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▪ "WORLDWIDE CLUSTERS" CALL FOR PROJECTS

As proposed by the DGCIS, the European Commission has shortlisted the Wiintech project

The Wiintech "Materials" project relative to the worldwide inter-cluster initiative for new materials and clean processes has been shortlisted by the European commission since the end of July 2011.

This project was proposed by the DGCIS. It involved the French [Plastipolis](#) competitiveness cluster, in partnership with 7 other European clusters. Working with Ubifrance and Oseo, the DGCIS has therefore responded to the "worldwide clusters" call for projects launched by the European Commission in the spring of 2011. The Commission's objective is to internationalize European clusters in order for them to develop as worldwide clusters. The Commission plans to select four projects based on collaboration between European clusters, for the definition of a common international strategy.

The EU's maximum financial contribution for each project submitted by an institution (national or regional) within a Member State is €600,000. This contribution is also limited to 80% of the project's total eligible costs, with a minimum of 60% of the EU's contribution being assigned to "guest" clusters.

The complete file relative to the Wiintech project must now be sent to the Commission before 28 September.

We also note that two other French projects presented by entities other than the DGCIS have also been shortlisted. They include the ERAI project in the health and biotechnologies sector, with the French [Lyonbiopôle](#) cluster, and another project in the textile sector with the [Uptex](#) cluster. The DGCIS had actually proposed three projects, of which only one was shortlisted in the end.



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▪ "SME INTERNATIONALISATION" CALL FOR TENDER

The European Commission is planning five events around the "SME internationalisation through clusters"

On 14 October 2011, the European Commission launched a call for tender for the selection of five events that will be held in 2012-2013.

The European Commission's Director General Enterprise and Industry has recently launched a call for tender entitled "*SME internationalisation through clusters*".

The objective of this contract is the organisation of five events that will be held in 2012-2013 in order to help European competitiveness clusters and their SMEs to make contacts with international partners (outside of Europe). The closing date for receiving tenders or participation requests is 14 October 2011.

The contract will be based on the collaboration agreements signed by the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) that was set up as part of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative. It will contribute to their set-up. The ECCP has already signed agreement protocols with partners in Brazil, India and Japan. Other collaborative agreements of the same type can be envisaged with countries from the southern Mediterranean (probably Egypt and Tunisia), as well as South Korea.

The events will be organised in the country of the international partners that have signed the agreement protocols. The contract will lay the groundwork for cross-border cooperation between competitiveness clusters. It will make more strategic usage of the transnational cooperation of competitiveness clusters as part of non-European contracts in areas of strategic interest such as renewable energies, clean technologies, creative industries and tourism.



▪ PCRDT

The two calls for proposals of the FP7 “Regions of Knowledge” and “Research Potential”: usage guide

The European Commission has launched these two calls for projects respectively until 31 January and 3 January 2012.


Regions of Knowledge:

Objective	Strengthen the research potential of European regions, in particular by encouraging and supporting the development, across Europe, of regional “research-driven clusters”, associating universities, research centres, enterprises, regional authorities and other stakeholders.
Subjects	RTD aspects and Innovation in the digital strategy for Europe; Development of relevant technologies and services for an efficient Europe in terms of resources.
Practical information	A single call for proposals for 2012 and 2013
	Date limit for submitting applications: 31 January 2012 at 5 PM
	Maximum project duration: 36 months
European contribution to the project’s funding	from 1 to 3 million euros
Approximate budget	17.99 million euros for 2012 (the 2013 budget is not yet known).

Research potential:

Objective	Promote the realisation of the extended Union’s research potential by releasing and developing the existing or emerging excellence of the European Union’s regions of convergence and of the ultra-peripheral regions, while contributing to the strengthening of the potential of researchers and allowing them to more successfully participate in EU research activities.
Areas in France currently included	Guadeloupe, Reunion Island, Martinique, French Guyana
Subject	All of the FP’s fields
Practical information	a single call for proposals for 2012 and 2013
	a single public or private entity promotes the project
	date limit for submitting applications: 3 January 2012 at 5 PM

	maximum duration of the projects: 36 months (42 in the event of an ex-post assessment)
European contribution to the project's funding	it can be up to 5 million euros per project (up to 100% of the eligible costs)
Approximate budget for 2012 available	66.57 million euros.

 **Contacts, information and forms for all of the calls for proposals in question:** <http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/7pc/>

The American policy in favour of clusters

In September 2010, 10 competitiveness clusters were created in the United States. This project is part of the federal government's efforts to support economic development and to create jobs in the regions.

10 clusters created by the “Small Business Administration” in 2010

In the United States, the creation of competitiveness clusters is a recent initiative. In September 2010, the American “Small Business Administration (SBA)”, an American federal agency, announced its support for 10 regional clusters with a strong focus on innovation. This new pilot project is part of the federal government's efforts to support economic development and to create jobs in the regions.

The objective is to strengthen the role of small enterprises within the regional clusters, in order to increase the job creation potential in a lasting manner. Meeting this objective will necessarily require efforts to promote interaction between small companies, the public sector, economic development institutions, research laboratories and major enterprises. This regional development support policy is intended to highlight the strengths within each region that are home to the selected clusters.

As such, after an initial call for projects, 10 competitiveness clusters were selected from amongst the 173 submitted projects. The call for projects indicated maximum funding of \$600,000 per project for a period of two years. All of the submitted projects focused on the cluster's research potential, as well as its ability to market new products.

Funding provided to the governance of the clusters

The awarded funding was allocated to the governance structures of the selected clusters. The latter must now implement the support actions for small companies as part of the regional development momentum. The funds can be used to provide services (consulting, operational support, establishment of relations, training). This primarily involves support activities for access to potential partners, support in the access to research funding as well as consulting with regard to strategies that these small companies can undertake in order to strengthen their place within regional economic projects.

A particular effort in the Defence sector

As part of this pilot project, the SBA has also worked with the American Department of Defence in order to identify regional innovation clusters that could provide technological bricks in the Defence sector. As such, three regional clusters have been identified with the strategic objective of strengthening the integration capacity of the technologies in the Defence sector.

10 clusters in strategic sectors

The 10 selected clusters are in the sectors of agriculture, nuclear, eco-technologies, space, aeronautics, information and communication technologies and defence.

- **Agriculture Innovation Cluster** (Monterey – Santa Cruz – San Benito, California). Innovations in the domain of agriculture, including production infrastructures and the human capital.
- **Carolinas' Nuclear Cluster** (North Carolina, South Carolina). This cluster focuses on nuclear energy.
- **Connecticut Hydrogen Fuel Cell Coalition** (Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and Rhode Island). Administered by the Connecticut Centre for Advanced Technology, this cluster focuses on hydrogen technologies and fuel cells.
- **Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions** (Mississippi - Louisiana). This cluster focuses on the training aspects of human resources, and access to geo-localization technologies.

- **Illinois Smart Grid Regional Innovation Cluster** (Illinois). This cluster includes more than 100 entities (including 70 companies) in the Chicago region. It focuses on strengthening innovation in the field of “Smart Grids”, the deployment of these technologies and the development of new markets.
- **NorTech** (Ohio). The funds obtained within the framework of the programme will be used in order to support the development of small companies as part of the “NorTech’s FlexMatters initiative”. This initiative focuses on advanced energies and flexible printed circuits.
- **Upper Michigan Green Aviation Coalition** (Michigan). This coalition of companies includes 41 active members (public and private).
- **Defence Alliance of Minnesota** (Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin). The aim of this cluster is to accelerate technology transfers to the defence sector.
- **San Diego Advanced Defence Cluster** (San Diego, California). This cluster notably focuses on autonomous systems and cyber security.
- **Von Braun Centre for Science and Innovation** (Huntsville, Alabama). Focus on aerospace technologies. The projects include the field of robotics for the detection of explosive devices as well as satellites and space launch equipment.

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 En savoir plus

- [The SBA Internet site](#) “regional clusters initiative” pages

REPÈRES

- **334**. This is the number of members of competitiveness clusters that received international support from the DGCIS in 2010 in an effort to build technological partnerships.

FOCUS ON COMPLETED PROJECTS

▪ BIOTECHNOLOGY / HEALTH CHEMISTRY

Immunosearch: an alternative solution to animal testing in laboratories

Doing away with animal testing in laboratories, greater knowledge about human skin irritation processes, testing the harmlessness of new cosmetic or perfume products using a reconstituted human skin model.



The Perfumes, aromas, scents and savours (PASS) competitiveness cluster led this project that then received aid as part of the 2nd call for projects from the Single Interministerial Fund (FUI).

Progressive Community ban on experiments using animals

One of the major challenges for the perfume and cosmetics industry is to develop alternatives to animal experimentation in order to ensure the harmlessness of products. Indeed, the 7th amendment to the [European "Cosmetics" directive 7/768/EEC](#) calls for a progressive total ban, by 2013, on the production and marketing of products tested on animals.

The development of "in vitro" tests as replacements for "in vivo" tests

The Immunosearch project targets the development of in vitro testing as an alternative to the usage of animals. Its objective is to assess the sensitizing capacities, i.e. causing skin allergies, of the molecules produced by the cosmetics and perfume industries. A reconstituted human skin model will be used in order to reproduce, as accurately as possible, the cellular reactions caused by sensitizing agents. This model will then be used to test and guarantee the harmlessness of the sector's products.



The creation of a research consortium between partner companies



The project is being led by the Immunosearch company that was created for the purposes of the project, in order to ensure better coordination and economic development of the results. It is an independent SME that specialises in the immuno-toxicology of perfume and cosmetics ingredients. It provides advice to companies that both produce and use such ingredients around the world. The main mission of Immunosearch is to further research leading to the development and dissemination of alternative tests to replace the usage of animals in the toxicological and pharmacological assessment of perfume and cosmetics ingredients.

Copyright: Immunosearch

The partner companies

-  [IRIS Pharma](#) is a private company that manages pre-clinical or clinical research studies. It specialises in ophthalmology. It has contributed its expertise in animal testing.
-  [Mane & Fils](#) and [Robertet](#) are two SMEs that produce perfume ingredients. They have provided their knowledge of ingredients as well as a library of substances.

Research partners

These partners are organised as a research consortium in order to bring together biologists, geologists, molecular biologists as well as statisticians and IT specialists

- the Institut de pharmacologie moléculaire et cellulaire (IPMC CNRS/UNSA).
- I3S (UMR CNRS-UNSA) This laboratory specialises in the statistical analysis of biological data.
- the Inria Sophia-Antipolis.

The efforts have led to the development of three “in vitro” tests



The project focused on decrypting the steps in the irritation and sensitization processes of human skin. The aim was to reproduce these processes as accurately as possible, using a reconstituted human skin model.

This work led to the development of the first quantitative tests for skin irritation and allergy.

The predictive value of the developed tests was validated by an analysis of more than 200 compounds that include chemical, perfume, cosmetics and pharmaceutical ingredients. Also, blind testing was performed with several companies that produce cosmetics and perfume ingredients. In the end, the works led to the development and marketing of three “in vitro” tests that require no animal experimentation. These tests provide for a reliable evaluation of the harmlessness of new products before their marketing.

Copyright: Immunosearch

The marketing of three new tests opens up genuine prospects

- **The tests have been marketed** to the aroma, perfume and cosmetics industries. The market is considerable, but it will only truly open up after the regulatory validation that is now in progress. This could take anywhere from a few months to a few years. Without this validation, the obtained results are only for information purposes. They cannot be used in a regulatory file (REACH for example).
- The generated data and discoveries should result in the launch of **new projects** in fields related to analysis of the efficiency of cosmetics, diagnostics or pharmaceutical developments.
- The results obtained and the collaborative efforts with the biggest companies in the cosmetics sector have helped **ImmunoSearch to become a European champion in skin immuno-toxicological analysis**. The new project should make it possible for the company to acquire indisputable recognition in the field of biological analyses of ingredients in contact with the skin.
- **Four international** patents have been filed.
- **The ImmunoSearch turnover** created at the time of the project was €700,000 in 2010. It should be higher this year.
- **Eight jobs** have been created.

 En savoir plus

www.pole-pass.fr/projets/projets/immunosearch.html

▪ RECRUITING OF VIE

Aerospace Valley has hired 8 “volunteers in an international enterprise” (French acronym VIE) in order to assist its exporting SMEs

8 volunteers in an international enterprise look after the monitoring and commercial prospecting for 3 to 5 SME cluster members.

Since 2010, the [Aérospatiale Valley](#) competitiveness cluster has been using an innovative mechanism in order to support the cluster's SME members as part of their international development. Assigned to a group of 3 to 5 companies, volunteers in an international enterprise (VIE) look after the monitoring and commercial prospecting for these companies.

This arrangement builds on the International SME Pact, which calls for major French groups to provide SMEs with accompaniment in their international efforts. In concrete terms, an industrial cluster member sponsors the VIE who is accommodated in its offices abroad. Aerospace Valley looks after the administrative procedures required from the host manufacturer and the companies involved, through Ubifrance. On-site, Aerospace Valley also relies on one of its partner clusters.

Three VIE, based in Montreal, Beijing and Hamburg, are currently on assignment. By the end of the year, four additional VIE will have been assigned to São Paulo, Shanghai and Munich, while the recruiting of a VIE for India is in progress. This initiative, funded by the State (Direccte) and the Aquitaine Region, has been a great success amongst the Aerospace Valley members.



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▪ EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP

The Vehicle of the Future Cluster, an actor in the European “E-light” project

The cluster is part of a European consortium consisting of universities and companies from Spain, Britain and Germany, as well as one Italian company, the ambition of which is to reduce the weight of electric vehicles by more than 30%.



The [Vehicle of the Future Cluster](#) has brought in seven European partners: Spanish, British and German universities and companies, as well as the Italian company Pininfarina, an international reference in automobile design. The objective of the cluster and its members is to be actively involved in European projects, notably the **E-Light** project funded by the FP7. This consortium strives to promote cooperation and to strengthen ties between industry and research, within a transnational framework. The project's objective is to develop a multi-material architecture in order to reduce the weight of electric vehicles by more than 30%.

The role of the Vehicle of the Future Cluster is to take part in research, **to set up a technology and regulatory watch, as well as to disseminate and exploit the results** in order to provide a maximum impact with the European technological communities. It will also establish a test group of manufacturers given the task of assessing the innovation possibilities brought to light during the project by the E-Light partners.

Within this consortium, the Vehicle of the Future Cluster has been selected for its ability to disseminate the results across Europe, thanks to its partnerships with clusters in other countries. The platform set up by the Mobilis International Meetings, organised each year, was also decisive.



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The Route des Lasers competitiveness cluster on the shores of the Yangtze

A partnership between the French cluster and the Chinese national optoelectronic laboratory, in order to demonstrate the French offer's competitiveness on the Chinese micro-machining market.



The companies in the [Route des Lasers](#) competitiveness cluster, specialising in the optical and laser sectors, are getting on board the Chinese growth train. Indeed, after an analysis phase of the development of the Optics Valley of Wuhan in China, the specialist economic centre in optoelectronic and information technologies, a single partner seemed inescapable.

An agreement protocol was first signed in 2010 by the cluster and the Wuhan national laboratory for optoelectronics (WNLO), for the set-up of a common technological platform. The company Amplitude Systèmes, active in Pessac in the Gironde region and producing new generation short impulse lasers, then launched a common development programme for laser micro-machining processes "made for China" in Wuhan on 15 June 2011.

This initiative has already created considerable momentum. This Wuhan giants are now turning to French know-how, through the cluster's representation office in China. A large number of experiments and tests are currently in progress, in order to demonstrate the competitiveness of the Aquitaine offer within the Chinese micro-machining market.

In the wake of the Bordeaux company Edit Laser, already established in China in order to provide maximum responsiveness to the market's growing demand, a considerable number of the Cluster's major actors will soon be established in the "middle kingdom".

The next get-together will be the 8th edition of the Optics Valley of China trade fair in Wuhan in November, expected to be attended by the major Chinese manufacturers in optics and photonics.

On a French stand measuring 108 m², flying the colours of the "Bordeaux Route des Lasers", the companies Amplitude Systèmes, Eolite Systems, IVEA, Amplitude Technologies and Quantel will be representing French interests.

The Imaginove competitiveness cluster and the Bureau du cinéma et de la télévision du Québec, 2 media clusters on the same wavelength

As part of its international development efforts, the French Imaginove competitiveness cluster has signed partnerships with 7 foreign clusters, including the Bureau du cinéma et la télévision du Québec (BTCQ) in 2009.

In addition to an exchange of best practices, the two clusters wished to develop direct relation between their members relative to subjects of common interest: innovation, sales, talents. This has also prompted them to take part in key professional trade fairs and events.

- 3 missions to Canada have been organised in order to allow [Imaginove](#) to establish promising contacts. As such, the Studio Anatole and the Agence Take off have opened offices in Montreal.
- For three years, business meetings between the members of the clusters have been held during the Marché international du film d'animation d'Annecy (MIFA). More than 30 Canadian companies in attendance! Cognizant of the importance of this event, the BTCQ has arranged for a stand at the MIFA and an increasing number of its members are deciding to attend.
- In 2011, the BTCQ took part in the Media forum co-organised by Imaginove. Correspondingly, reflections are in progress for an event to be held in Quebec.

On 12 September, an action plan for the 2011-2014 period was signed between the Rhône-Alpes Region and the province of Quebec. The idea is to strengthen ties and to allow both clusters to continue developing their visibility, respectively within the European and North American markets.

Two years after the creation of F2C Innovation: the creation of an international WoFIN cooperation network in the field of agro-food

The efforts undertaken by the three French competitiveness clusters in order to create an agro-food “super-cluster” have truly been bearing fruit. Two strategic partnership agreements and an international innovation network have already been set up.

The international development momentum of the three competitiveness clusters Agrimip Innovation, Valorial and Vitagora has truly been fruitful. Two years ago, these three competitiveness clusters created F2C Innovation, the French agro-food “super-cluster”. They facilitated the set-up of many business partnerships, notably as a result of the international efforts of F2C Innovation, launched in June 2009. This international development programme allowed the three clusters to target key scientific competences on the international level, that corresponded with their priority development subjects. Result: two strategic partnership agreements have been signed, one with Kyushu Biocluster (Japan) and the other with Portugal Food. At the same time, an international scientific network for agro-food innovation, known as the “World Food Innovation Network” or WoFIN was set up in June 2010.

WoFin: the international cooperation network in the service of agro-food innovation projects



WoFIN is made up of 15 competitiveness clusters and excellence clusters in 11 countries. This network is made up of specialists in nutrition and food safety, as well as specialists in farming and sustainable development. Its objective is to federate and promote the research strengths and participants of each of the members. Its tasks involve strengthening ties between the actors, setting up consortia and helping with access to the funding dedicated to international projects.

The WoFIN representatives visit the Lavazza company in Turin (Photo credit: WoFIN)

This network’s members have met three times since its launch, most recently in Turin in April 2011. During this meeting, a memorandum was signed in order to describe the axes for cooperation identified between the partners.

These events are an opportunity for exchanges during workshops on key topics. 17 working groups have been set up as a result of these workshops, with the objective being to launch, as early as 2013, European projects involving the industrial and research actors taking part in the WoFIN network.

A 4th meeting will be held in Rennes this coming November, followed by Great Britain in the spring of 2012.

As part of the F2C-EU project, co-funded by the DGCIS, the three French clusters are also striving to sensitize and mobilise SMEs in the agro-food sector around European R&D programmes. The exchanges established with WoFIN partners are therefore making a strong contribution to the identification of collaboration opportunities, that are then conveyed to French SMEs. As such, since the launch of the F2C-EU project in December 2010, two SME from within the territories of the clusters have already joined European consortia involved in the KBBE 2011 call for projects.



Les membres du WoFIN :

[AFMNET\(Advanced Food and Materials Network\)](#) au Canada
[Agrimip Innovation](#), France
[Campden & Chorleywood Food Research Association](#), Royaume-Uni
[Food Valley](#), Pays-Bas
[IFR - Institute of Food Research](#), Royaume-Uni
[Istituto Insubrico – Ricerca per la Vita](#), Italie
[IRTA – Institut de Recerca i Tecnologia Agroalimentaries](#), Espagne
[Parco Tecnologico Padano](#), Italie

SIK - Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology, Suède
Technopole de Sainte Hyacinthe, Québec
University of Aarhus, Danemark
Università di Torino/ AgrolInnova, Italie
Valorial, France
Vitagora, France
Wagralim, Belgique






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