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CLUSTER POLICY

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Performance contracts: a key step in the implementation of the new phase of the competitiveness clusters policy

In the first half of 2013, the work of the competitiveness clusters was heavily marked by the preparation of the new performance contracts. These contracts have the prospect of turning the clusters into “product factories”. The public authorities have validated most of them, and their signing is expected in the very near future.

The contractualization of the relations between the public authorities and the clusters is an essential step in the kick-off of the new phase of the competitiveness clusters policy. It will serve to convey the general objectives of the clusters, i.e. to become “factories for products of the future”, within customised and forward-looking documents.

With this new phase of the clusters policy, the major innovation is the “market” dimension of these performance contracts. Working with their members, the clusters must identify the target markets that will be at the heart of their actions. The poles have also set up a 3-year programme of compatible actions, using the human and financial means at their disposal.

The performance contracts are beneficial to the strategic steering of the clusters policy. They will serve to provide the public authorities with an updated view of each cluster’s strategy, to ensure the positioning of each of them and, if relevant, to encourage new inter-cluster collaborative efforts. With their related indicators, these documents will serve as a reference for measuring the performance of the clusters.

More than two thirds of the performance contracts have already been validated by the ministers involved in the competitiveness clusters policy. These documents are indicative of a significant amount of reflection. They constitute a quality response to the two pillars of the clusters policy: increasing the economic impact of the projects put forward by the clusters, and ramping up the accompaniment of the growth of small and mid-sized companies within the territories. These contracts are expected to be signed by the clusters and the public financiers before the end of 2013.

R&D PROJECTS

R&D projects of the competitiveness clusters: how to promote the transition between R&D and the market?

Concrete examples of the support provided for the marketing of R&D works, in other words building “factories for products of the future”, were presented during the 12th national competitiveness clusters day.

The Government’s ambition for the new clusters policy (2013-2018) is to strengthen the economic impact of the clusters by encouraging them to support the transition of R&D into industrialization and the marketing of the results of the projects.

The 12th national clusters day was an opportunity for three directors of competitiveness clusters and the director of a SME to present the actions intended to facilitate the marketing of the results of collaborative R&D projects.



Concrete examples of the implemented measures included making contacts with major international groups, the effective use of knowledge maps within specific sectors, and accompanying small and mid-sized companies that are active in rapidly changing markets. They are a testament to the essential role that the clusters can play as part of bringing the products of tomorrow and their future customers into contact.

Faced with the need for R&D to transition into the market, the public authorities also took steps. Various institutions are already very involved, notably including the Investment general commission (French acronym: CGI), in charge of investments for the future, the new public investment bank Bpifrance, and the Ile-de-France regional council. Several tools have been set up, or will be set up in the very near future: subsidized loans (PIPC) managed by Bpifrance as part of the investments for the future programme, as well as experimental sites for innovative projects for the Ile de France SMEs, with the support of the Ile de France Regional Council (AIXPé mechanism).

▪ FROM R&D TO THE MARKET

The industrialization loan for the R&D projects of the clusters: a new financial instrument for their companies

€100 million of loans in order to encourage the industrialization and marketing of products, services or processes directly resulting from the R&D projects of the clusters. They will be available starting in early October 2013.

As part of the investments for the future programme, the Government decided to dedicate €100 million to subsidized loans for small and mid-sized companies. These loans are intended for companies in the clusters that wish to transform the results of an R&D project previously backed by their cluster and financed by the State, into a project under the single interministerial fund (French acronym: FUI). They are referred to as “industrialization loans for the R&D projects of the competitiveness clusters” (French acronym: PIPC).

The amount of these loans ranges between €0.5 million and €5 million. They are repayable in 7 years, after 2 years of deferred payments. The State is subsidizing them by 200 points. These loans will be available subject to at least equivalent private co-financing, and with no personal surety or guarantee on the company.

They underscore the Government’s desire, as part of the new phase in the clusters policy, to encourage economic effects throughout the country by promoting the transition from a “project factory” into a “factory for products of the future”.

The collection of the applications will be organised **as of October 2013**. Each candidate will have a maximum of 30 days in which to respond.

 Contact

 contact-pole@finances.gouv.fr



▪ FROM R&D TO THE MARKET

New: a mobile version of the competitiveness clusters Internet site



A new mobile version, for better and more appropriate ergonomics when using the various smartphones on the market.

Given that most web surfers who visit the site www.competitivite.gouv.fr do it from their mobile device, a new version of this Internet site very quickly became necessary to allow better consultation with the use of these tools. While the content available on both versions is exactly the same, the access to these documents was deliberately simplified.

With the first visit to the site from a mobile platform, the choice of the site's version is offered. At any time, a web surfer can return to the Internet site's classical version.

 More information

 [Mobile Internet website \(English access\)](#)

 [Standard Internet website \(English access\)](#)



▪ PUBLICATION

Monitoring State aid on behalf of the competitiveness clusters

Amongst the subjects being studied this month:

- The European Commission approved the restructuring plan for the PSA group, and found that the restructuring aid of €571.9 million is compatible with the internal market.
- As part of the review of the de minimis regulation that will be adopted at the end of 2013, the Commission launched a public consultation on the re-examination of the regulation applicable to de minimis aid. The Member States were asked to submit their observations by 9 September 2013.
- As part of the review of the general block exemption regulation, the Commission initiated a public consultation intended to list the additional categories that should be included in the new regulation.
- The European Commission is consulting with the public on the proposed guidelines regarding how Member States can support the financing of the risks of small and mid-sized companies.

CLUSTERS IN ACTION

FOCUS ON COMPLETED PROJECTS

OPTICS / PHOTONICS

Mosahyc: high definition lithography for industry

Creating new machines that provide laser-based writing systems in order to produce components with the complex technical specifications used in the fields of micro-electronics, biotechnologies and the medical sector.



The Mosahyc project was backed by the Optitec competitiveness cluster.

It received a subsidy under a call for projects supported by the Single interministerial fund.

Copyright : Kloé

The objective

The project's objective was to develop a direct laser-based writing system compatible with complex technological specifications. For example, the plan was to produce microcells with significantly higher walls (1x20), sides that are perfectly vertical and with very low roughness, etc., at speeds that are acceptable for large volume industrial production. The initial aim was the production of new generation ophthalmic lenses.

The project partners

- The project's initiator is Essilor International
- Kloé, the designer and manufacturer of laser writing systems. www.kloe.fr (SME)
- The CEA, user of the Kloé Dilase systems
- The Institut supérieur de l'électronique et du numérique (ISEN): electronic development
- The study group on semiconductors (GES, University of Montpellier): development of materials

Initial technological and economic spin-offs

Results, products, processes, services resulting from the R&D works: the project led to the development of an **industrial prototype** offering the performances expected by the partners. Based on this prototype, Kloé then developed a range of compact and entirely automated lithography systems (the Dilase range), that is now sold around the world. The project had initially been intended to apply to the production of new generation ophthalmic lenses. In the end, this application did not lead to industrialization. Nevertheless, the performances of the prototypes produced by the project were quickly adapted and put to use in other application domains, such as microelectronics and biotechnologies.

- **Theses:** 3



- **International presentations:** the Laser World of Photonics trade fair in Munich at the end of the project, then during various international trade fairs.
- **Initial economic fallout:** the Kloé company created a functional unit around the equipment produced by the project. It is in the process of relocating in order to adapt its area to the production needs of these machines that are sold around the world.
- **Jobs created:** 13 jobs created, including 3 during the project and ten during the commercial phase. The creation of other jobs is planned.
- **In perspective:** the Kloé company developed a new model of the equipment, the Dilase 650, as the direct outcome of the project; it is currently being marketed. Essilor, the CEA and the CNRS are amongst its customers. The Dilase 650 is now one of the flagship products in the Dilase range. Kloé is currently developing its sales of laser lithography equipment on the international stage (Japan, India, Taiwan, Israel and United States). Distribution contracts have been signed with local actors, after presentations during international trade fairs. The company has experienced sustained growth since the marketing of the Dilase 650. It represents 25% of the company's turnover. The development prospects are excellent: within the next two years, the share of export sales should represent 40% of the turnover.
- **Internet site mentioning the project** <http://www.kloe.fr/fr/nos-solutions-lithographie/gamme-dilase>

CLUSTER NEWS

■ SUPPORT FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES

The Aerospace Valley cluster and the European Space Agency present ESA-BIC Sud France, the incubator for space start-ups

Launched during the Bourget trade fair, the new incubator from the European Space Agency (ESA) is called ESA-BIC Sud France. This is this agency's first incubator located in France, with a further 7 already existing in Europe.



During the last Bourget Trade fair, the [Aerospace Valley](#) competitiveness cluster, working with the CNES and the [Pégase](#) Cluster, signed an agreement to create this new structure with the European Space Agency (ESA). It will include 5 incubators from the Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrénées and PACA regions: Technowest, Estia Entreprendre, Midi Pyrénées incubator, Théogone, and Paca Est incubator.

Established in Sophia Antipolis, Toulon, Biarritz, Bordeaux and Toulouse, its aim is to create 75 new space-related start-ups in the next 5 years. These companies must develop space-related data or carry out technology transfers from the space industries to other sectors.

Copyright: Aerospace Valley. Marc Pircher, director of the Centre Spatial de Toulouse, Jean-Jacques Dordain, director general of the European Space Agency, Agnès Paillard, Chairwoman of the Aerospace Valley cluster, Jean-Yves Longère, director general of the Pégase cluster.



“Using its ESA BIC concept, the ESA technology transfer programme has demonstrated, in several European regions, its ability to create new jobs and companies with the use of European investments in research and development, and while making them accessible to entrepreneurs”, indicates Jean-Jacques Dordain, ESA director general. “This powerful tool has now been extended to regions where technical excellence is part of the culture.”

According to Agnès Paillard, chairwoman of the Aerospace Valley cluster, “the creation of this incubator is exceptional. It’s providing innovative SMEs with opportunities. It has also brought together three regions and five incubators, which once again indicates that the competitiveness clusters are unifying structures.”

 More information

 [Internet website](#)

 Contact

 For any information: lattes@aerospace-valley.com

▪ INTER-CLUSTER COLLABORATION

Working together for greater competitiveness: the results of F2C-eu

Thanks to the actions of Agrimip Sud-Ouest Innovation, Valorial and Vitagora, the SME members of these three competitiveness clusters obtained European aid for their participation in 5 European research projects.

The agri-food sector is a major industry in Europe. It represents 14.5% of the total turnover of EU production, i.e. more than €917 million. The sector is made up of a great number of small companies (99% SMEs), that often have trouble competing on the international stage.

In this context, in 2010, the DGCIS launched a call for projects for “European technological partnerships”, intended to encourage the involvement of SMEs in European projects. Three competitiveness clusters, Agrimip Sud-ouest Innovation, Valorial and Vitagora (the Aquimer cluster has since joined them) created an agri-food super-cluster, F2C-Innovation, in order to jointly respond to this call for projects.

They proposed the project “F2C-eu, working together for greater competitiveness”, with the aim of:

-  establishing scientific and technological partnerships in order to acquire new tools and new skills;
-  facilitating the international development of their SMEs by extending their network and encouraging exchanges between European partners.

In September 2013, the F2C-eu project is in progress. Its objectives have already been reached: 340 first-time SME participants in European projects were provided with information, and 14 SMEs were provided with support for submitting a project.

In all, 5 European projects – Optifel, Beast, Legato, Terifiq and Nu-Age – involving 5 of the SMEs from the three clusters, were able to receive a subsidy of more than €700,000. Today, the action is continuing thanks to the methodology developed by the clusters in order to provide SMEs with easier access to European projects and the set-up of a network of actors. This initiative also helps the clusters to better understand the Horizon 2020 programme, in order to better respond to the expectations of their members.



i More information

Video testimonials of the three SMEs supported as part of the F2C-EU.



Michel Berning
Chazal Group
<video M.Berning>



Jean Le Lez
Le Lez Process company
<video J.LeLez>



Alain Gaudon
Sigfox company
<video A.Gaudon>

▪ INTER-CLUSTER COLLABORATION

Initial concrete outlines of projects during the 3rd Plant InterCluster international get-togethers

The 3rd international get-togethers hosted by the Plant InterCluster, a network of 4 French plant competitiveness clusters, provided an opportunity to strengthen the partnerships with foreign clusters, notably in Argentina and Poland.



The Plant InterCluster (PIC) is a consortium created in 2001 on the initiative of the 4 competitiveness clusters [Terralia](#) (former PEIFL), [Qualimediterranée](#), [Qualitropic](#) and [Végépolys](#) in the plant domain. For the 3rd consecutive year, they gathered their international network in order to promote collaborative efforts in terms of innovation, commercial exchanges and best practices.

Copyright : PC-Vegepolys

The representatives of the 11 clusters at the end of the 3rd PIC get-togethers.

The third get-togethers were organised in Marseille on 5 and 6 June, around the topic of “Best practices for a greener future”. They brought together 11 international clusters from 7 countries (Argentina, Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal).

In addition to strengthening the mutual knowledge of the consortium members, the objective of these 3rd get-togethers was to generate collaborative research and development projects. Several working groups were organised around topics such as “greenhouses”, “alternative inputs and biocontrol”, and “precision agriculture”.

These get-togethers were a great success, since they led to:

- **2 cooperation agreements** with the Argentine “Cluster de la Semilla” and the Polish “Wielkopolska Clustering centre”;
- the creation **of a European project consortium** around the topic of “greenhouses of the future”;



- **the emergence of a working group** after the “alternative inputs and biocontrol” workshop, that served to identify key contracts and shared working axes;
- **the emergence of working leads** around information and communication technologies applied to agronomy.

These good results confirm the actions of the consortium members as promising new ideas for the worldwide plant sector. One of the clusters that signed the cooperation agreement will host the next PIC get-togethers in 2014.

📁 Consult the archives [<http://competitivite.gouv.fr/newsletter-924.html>]

📧 Sign up [<http://competitivite.gouv.fr/home-903.html>]

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