







December 2011

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▪ FUI R&D

Competitiveness clusters report positively on their R&D projects in 2011

In 2011, 163 collaborative cluster projects attracted €259 million in public aid

In 2011,

- **317 applications were submitted** as part of **two calls for R&D projects** from the single interdepartmental fund (fonds unique interministériel, FUI),
- **163 collaborative projects awarded labels** by the competitiveness clusters were selected for public funding.
 - The projects represented total R&D work of **€621 million**.
 - They received public funding of **€259 million**, including **€150 million in FUI subsidies** and **€109 million** in co-financing pledges from **local authorities**.

▪ CLUSTER POLICY ASSESSMENT

Details of the assessment calendar announced

Assessment work begins in December 2011 and will be completed by spring 2012

The work of the BearingPoint/Erdyn/Technopolis consortium responsible for assessing the second phase of the national competitiveness cluster policy and each of the 71 clusters will begin in December 2011 and will be completed by spring 2012. The assessors will begin visiting the clusters in January 2012. Over the course of the assessment, they will meet both representatives of the 71 clusters and the key regional and national agencies involved in implementing competitiveness cluster policy.

The consortium will go on to make recommendations in the light of the assessment's findings. Ministers will subsequently examine the individual consequences of the assessment for the clusters, and determine the conditions under which cluster policy will be taken forward in the years ahead.

 En savoir plus

➤ [Assessment of the 2nd phase of the competitiveness cluster policy](#)

▪ EIP LABEL

Over €16 million raised by 19 SMEs, thanks to the EIP label

These are the results for far for the “cluster innovative enterprise” (Entreprise Innovante des Pôles, EIP) label, just 18 months after its launch in June 2010. How many clusters have signed the charter to date? And how many SMEs have been awarded a label?

- 51 competitiveness clusters have signed up to the charter
- 84 SMEs have been awarded the label since its creation (including 45 in 2011) out of the 250 SMEs seeking funding and applying for the label
- 15 labelling committees, covering 31 clusters, are in action.

The “Entreprise Innovante des Pôles” label was launched on 3rd June 2010 under the auspices of the Ministry for the Economy, Finance and Industry, with the aim of helping high-potential innovative companies actively involved in competitiveness cluster R&D projects to attract private investors (investment funds and business angels) to finance their growth.

From the investor's viewpoint

As part of the EIP labelling process, the SME is made aware of the investor's viewpoint from the outset and thus can move swiftly to identify the elements it needs to work on in order to raise the capital it needs.

Philippe Herbert is a partner at Banexi Ventures Partners and a member of the Venture Committee of AFIC (*Association Française Investisseurs en Capital*), and he explains the strategic role of the support provided: "Over the past 18 months, AFIC has closely monitored, on an experimental basis, the call by the Systematic and CapDigital clusters for SMEs to participate in the EIP labelling process".

We felt it was important and only natural for this labelling process to be supported by investment professionals. AFIC brings together all those involved in the financing chain, from investors (including groups of business angels) to professional experts in areas closely associated with investment (public funding/OSÉO, human resources, legal, M&A). AFIC provides this support to each participant, free of charge. Our involvement takes the form of an initial plenary session with a team of experts, followed by one or two individual working sessions with pairings of experts chosen to meet the SME's major areas of need. Both the clusters and the firms found this to be a helpful approach, giving SMEs an opportunity for dialogue, analysis and a valuable perspective on their firm, irrespective of the ultimate outcome. Over the 18 months, AFIC has worked with nine firms out of a total of around twenty applicants. At least four have already raised capital from new investors.

On the strength of this experience, AFIC is keen in 2012 to explore the conditions for deploying this initiative over a larger sample and also to other competitiveness clusters".

From a cluster SME's viewpoint

Séverine Sigrist, President of SME Defymed, a member of the [Alsace Biovalley](#) cluster, selected in September 2011 to join the EIP labelling process:

"We are very proud of the fact that our firm was one of the first three chosen by the Alsace Biovalley EIP labelling committee, showing how much interest our project has aroused amongst those involved in innovation in Alsace. We had backing from Alsace Biovalley, and from business incubator Semia, to help prepare for our appearance before the labelling committee on 23rd September. Our application was assessed by a panel of investors, entrepreneurs and scientists, as well as others involved in innovation at the local level. They suggested avenues to explore to overcome the obstacles we were encountering. This helped us sharpen up our development strategy considerably in order to attract investors and take our project forward swiftly and successfully".

From a cluster's viewpoint

Many competitiveness clusters have opted for a concerted approach to implementing the EIP process, sharing both their labelling committee and the range of services on offer to SMEs in preparation for raising capital. Dealing with actors at the regional level makes for closer coordination with OSEO and the incubators and for incorporating existing initiatives to provide support to SMEs or put them in touch with investors.

The [IAR \(Industries & Agro-ressources\) cluster](#) introduced EIP labelling in June 2011 as an adjunct to its "IAR Invest" investors' club. Johan de Coninck is responsible for implementation and has plans to share the initiative across the entire "plant chemicals" sector in 2012: "There are not many funds that take an interest in the themes we address. We need to get the right investors to the table to meet with our project sponsors, and offer our investors the right projects. This is the task that the IAR-Invest club, which is involved in our EIP labelling process, was set up to perform, and its services are available to the clusters in our sector. The process takes time, however; we need to learn how best to work together.

In the field of plant chemicals, SMEs are soon brought face to face with economic realities, i.e. the highly capital-intensive nature of the investment, combined with the traditionally lengthy chemical industry cycle. Unlike information or communication technology, chemical production plant is hugely expensive, adding to the need for the entrepreneur to raise capital and, above all, pushing up the entry cost."

Jean-Noël de Galzain, Vice-President of the [Systematic](#) cluster, EIP label spokesman:

"With 51 signatories to date, there has been massive support for the EIP label from two thirds of France's competitiveness clusters. Until now, the clusters have acted as collaborative R&D project factories between academic institutions and businesses large and small. Now they are increasingly positioning themselves as players providing support to innovative SMEs in their strategic fields, through this process of labelling aimed at sources of private financing (business angels, venture capitalists, etc.). We will be pursuing our efforts to make the label a permanent feature, to raise the profile of our successful candidates with investors and thus increase the private capital raised to fund innovative SMEs as they bring their ideas to market. This is what it takes to ensure a future for investment in the future through our high-potential SMEs."

Polinvest supports the competitiveness clusters in implementing the EIP label.

To join the signatories to the EIP label national charter:

✈ **Contact:** Aude Marty a.marty@polinvest.org or 01 73 01 93 26

✈ **Spokesman:** Jean-Noël de Galzain jn.degalzain@polinvest.org or 01 53 42 12 90

 En savoir plus

✈ Support to cluster SMEs: www.polinvest.org

✈ Coordination of the label: www.entreprise-innovante-des-poles.com

▪ ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE


An economic intelligence self-testing tool for VSE/SMEs

38 questions to help VSEs and SMEs identify their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to economic intelligence.

In conjunction with the institute of chartered accountants (Conseil supérieur de l'Ordre des experts-comptables), the Economic Intelligence Coordination department of the French Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry has developed an economic intelligence test for VSE/SME directors. The test is designed to help firms assess their practices in terms of gathering, analysing, exploiting, disseminating and protecting strategic information.

The test itself consists of 38 questions divided into three sections: intelligence (competitive, economic, legal), influence and competitiveness (communication campaigns, corporate image, etc.) and capitalisation and preservation of intangible assets (economic security, IT security, etc.).

A fast and effective way of identifying strengths and weaknesses.

 En savoir plus

✈ **Test your economic intelligence** on the website of *the Conseil supérieur de l'Ordre des experts-comptables*.

State aid monitoring bulletin for the information of competitiveness clusters, December 2011 edition

In this month's news:

- The European Commission has authorised Latvia's aid scheme for ultrafast broadband networks, and even considers it to be compliant with the objectives of the Commission's digital strategy, which involves making ultrafast broadband access available to all European citizens at the earliest opportunity.
- The Commission is launching an in-depth investigation into German regional aid for a major industrial investment project. The investigation will assess the impact of the products concerned on the market and any increased risk of distortion of competition as a result of such aid.
- The Commission has authorised a Swedish aid programme for a research project involving wave energy technology. The project is intended to bring an area of green technology currently still in its infancy closer to market, without unduly skewing competition.

 [Monitoring for December 2011](#)

 [Monitoring bulletins since January 2011](#)

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The number of collaborative R&D projects awarded a label by the “**agriculture-food-fisheries-forests**” clusters. Projects worth a total investment of €377 million have been awarded subsidies as part of single interdepartmental fund (FUI) calls for projects since the introduction of the procedure.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, November 2011

FOCUS ON COMPLETED PROJECTS

▪ AGRIFOOD AND BIORESOURCES

Géowine: everything there is to know about a bottle of wine, in a couple of clicks

A unique code on each bottle will enable the consumer to trace the wine back to a specific plot in the vineyard, with details of the grape varieties used and the wine-maker, and to locate the exact spot on a map, all in a couple of clicks online, using a smartphone or PC.



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Copyright Prooftag

The Géowine project has been awarded a label by the Agrimip Innovation cluster, and received a subsidy as part of the 5th FUI call for projects.

Certifying a wine's precise origin and production process

Géowine set out to certify the exact origin of a wine and the details of its production process thanks to a built-in "geo-traceability" system, which was also designed to identify the grape varieties used, the wine-maker's production and wine-making methods, the geology of the section of the vineyard in which the grapes were grown and the composition of the blend. Using a tool like Google Earth, the consumer can then display the precise spot that produced the wine.

A Bubble Tag™ constitutes a unique identifier for each bottle

The project is based on the use of Bubble Tags™. The tag is unique for each bottle and is made of a translucent polymer inside which bubbles are self-generated as the result of a random physical reaction. This constellation of bubbles forms the basis of the identity assigned to each bottle. Each Bubble Tag™ is unique and impossible to replicate. Bubble Tags™ already existed prior to the Géowine product, and were first used in the agricultural and agri-food markets. It is a simple matter for consumers to access the Géowine website, using a mobile phone or personal computer, for confirmation of the origin of the bottle and the characteristics of the wine it contains.

As well as identifying the bottle, the project also combats fraud

The project is expected to provide added value for winegrowers, giving their products greater authenticity. It also provides new guarantees for retailers and consumers by combating fraud, in preparation for implementation of the European directive on wines currently under negotiation.

Project partners

-  Project sponsor: [Plaimont producteurs](#) (winegrowers)
-  [Gers Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)
-  [Prooftag](#) (start-up)
-  [Teledetection and regional management laboratory](#) (Purpan Engineering School)
-  [University of Toulouse III IT research laboratory \(IRIT\)](#)
-  [University of Toulouse I – Capitole economics research laboratory \(LEREPS\).](#)

Initial project results

- **R&D inspired products, prototypes, proof of concept, services:** the project has enabled the development of a geo-traceability and authentication system for winegrowers in the Midi-Pyrénées region, but also throughout France and Europe. It provides growers with a high value added response to the future Wine Directive currently being formulated by the European Commission's Directorate General of Agriculture. The aim is also to help restore European wine's share of the export market by raising the profile of French regional wines in today's competitive wine market.
- **Publications:** 10 scientific publications, 1 book and 5 publications in preparation.
- **Outlook:** the results will be brought to market by the Plaimont winegrowers and Prooftag under the terms of a partnership agreement. Other wine-growing regions will be invited to take part in the operational phase as part of a Géowine2 project. The benefits will be twofold:
 - promoting the commercial development of winegrowers on emerging markets to encourage fraud-free exports;
 - developing a business activity certifying projects in France and internationally.

En savoir plus

- [The Géowine project in pictures](#)
- [The dedicated website](#)

CLUSTER NEWS

▪ INTER-CLUSTER PARTNERSHIP

Languedoc-Roussillon's competitiveness clusters pursue collective support for their innovative SMEs

The seven Languedoc-Roussillon clusters are extending the PREPAR initiative run in conjunction with regional innovation agency Transfert LR to assist their innovative SMEs.



The seven competitiveness clusters in the Languedoc-Roussillon region, [Derbi](#), [Eau](#), [Eurobiomed](#), [Optitec](#), [Risques](#), [Qualimediterranee](#) and [Trimatec](#), will thus be continuing to work alongside the regional innovation agency, Transferts LR, on the PREPAR (PME REcherche PARtenariat) programme.

Innovative SMEs in the Languedoc-Roussillon region will enjoy support from the programme in setting up collaborative projects through to **December 2012**.

This assistance will take the form of:

- a customised project analysis, conducted either by the clusters or by Transferts LR
- four days of consulting services (80% financed) on strategic issues such as feasibility, project structuring or intellectual property.

Since 2007, Languedoc-Roussillon has launched a number of collective initiatives to boost business competitiveness by developing collaborative R&D projects (Insert Europe, PREPAR, Spire) to steer innovating firms towards regional, national and European co-financing. Each initiative, with its own specific features, has provided further information and support for collaborative R&D projects. Following the success of the first support phase, Europe, the French government and the Languedoc-Roussillon region are preparing to extend the PREPAR initiative for a further 18 months.

En savoir plus

- [The PREPAR collective initiative](#)

Alsace BioValley launches calls for bilateral projects from firms and laboratories in the Health sector in Alsace

The cluster has decided to take concrete action to answer the concerns of firms in its sector: yes to international development, as long as it brings in real business.

“International development that must bring returns”

As a result, [Alsace BioValley](#) is launching calls for bilateral projects to finance collaboration between firms and laboratories in Alsace and internationally. Two examples provide a useful illustration.

Quebec

The Alsace BioValley cluster has signed an agreement with the Quebec Consortium for Drug Discovery (CQDM). Under the terms of the agreement, over the period 2011-2013 a number of calls for themed projects will be issued, in response to which academic institutions and private research firms, in both Quebec and Alsace, may submit a joint collaborative project.



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Candidate projects will be evaluated by a peer review committee made up of international experts that will award labels to the most pertinent projects.

Once labelled, the projects will then be presented for bilateral co-financing.

Over the months ahead, several Alsace/Quebec collaborative projects will be getting under way, in areas such as:

- Identification of new biomarkers for neuroendocrine cancers. Sponsored by Caprion Proteomics (Montreal), in collaboration with Strasbourg University Institute of Cellular and Integrative Neurosciences (INCI).
- Visualization and monitoring of receptor-effector complexes activity *in vivo*. Sponsored by the Institute of Genetics and Molecular and Cellular Biology (IGBMC) and the University of Montreal Immunology and Cancerology Research Institute (IRIC) in collaboration with Domain Therapeutics in Illkirch and Mispro in Montreal.
- Development and validation of two synergistic platforms based on imaging and biosimulation to facilitate the discovery and development of drugs to treat diseases of the central nervous system. Sponsored by Rhenovia Pharma in Mulhouse and Photon etc. in Montreal in collaboration with the Neurophotonic Department of the Robert Giffard Research Centre at the University of Laval in Quebec.

Israel

On the strength of this initial success, Alsace BioValley has signed a similar agreement with MATIMOP, the Israeli Industry Center for R&D, in partnership with two other French Health clusters, Lyon Biopole and Cancer-Bio-Santé. This latest agreement should also lead in the next few months to calls for bilateral R&D projects to apply for co-financing.

 En savoir plus

 [The press release of 18 October 2011](#)

ALG'N'CHEM Conference: when the algae professionals meet the chemists

The conference brought together actors, international experts, scientists and industrialists with an interest in algae (macro and micro) and chemicals, sparking dialogue and the sharing of ideas on promising subjects.



Macroalgae. Copyright CEVA

The ALG'N'CHEM conference on algae and chemistry was an international event held in Montpellier from 7th to 10th November.

Organised by the Fédération Française pour les Sciences de la Chimie, [competitiveness cluster Trimatec](#), Transferts LR and ChemSuD, this is the first conference to link the two fields of algae and chemistry.

ALG'N'CHEM attracted some 200 actors, international experts, scientists and industry leaders, who enjoyed a unique opportunity to exchange views and share progress in their work.

The 38 sessions presented the processes currently used for the exploitation of algae. They also described new possibilities regarding products and the chemical and biological processes involved in their processing. With 21% of conference participants representing sixteen nationalities other than French, the conference also firmly established France on the international stage.

Both micro and macroalgae offer remarkable opportunities, whether it be in terms of energy (biofuel), food (both human and animal) or in the chemicals, health and cosmetics sectors. Demand exists in the market, as does the resource itself, but it is underexploited. Developing the algae sector will call for combining talents, energy and complementarities. There are still many challenges to be met: exploring new ways of using algae resources to open up new markets, reducing production costs – energy, processing and packaging costs – as well as environmental impacts.

The production and use of algal biomass is one of the key themes of the Trimatec cluster. The ALG'N'CHEM conference is thus a further addition to the cluster's structural initiatives in this area:

- [The Algasud collective initiative](#) bringing together over thirty firms and some twenty academic teams.
- The publication of a “turquoise” paper, “[Algae, sectors for the future](#)”.

The national partnership agreement with the [Mer PACA](#), [Mer Bretagne](#), [Industrie Agro Ressources](#) and [Qualitropic](#) competitiveness clusters to organise the French microalgae sector.







 Consult the archives [<http://www.competitivite.gouv.fr/lettre-d-information-55.html>]

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