE
Masdar City Free Zone, UAE

Infrastructure Upgrades

Tanger Med Zones, Morocco
Freeport of Ventspils, Latvia
Rezekne SEZ, Latvia
Kaunas FEZ, Lithuania
Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain
Ceará Free Trade Zone, Brazil
Sohar Free Zone, Oman
Hamriyah Free Zone, UAE

Start-up Support

Innovation Technology Park SEZ, Kazakhstan
Industrial Zone of Pleternica, Croatia
Łódź SEZ, Poland
Free Zone Pirot, Serbia
Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain
Birmingham Enterprise Zone, UK
Hamriyah Free Zone, UAE
Masdar City Free Zone, UAE
Industrial Zone of Pleternica, Croatia
Tubitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone, Turkey

New Investments

Manaus Free Zone, Brazil
Kaunas FEZ, Lithuania
SEZ Titanium Valley, Russia
Free Zone Šabac, Serbia

Digitalisation

Dahej SEZ, India

Recruitment Assistance

Zona Franca Santander, Colombia

Aftercare Services

Pomeranian SEZ, Poland
Birmingham Enterprise Zone, UK

Language Programme

Zona Franca de Bogota, Colombia
Zona Franca Santander, Colombia

China Strategy

Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Poland
Aqaba International Industrial Estate, Jordan

Cluster Development

Katowice SEZ, Poland
Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain

Energy Efficiency

Panama Pacifico Special Economic Area, Panama
Klaipeda FEZ, Lithuania

Export Support

Mauritius Freeport, Mauritius
Free Zone Pirot, Serbia

SME Internationalisation

Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain

Crossborder Collaboration

Freeport of Ventspils, Latvia
Pomeranian SEZ, Poland

Increased Connectivity

Kaunas FEZ, Lithuania

Contribution to National Economy

Klaipeda FEZ, Lithuania
Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

Access to Finance

Pomeranian SEZ, Poland

Charitable Efforts

Inhdelva EPZ, Honduras

Marketing Assistance

Aqaba International Industrial Estate, Jordan

Energy Independence

Sohar Free Zone, Oman

Legal Support

DMCC, UAE

Smart City Strategy

DMCC, UAE

Red Tape Reduction

DMCC, UAE

Hamriyah Free Zone, UAE

Set-up Cost Reduction

RAK Economic Zone, UAE

Risk Management

Inhdelva EPZ, Honduras

Safety Measures

Panama Pacifico Special Economic Area, Panama

Encouraging IT Innovation

Innovation Technology Park SEZ, Kazakhstan

MindspaceMadhapur, India

Diversification Efforts

ZIP Porvenir, Honduras

Thought Leadership

DMCC, UAE

Tax Reforms

Lipetsk SEZ, Russia
Aegean Free Zone, Turkey
Parque Central Zone Franca, Colombia

Education and Training

■ **Ladol Free Zone** in Nigeria understands the importance of qualified and well-trained staff for investing companies. The zone's Upskilling Academy is due to break ground in 2017, which will include the provision of courses to local students, supported by private companies and non-governmental organisations, and will mean tenants can access well-trained staff.

■ Winner of the Europe region in this year's awards, **Katowice SEZ** in Poland, engages closely with local schools and colleges. Its Expedition for the Future is conducted in the town of Tychy and targets lower and upper secondary students. In 2016, 29 students took part in a

dual study project between investors in the zone and the Silesian University of Technology.

■ **Starachowice SEZ**, west of Lublin in Poland, leads an initiative called the Regional Cluster of Vocational Education, which aims to work closely with education institutions in the region to meet companies' needs. Members of the initiative straddle education, business and politics, and include representatives of regional government.

■ For the third year in a row, Colombia's **Zona Franca Santander** has been recognised for its efforts in education and training. Three on-site universities are located in the park, while more than 200 employees have

been given over 1200 hours of training.

■ The bilingualism programme on offer at **Zona Franca de Bogotá** in Colombia trains about 500 people annually, and offers BPO investors a large pool of talented and trained workers. An alliance exists with six universities, offering 35 training programmes to provide suitable staff for investors.

■ As part of its commitment to corporate responsibility, **PIISA Industrial Park** in the Dominican Republic participates in the PIISA-IPHA Technology Fair, a joint programme displaying innovative and creative projects from students at the Polytechnic Institute of Haina.

■ Staff at **Panama Pacifico Special Economic Area** on the shores of ▶

"ZONA FRANCA ROMANA IS PROUD AND HONORED TO BE ONCE AGAIN ACKNOWLEDGED. OUR GOAL IS TO CONTINUE AS ONE OF THE LEADING FREE ZONES OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, AND THE AMERICAS"

Eduardo Martinez Lima, president,
Zona Franca Romana

Panama Bay are trained on site by the National Institute of Professional Training for Human Development, including soft skills training development.

■ Investors in Panama's **Panapark Free Zone** will soon be able to access training facilities for the education and training of personnel on site, with the creation of the Higher Technical Specialised Institute of Panama.

Expansions

■ **Klaipeda FEZ, Lithuania** – NEO Group is increasing PET production in the zone by 160,000 tonnes annually, and General Electric is constructing another facility and increasing engineering staff by 50%.

■ **Rezekne SEZ, Latvia** – NewFuels is investing €11.3m to increase pellet production by 94% and increasing staff numbers by 84%.

■ **Technological Industrial Development Zones – Kicevo, Macedonia** – Key Safety Systems' second phase of investment will see staff increase from its current level of 1000 to 3000.

■ **Technological Industrial Development Zones – Prilep, Macedonia** – Gentherm will invest more than \$25m to increase staff numbers to over 2000.

■ **Technological Industrial Development Zones – Skopje, Macedonia** – Van Hool invested in a new 3902-square-metre facility that will employ an additional 450 people.

■ **Panama Pacifico Special Economic Area, Panama** – Grainger added a supply chain unit and an additional 2000 square metres to its footprint, while BASF expanded its footprint by 1000 square metres in a new regional distribution centre.

■ **Manaus Free Zone, Brazil** – GBR Components is investing more than \$41m to expand its facility for the production of circuit boards.

■ **Masdar City Free Zone, UAE** – Honeywell is adding a regional assembly centre in the zone, which will employ more than 200 people.

■ **Aegean Free Zone, Turkey** – Hugo Boss is extending its footprint in the zone with the construction of a new

building comprising more than 10,000 square metres.

■ **Free Zone Subotica, Serbia** – Siemens is expanding its presence in the zone to 46,000 square metres.

■ **Free Zone Smederevo, Serbia** – Kaizen is moving from premises currently leased and constructing its own 14,000- to 18,000-square-metre facility.

■ **Free Zone Pirot, Serbia** – Tigar Tyres is investing €27m in the first phase of a logistics project and construction of a 3300-square-metre warehouse.

■ **Lipetsk SEZ, Russia** – Bekaert is moving production from China to Lipetsk, thus doubling the company's output of steel cords at the zone.

■ **Pomeranian SEZ, Poland** – Flextronics is investing more than \$142m to retain over 3200 jobs and create an additional 50.

■ **Lodz SEZ, Poland** – Infosys is expanding to take on an extra 440 employees and offer new services.

■ **Katowice SEZ, Poland** – General Motors is investing \$100m in a new project in Gliwice.

■ **Alabuga SEZ, Russia** – Hayat Kimya is investing \$100m in the addition of a new production line, doubling capacity.

Facilities Upgrades

■ **Katowice Special Economic Zone** in Poland has seen many upgrades in facilities on offer to investors in 2016. An old warehouse facility in Tychy was modernised and developed into a modern office facility, to include an art gallery, fitness area and conference spaces for rent. An additional project was undertaken in Sosnowiec, creating almost 1000 square metres in office rental space.

■ The Jafza One complex at **Jebel Ali Free Zone** was completed in 2016, offering an additional 100,000 square metres of office space. Furthermore, 100 units of pre-built warehouse and office space were added to meet the requirement for high-quality storage and warehousing units.

■ Global Free Zone of the Year **DMCC** added nearly 2323 square metres of serviced office and desk space in 2016, increasing co-working space for SME companies to more than 13,935 square metres. One JLT, a grade-A office development, was opened in 2015, while the Burj 2020 District will see the addition of a mixed-use district to the zone.

■ A new R&D centre is planned at **Masdar City Free Zone**, while additional office space and residential and retail facilities are being added. New family facilities were added in 2016, including an open-air cinema and a playground.

Infrastructure Upgrades

■ A new zone is planned for **Tanger Med Zones** in Morocco measuring 1200 hectares. Ain Daillia – Tangier will comprise an industrial park, a textiles zone dedicated to exports, a commercial free-trade zone and a logistics hub. A new gate was added to the zone for the sole use of logistics trucks, simplifying the import and export of goods for investors.

■ In 2016, \$5.4m was spent on infrastructure developments in Latvia's **Freeport of Ventspils**. Plans are in place to build and reconstruct access roads in the port and industrial areas, while also installing fibre optic capabilities throughout the territory.

■ By 2018, roads and streets in **Rezekne SEZ** in eastern Latvia will be rebuilt to provide access to utilities for all investing companies. In addition, there have been cultural additions to the zone, including the country's first acoustic concert hall.

■ Several development projects to the infrastructure in Lithuania's **Kaunas FEZ** were completed or at least started in 2016. An entrance connection to the A1 was completed in 2016, while 2017 will see the completion of the water supply network reconstruction, the reconstruction of a road through the Ramuciai settlement and the installation of a 20-megawatt electricity line.

■ **Zona Franca de Vigo** in Spain invested more than €20m in infrastructure developments in 2016, including improvements in utilities networks, security controls and new access to the zone to improve logistics capabilities. Plans are in place to invest a further €3.4m in 2017 in the port area of Bouzas.

■ With the support of the state, improvements have been made at the Pecem seaport and the development of local infrastructure to support Brazil's **Ceará Free Trade Zone**. In the seaport, three new berths were opened, two new ship-to-shore container cranes were purchased and a new 2-kilometre bridge was built.

■ A new bonded corridor is soon to be completed at **Sohar Free Zone** in Oman, to connect the port and the free zone. A multi-lane highway will be part of this upgrade, as well as pipelines, and there is the potential for conveyor connections.

■ A new double carriageway will be established at **Hamriyah Free Zone** in the UAE in 2017, which will connect the zone with the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road (E311), a main thoroughfare in the UAE that connects major cities. Plans are also in place to expand the port of Hamriyah, its container terminal and depot, and to extend the logistics capabilities in the zone. ▶

New Investments

■ **Manaus Free Zone, Brazil** – BMW Moto invested \$25m in a motorcycle manufacturing facility to produce machines above 450cc.

■ **Kaunas FEZ, Lithuania** – UPS invested in a new warehousing and office facility in the zone, which resulted in the addition of a plane connection between Kaunas and Cologne.

■ **SEZ Titanium Valley, Russia** – Boeing has a joint venture with VSMO-Avisma that will see the creation of 320 jobs at a new facility, which will produce fuselage parts, aircraft wings parts, pylon elements and wheel train parts.

■ **Free Zone Šabac Ilc, Serbia** – Yazaki Corporation invested in the purchase of seven hectares of land, on which it will construct a 30,000 sq m facility and create 2000 jobs in the automotive sector.

Start-up Support

■ A start-up support programme, Startup Kazakhstan, was launched by **Innovation Technology Park SEZ**, which is designed to attract start-up companies and SMEs throughout the country and the wider Commonwealth of Independent States region. The programme consolidates the best projects with high potential for export, and winning companies become members of the zone.

■ **The Industrial Zone of Pleternica**, close to the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina in Croatia, offers start-up companies a business incubator with office space rent-free for the first year, moving to 50% of market rental price in the second and 75% in the third. The Entrepreneurial Center Pleternica assists entrepreneurs with the establishment of their start-ups.

■ The Startup Spark programme on offer at **Łódź SEZ** in Poland chooses the most innovative companies to receive a support package including financial support, dedicated project managers and connections with big business.

■ Start-up companies locating in Serbia's **Free Zone Pirot** can qualify for a financial support programme that provides up to €8000 in grants to start production activities. Additional support programmes are on offer to micro SMEs, including up to €4000 for the development of international standards, education, packaging and design and export support up to €8000.

■ Four business incubators are on offer at **Zona Franca de Vigo** in Spain, where start-up companies can lease office space and other facilities on a flexible basis before finally committing to a location. Each incubator is specialised in a different sector.

■ **Birmingham Enterprise Zone** in the UK provides an £11m (\$14.6m) site development and access fund, which is targeted at SME and start-up companies. The fund aims to unlock development sites for companies that are likely to experience high levels of growth.

■ A range of new business packages was launched at **Hamriyah Free Zone** in the UAE, targeted specifically at SMEs and start-ups.

■ Flexidesks, whereby companies do not have to establish offices but can lease desk space, were introduced in 2016 at **Masdar City Free Zone** in the UAE, offering a more affordable and flexible option. This is part of the zone's strategy to become a leading location for such investors in the region.

■ Start-up investors in **Tubitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone** in Turkey can take advantage of the zone's incubation centre. This offers start-up companies fully furnished office space, complete with telecommunication connections, rent-free for one year.

Aegean Free Zone, Turkey

Passed in February 2017, tax regulations have changed at Aegean Free Zone to include tax exemptions for a range of services, winning the zone the **Tax Reform** bespoke award. Services – including maintenance, repair, assembly, disassembly, sorting, packaging, testing, labelling and warehousing – are now all tax exempt, in a move designed to attract more and smaller companies.

Aqaba International Industrial Estate, Jordan

Aqaba International Industrial Estate has won the **China Strategy** award for its efforts to boost its presence in the Chinese market and attract Chinese investors. The zone works closely with Shenzhen Chamber of Investment to attract companies to the zone, and they jointly manage an office in China. Aqaba has also partnered with a private marketing company to expand its activities outside Shenzhen, and is focused on large building materials companies in Shanghai and on the north coast of China. The zone was also nominated for a **Marketing Assistance** award, as it assists SME companies in developing business plans and marketing, and works with them to find regional partners.

Birmingham Enterprise Zone

Birmingham Enterprise Zone is home to the EZ Relocation Services Pilot, an initiative launched to support the zone's ►

“THIS RECOGNITION IS EVIDENCE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS IN CEMENTING A DYNAMIC BUSINESS COMMUNITY AIMED AT GENERATING SHARED VALUE WITHIN A WORLD-CLASS PLATFORM FOR COMPETITIVE, GLOBAL AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATIONS”

Nivea Santarelli, CEO, Zona Franca Santander

"RECEIVING ACCOLADES IN SEVEN CATEGORIES IS A GREAT HONOR. THE AWARDS SUMMARISE PERFECTLY ALL THE AREAS IN WHICH WE HAVE FOCUSED OUR ACTIVITY IN RECENT YEARS"

Teresa Pedrosa Silva, state delegate, Free Zone Consortium of Vigo

inward investment activities that led it to win an **Aftercare Services** award. This service is part of a three-year testing period and is the only such service in the UK outside London.

Dahej Special Economic Zone, India

The existing website for Dahej SEZ was redeveloped in 2016, to be made more user-friendly and to offer a new redress and grievance system for users on the portal. Invoices are now available digitally, in a shift from printed invoices, and users can submit them online. Applications for the allotment of land can also be submitted online, helping the zone to win a **Digitalisation** award. The zone also won an award for **Sustainability Efforts** for its move away from printing and towards paperless activities.

DMCC, UAE

The winner of this year's Global Free Zone of the Year award has also won a bespoke award for **Legal Support**. The DMCC Disputes Centre was expanded to allow smaller and younger companies to access legal services for Dubai International Financial Centre hear-

ings at no cost to the investor. The companies can attend hearings remotely via video link from the Almas Tower in the zone, and DMCC is the first zone to offer such a service.

DMCC has also scooped the **Smart City Strategy** award for the creation of its smart city strategy in 2016. The zone's Smart District was created as part of the strategy and offers residents and employees in the zone the latest in technology and connectivity. In late 2016, the zone implemented the electronic signature initiative that allows companies to electronically validate contracts, and since its introduction more than 8000 contracts have been finalised this way. This led to the nomination for the zone's **Red Tape Reduction** award.

DMCC was also nominated for a **Thought Leadership** award, thanks to the launch of its thought leadership programme, Connected Thinking. This is designed to connect people and industries across the globe through monthly reports on a range of topics.

Free Zone Pirot, Serbia

Free Zone Pirot offers investors a range

BUILD AND WORK FREE

Located in the middle of Balkan Peninsula, leaning on the Corridor X „Orient/east–Med Corridor“ which connects the city of Belgrade and Sofia on the way to Istanbul, very good connected to transport corridors toward Greece and Italy, existence of all necessary logistic services at one place, extension of area up to 400ha, modernization of our services, existence of big companies in the Zone, increased financial support by the state to small and medium-sized enterprises, Free Zone Pirot will have important strategic position for doing business in South Eastern part of Europe.



of financial support to potential investors, leading it to win an **Incentives** award. Incentives for investors get larger with the size of the investment, in terms of capital injection and job creation. In addition, a range of financial support and incentives is on offer for SME companies. The zone also received an **Export Support** award, thanks to the programmes of support on offer, including grants for training and education, promotional material and exhibition space.

Freeport of Ventspils, Latvia

A co-operation agreement was signed between China-Belarus industrial park Great Stone and the Freeport of Ventspils, landing the zone an award for **Crossborder Collaboration**. According to the agreement, the zone will exchange and co-operate with its partner in a range of areas, including logistics. In addition, Freeport of Ventspils has conducted a range of dedicated marketing campaigns in several countries across the world, including Germany, Sweden and Russia, and participated in several worldwide conferences, exhibitions and roadshows.

Hamriyah Free Zone, UAE

Hamriyah Free Zone has won an award for **Red Tape Reduction**, thanks to its efforts to speed up and simplify processes for investing in the zone. Hamriyah Free Zone is the first zone in the Middle East to issue business licences for investing companies in less than one hour and also offers express services for consulting companies and consultants.

Inhdelva EPZ, Honduras

Every year hundreds of children are fed, nursed and educated under Inhdelva's Amigos de las Guarderías Infantiles programme, leading the zone to win the **Charitable Efforts** award. The zone also won a **Risk Management** award, following the establishment of an onsite risk management centre, which offers investors advice on topics from security to money laundering.

Innovation Technology Park Special Economic Zone, Kazakhstan

Innovation Technology Park SEZ aims to attract 30 innovative hi-tech SMEs as part of the Startup Kazakhstan acceleration programme, resulting in an **Encouraging IT Innovation** award. Part of the acceleration programme will take place in Silicon Valley in the US. An IT district was also created in 2016, welcoming investors in smart technologies and fintech.

Jebel Ali Free Zone, UAE

According to Jebel Ali Free Zone's sub-

mission, the zone contributes more than 20% of Dubai's GDP, helping to secure the award for **Contribution to National Economy**. More than 125,000 people are employed in the zone, which also accounts for more than 30% of inward FDI into the country.

Katowice Special Economic Zone, Poland

Katowice SEZ has won the award for **Cluster Development**, thanks to its engagement with the Silesia Automotive and Advanced Manufacturing cluster, of which the zone was a founding member. The aim of the initiative is to strengthen co-operation between investors, labour and education in the related sectors.

Kaunas Free Economic Zone, Lithuania

Kaunas Free Economic zone won an award for **Increased Connectivity**, in recognition of the additional flight connection established between the zone and Cologne in Germany, for US-based logistics tenant UPS. The zone's proximity to the airport played a part in the company choosing Kaunas FEZ for its investment.

Klaipeda Free Economic Zone, Lithuania

Klaipeda FEZ has proved its economic weight in Lithuania, winning the award for **Contribution to National Economy** by generating about 2.5% of the country's GDP, according to its submission for this year's awards. About 3% of the country's exports are from the zone, which beats all other free zones in the country to enjoy the largest share of Lithuania's FDI inflow.

Klaipeda FEZ also won an **Energy Efficiency** award, following the installation of a smart lighting management system that achieved energy savings of 30%. A biofuel heating plant, originally installed for an investor in the zone, produced enough residue heat to serve other companies in the zone and Klaipeda city.

Lipetsk Special Economic Zone, Russia

Lipetsk SEZ has won the **Tax Reform** award for 2016 for bringing local customs officials and tax inspection authorities together to create a task force, whose primary aim was to resolve conflicts in VAT calculations for some zone tenants.

Manaus Free Zone, Brazil

Located in the Brazilian Amazon region, Manaus Free Zone has won the **Sustainability Efforts** awards through its work with partners to help con- ▶

"RAKEZ WAS JUST RECENTLY INTRODUCED BUT IT HAS ALREADY BEEN RECOGNISED FOR ITS COST-EFFECTIVENESS. WINNING A PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FROM fDi IS OUR CHERRY ON TOP"

Ramy Jallad, group CEO, RAK FTZ

serve and protect the local environment, with efforts to prevent deforestation.

Masdar City Free Zone, UAE

Investors in Masdar City Free Zone can benefit from partnership opportunities with Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in education and R&D, contributing to the zone's award for **R&D Incentives**. The zone boasts a business accelerator, targeted at clean tech and sustainability investors, while a new research centre is opening to increase space and facilitate new innovative investments.

Mauritius Freeport, Mauritius

Mauritius Freeport has won the award for its **Incentives**, including duty-free and VAT-free goods and equipment, free repatriation of profits, a 50% reduction in port handling charges and access to offshore banking facilities, among others. The zone has also been recognised for its **Export Support**, offering a 40% reduction in the cost of air freight to Europe, allowing exporting companies to become more price competitive.

Mindspace Madhapur, India

The award for **Employee Amenities** goes to Mindspace Madhapur, where employees have access to a creche, food courts and cafes, outdoor recreational facilities including football pitches and basketball courts, shopping malls and entertainment zones. Employees also benefit from residential facilities on site. The zone has also won an award for **Encouraging IT Innovation**, following efforts to create an ecosystem for IT companies.

Oil & Gas Free Zone, Onne, Nigeria

Incentives offered by Oil & Gas Free Zone in Onne, Nigeria include 100% repatriation of capital investment, no requirement for export or import licences, no VAT, 0% corporate tax and no capital gains tax. No customs duty is applied to goods stored and consumed within the zone, and no customs duty is payable for the export of free-zone goods to other countries.

Panama Pacifico Special Economic Area, Panama

The first LEED gold-certified office building in Panama Pacifico Special Economic Area was recently completed, and is considered the most energy-efficient building in Panama. Newly designed warehouses have been constructed using passive energy systems, and are completed with an integral thermal insulation for increased **Energy Efficiency**. The zone was also recognised for its **Safety**



Masdar City in the UAE targets clean tech and sustainability investors with its business accelerator

Measures, with the introduction of its Integrated Security Centre, complete with round-the-clock thermal imaging camera coverage, alert buttons for immediate emergency response, help points and access control systems.

Parque Central Zona Franca, Colombia

A programme of **Tax Reforms** was completed at Parque Central Zona Franca in Colombia at the end of 2016, as part of wide reforms in Turbaco municipality. Companies investing in the zone will now be fully exempt from local business tax, while 80% of land taxes will be deducted.

Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Poland

Pomeranian SEZ's team of staff responsible for post-investment support of companies have landed it an award for **Aftercare Services**. The team offers consulting services, helps with local media promotion and assists with organising conferences and business meetings. Trade missions that resulted in agreements being signed were undertaken by the zone in countries including China, resulting in the award for its **China Strategy**.

Further afield, Pomeranian SEZ also won an award for **Crossborder Collaboration**, following one agreement signed with Suez Canal Economic Zone, and another that will result in the construction of a Polish industrial park in Egypt. Pomeranian has also been recognised with the award for **Access to** ▶

Finance that it offers to companies investing there. Meanwhile, a co-operation agreement with Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego enables projects to be funded from export credit guarantees and finance equity from local entrepreneurs.

RAK Economic Zone, UAE

Located in the Ras al Khaimah emirate in the UAE, RAK Economic Zone has been awarded for its **Set-up Cost Reduction** this year. The zone offers investors a 10% reduction and 12-month instalment option with its three-year business plan. The Rakez easy payment plan is tailored to start-up companies and SMEs, and allows these investors to spread the instalment costs over 12 months, making payments more manageable.

Sohar Free Zone, Oman

Sohar Innovation Zone within Sohar Port and Free Zone is the world's first self-sustaining free-zone cluster, and winner of this year's **Energy Independence** award. The zone creates its own energy, recycles all its waste, and is completely disconnected from the grid.

Starachowice Special Economic Zone, Poland

The Regional Cluster of Vocational Education is led by Starachowice SEZ, which helped it to win an award for **Academic Collaboration**. The aim of the initiative is to improve the local vocational education and to meet the needs of investing companies by ensuring a qualified workforce.

Tübitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone, Turkey

Investors in Tübitak Marmara Technopark Technology Free Zone can enjoy range of Incentives, including 0% VAT, customs-free production of goods and 100% repatriation of capital. The zone has also been recognised for its **R&D Incentives**, which include 0% income and corporate taxes on revenues from software R&D and 0% taxes on employees in R&D activities.

Yachay Free Zone, Ecuador

Developed as a City of Knowledge, Yachay Free Zone has been awarded for its **Innovation Ecosystem**. The zone has been created for the development of research, science and technology, and includes research laboratories and a life sciences cluster.

ZIP Porvenir, Honduras

ZIP Porvenir has been recognised with an award for its **Diversification Efforts**, following a renovation of a building to



The payment plan at the RAK Economic Zone is tailored for start-ups and smaller businesses

meet the needs of non-textiles investors, who require smaller layouts. The zone started welcoming investors to these facilities in 2016.

Zona Franca de Bogotá, Colombia

A bilingualism programme at Zona Franca de Bogotá in Colombia, which is offered with national education service SENA, aims to train 500 people annually. The zone, winner of this year's **Language Programme** award, prepares potential employees for companies wishing to export to foreign markets.

Zona Franca de Occidente, Colombia

Zona Franca de Occidente, close to Colombia's capital city Bogotá, has been awarded for its **Academic Collaboration**. The zone partners with various Colombian education institutions to offer training programmes to offer potential investors a qualified workforce to grow their business.

Zona Franca de Vigo, Spain

Partnerships between public and private bodies at Zona Franca de Vigo contributed to the zone winning an **Innovation Ecosystem** award. The aim of the co-operation is economic development from the exchange of knowledge. The zone was also recognised for its **R&D Incentives**, due to the Innovation Factory programme (launched with the University of Vigo) and the ViaGalicia business accelerator offered to investors.

There is a programme to support

entrepreneurs in the automotive industry by providing the resources and support to go to market, while an aerospace incubator operates with the support of other public organisations and promotes technology knowledge transfer. For this, Zona Franca de Vigo was awarded for its **Cluster Development**. The zone was also given an accolade for **SME Internationalisation**, for the programmes undertaken in 2016 that aim to encourage the internationalisation of SMEs. More than 400 companies reached new foreign markets as a result of these efforts.

Zona Franca Santander, Colombia

In addition to management strategies undertaken by Zona Franca Santander, the zone works with employees to change environmental practices on site. The zone earned a carbon footprint certification in 2016, and was awarded in this year's award for its **Sustainability Efforts**. Zona Franca Santander also constructed an online digital platform for investors, which gives them access to an employment information network, helping the zone to win an award for **Recruitment Assistance**. In line with training programmes offered by the zone, a bilingual training programme is on offer for investing companies, whereby 100 people receive training in English with a view to being placed with an investing company. This contributed to the zone's **Language Programme** award. ■