



THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF WALLOON COMPETITIVENESS CLUSTERS

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WALLONIA : A REGION AT THE VERY HEART OF EUROPE



WALLOON COMPETITIVENESS CLUSTERS



- A totally new industrial development approach linked to the implementation of an extensive economic recovery programme known as Wallonia's Contract for the Future.
- The Contract for the Future focuses exceptional resources (€1.4 bn) on 5 priorities during the 2006-2009 period :
 1. Create competitiveness clusters
 2. Stimulate business start-ups
 3. Reduce corporate taxes
 4. Boost research and development activities
 5. Generate job skills

- Priority given to the most promising growth sectors:
 1. Life sciences (pharmaceuticals / health)
 2. Aeronautics & Aerospace
 3. Mechanical engineering
 4. Transport & Logistics
 5. Food-processing industry

- Total budget for cluster development: 280 million euros over the 2006-2009 period
 - 120 millions for research and development projects ;
 - 55 millions for training and employment schemes ;
 - 50 millions invested by the government in assets and holdings specific to the clusters ;
 - 45 millions for general investment incentives ;
 - 10 millions for export promotion and foreign investment assistance.

- **Status report**

- A call for tenders for the constitution of clusters was issued in late 2005.
- Proposals submitted by consortia of enterprises, research organisations and job training centres were evaluated by an international jury composed of CEOs of large Belgian firms.

- **Status report**

- In July and September 2006, the five competitiveness clusters were launched:
 - ❑ total number of participants : 486 organisations, of which 375 private firms ;
 - ❑ 61 projects approved and financed (R&D, product design, industrial process, training)
 - ❑ 30 R&D projects financed ;
 - ❑ € 164 millions of public aid allocated ;
 - ❑ 3.760 expected new jobs.

Role of AWEX

- **Evaluator of the international dimension of the clusters**
- **Eligibility criteria for the international dimension of the clusters' projects :**
 - Impact on the growth of Walloon exports and employment creation linked to export activities ;
 - Potentialities of the foreign markets targeted ;
 - Quality of international partners ;
 - Impact on Wallonia's international visibility and attractiveness towards foreign investors.

Role of AWEX

- **Promoter of the international development of clusters**
- **Export promotion measures (2006-2009 budget : €5.5 millions)**
 - Assistance in recruiting an export manager per cluster ;
 - Preparation of an annual export action plan per cluster specifically based on their international strategies.
- **Foreign investment promotion measures (2006-2009 budget : €4.5 millions)**
 - Recruitment of five high-level FDI experts within AWEX which are specialised in the search for foreign investors in the sectors covered by the clusters ;
 - Reinforcement of the international visibility campaign of the Walloon region by integrating the dynamics of the clusters.

- **Conventions : legal framework for international development assistance provided by AWEX**
- **Type of projects defined in the conventions:**
 - Recruitment of export managers ;
 - Development of promotional material (Web sites, CD-ROMs, brochures, etc.) ;
 - Carrying out of visibility and branding campaigns at the international level ;
 - Organisation of cluster-based foreign trade missions ;
 - Participation to major international fairs ;
 - Invitation of foreign delegations and foreign investors ;
 - Development of networking and partnerships with foreign clusters.

• Conclusions :

- Efforts to promote the international development of clusters through AWEX are important at the Walloon scale ;
- The international development of clusters is based on:
 - ❑ a supportive approach by the Walloon government (important public aid for cluster specific investments) ;
 - ❑ structures and organisations initiated and managed by clusters' members ;
 - ❑ a pro-active international approach: cross-border networking, international partnerships and participation to European research programmes.
 - ❑ sufficient critical mass of participants.



Thank you for your attention

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