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“Accelerating the international development of competitiveness clusters”

Second annual Forum on Competitiveness Clusters to focus on
“Worldwide clusters and French *pôles de compétitivité*”
17 November 2006, Sophia Antipolis, France

One year after they were given the official seal of approval by the French government, the **Review of competitiveness clusters (*pôles de compétitivité*)** - presented to the council of ministers on 30 August 2006 - shows that all the planned clusters in France are now fully operational, the funding has come in according to plan, and the officially sanctioned projects they are working on are mainly focused around sectors tackling the greatest challenges for the economy : information and communication technologies (ICT), energy, healthcare, biotechnology, aeronautics and transport.

2007, towards international horizons

2007 is the year when the French clusters look towards speeding up their international development and mobilising their funding in terms of capital investment.

To intensify and support this new move, the Sophia Antipolis Foundation (which aims to facilitate partnerships and exchanges in technology) is organising the Second annual Forum on Competitiveness Clusters, in close co-operation with the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Foreign Affairs Ministry and state-owned financial institution the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*. The main theme of the Forum will be

**“Worldwide clusters and French *pôles de compétitivité*:
time for international development”**

To be held on 17 November 2006 in Sophia Antipolis, France

Important guests attending the Forum will include **Christian Estrosi**, Minister for Regional Development; **François Goulard**, Minister for Higher Education and Research; **François Loos**, Minister for Industry; and **Pierre Laffitte**, parliamentary Senator for the Alpes Maritimes region, Chairman of the Sophia Antipolis Foundation and Chairman of the global ‘Secure Communications Solutions’ business cluster.

The Forum aims to measure the international activities of the French clusters and make practical use of best practice in this area based on case studies from twinned foreign/French clusters already operating in Europe. Another aim of the event will be to encourage more of these kinds of international co-operative programmes by introducing potential international partners to appropriate French clusters.

KEY FOCAL AREAS

The clusters involved operate in areas that have never been more crucial for global development:

- Complex information systems (*Systém@tic*)
- Healthcare (*Orphème*)
- Maritime issues (*Mer PACA* and *Mer Bretagne*)
- anotechnology (*Minalogic*)
- Agriculture and sustainable development (*Industries et Agro Ressources*)
- Aeronautics, space and embedded systems (*Aerospace Valley*)
- Photonics systems (*Photonique*)
- Natural, industrial and technological risks, and associated systems for local authorities (*Gestion des risques et vulnérabilité des territoires*)
- Secure communications solutions (*SCS*).

The Forum will take the following format:

- ✓ A **conference** centred around case studies from various French and worldwide clusters, companies, research and training centres. In particular, the focus will be on alliances, especially those aimed at developing innovation or accessing new markets.
- ✓ A series of **business-to-business meetings** between French clusters and their international counterparts.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Focus on the **French government's policy of support**, with presentations from relevant Ministries and organisations including the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry (MINEFI), the national Treasury and Economic Policy directorate (DGTPE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the agency for innovation Oséo/Anvar, the French inward investment agency (AFII) and the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*.
- ✓ The **European Commission's policy on clusters** will also be on the agenda, with a contribution from **David White**, the Commission's Director of Innovation Policy. As the Sophia Antipolis Foundation confirms, in this respect: *"This, the second event after the 'pôles de compétitivité' were established, is the prelude to the development of Europe's future policy on clusters, which will shortly be implemented under the auspices of the EC"*.
- ✓ **Eminent figures from the international political, business and scientific community** from Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary, Israel and Finland will attend the event to discuss potential partnerships in their respective countries, as well as their own local centres of interest, networks and co-operation policies. In addition, the head of research and technology for a major US group will be present to explain how his company has incorporated the policy of competitiveness clusters into its worldwide strategy.

For more information and press registration for the event, please contact:

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