



SET UP YOUR BUSINESS

➤ CLUSTERS OR ENTERPRISE NETWORKS

On the initiative of the Wallonia government, clusters came into being in January 2000 with the purpose of fostering networking among companies. A cluster is thus a way of organizing the production system, set up by businesses and possibly involving research centers as well. Its features include:

- a framework for cooperation based on related activities
- the voluntary development of complementary relations between businesses, whether commercial or not
- the promotion of a common development vision.

Since 2001, this support for enterprise networking has been prominent among the measures of the Contrat d'Avenir (Contract for the Future) for the Wallonia Region – demonstrating the determination of the authorities to foster cooperation and partnerships between Wallonia businesses, whatever their size.

The clusters' many advantages include increased productivity from better synergies between the players involved, lower prices, and more adaptation and sharing of production factors.

Market mechanisms are made easier by the community of interests and the trust that exists within clusters. Complementarity between the businesses permits economies of scale – in the commercial sector, for example. Production factors (labor, equipment etc.) become more effective by virtue of the critical mass of the com-

panies that make up the networks. Innovation has improved, mainly owing to the interactions that have been established between customers and suppliers: these favor the development of market-driven innovation. Proximity improves access to sources of knowledge, in both businesses and research centers.

While Centers of Competitiveness receive funding for the implementation of their investment, R&D or training projects in line with the competitive positioning strategies that they have defined for themselves, the clusters themselves are supported by the Wallonia Region for the purpose of creating networks of enterprises and favoring innovative partnerships – whether industrial, commercial or technological.

The ten clusters or (cross-)sector networks are increasing interaction between businesses operating in the Wallonia productive base, in all the fields where sharing resources and knowledge may raise the level of competitiveness and innovation.

- Aeronautics
- Auto-Mobility
- Solid waste
- Eco-construction
- Space
- Nutrition
- Clinical research
- ICT
- Transport and logistics
- Digital audio, video and text technologies

<http://clusters.wallonie.be>

GOOD TO KNOW

The Wallonia clusters, together with the Centers of Competitiveness, cover virtually all the sectors of the economy. Every ambitious enterprise wishing to root its business activity firmly within the Wallonia Region, and simultaneously to develop its market on the international plane, is strongly

recommended to play an active role in the operation of these clusters.

For online information about the clustering policy in the Wallonia Region, please visit the web site:

<http://clusters.wallonie.be>

> CLUSTERS OR ENTERPRISE NETWORKS

10 clusters as vectors of competitiveness

• **Aeronautics: EWA**

The aeronautic sector plays a fundamental role in the Wallonia economy, as it is based on the existence of a metallurgical industry and, in particular, on a network of subcontractors specializing in precision engineering and armaments. Wallonia aeronautics, based in Charleroi and Liège, employs 5,000 persons directly and 7,000 indirectly. Under the umbrella of the Association of Wallonia Aeronautics Enterprises (EWA), the 52 member companies cover the sector's entire range of activities (engines, structures and systems, on-board equipment and defense equipment) for a turnover of approximately €1 billion in 2005, 90% of which was exported.

www.ewa.be

• **Auto-Mobility**

The Auto-Mobility cluster is an independent, interdisciplinary and dynamic network of businesses, universities, specialized research centers and services in support of research, financing and the commercial expansion of the automotive sector in the broadest sense of the term.

www.clusterautomobile.be

• **Solid waste**

The "Solid Waste Cluster" groups together some forty companies with expertise in waste management and disposal. It covers all the aspects and problems related to solid waste, whether domestic or industrial, hazardous or green waste, contaminated soil or sludge, inert or special products, incineration or composting, biomethanization or land-filling, the management of construction spaces or the closing of sites.

www.dechetssolides.com

• **Eco-construction**

Environmentally-friendly construction through the identification of the impact of projects on the environment, the incorporation of bioclimatic principles, renewable energy, and the use of so-called "ecological" or "natural" materials and building techniques, which are more labor- than energy-intensive.

www.clusters.wallonie.be/ecoconstruction

• **Space: WALLONIE ESPACE**

Established in 1996, the WALLONIE ESPACE association has the objective of promoting and developing the Wallonia space potential at both national and international level, and to strengthen the dynamics existing between industry and research centers. With thirty or so members, the association was recognized in October 2003 as the Space Cluster of the Wallonia Region. www.wallonie-espace.be

• **Nutrition**

The mission of the Nutrition Cluster is to stimulate and support food-processing businesses in the Wallonia Region, and more specifically SMEs and very small enterprises, with the purpose of promoting healthy food and innovation through awareness campaigns.

www.clusternutrition.be

• **Clinical research: ARESA**

The Wallonia Region possesses medical skills and infrastructures whose quality is recognized worldwide. The main objectives of this cluster are: to offer high-quality Clinical Research, to become the reference platform for communication within the sector, and offer a global solution to the demand for clinical trials from the biotech and pharmaceutical industries. ARESA brings together over ninety bodies, which cover all research issues and needs from pre-clinical phases to phase IV studies.

www.aresa.be

• **INFOPÔLE ICT CLUSTER**

This excellence cluster in information and communication technologies – the INFOPOLE ICT Cluster – aims at improving the visibility and attractiveness of the sector, to strengthen its development dynamics, to capitalize the expertise stemming from research and to open doors to international development.

www.ict-cluster.be - www.infopole.be

• **Transport – Logistics: T&L**

The meeting point for all players in the sector (carriers, logistics companies, infrastructure managers, training organizations etc.) and coordinator of all local initiatives through, among others, local transportation & logistical structures, the Transport & Logistics Cluster of the Wallonia Region, Belgium fuels the development of the transport and logistics sector in the Wallonia Region.

www.focus-on-logistics.be

• **Digital audio, video and text technologies: TWIST**

This network of players operating in the digital-technologies sector with applications in sound (audio), image (video) and text, TWIST consists of some forty businesses, research centers and training organizations. From synthesis imaging to set design and voice and character recognition, the sector employs over 6,000 persons and generates sales exceeding €850 million in the Wallonia Region.

WALLONIA EXPORT & INVESTMENT OFI - Office for Foreign Investors

Av. Materne, 115
B - 5100 Namur
Belgium
Phone: +32 81 332 850
Fax: +32 81 332 869
welcome@investinwallonia.be

San Francisco (USA): +1 415 391 31 11
Chicago (USA): +1 312 357 63 49
Tokyo (Japan): +81 3 3556 1061
Shanghai (China): +86 21 6437 9489

And over 40 offices throughout the world