

La France à la loupe

Competitive clusters in France

Changes in the international economic environment have prompted France to launch a large-scale industrial policy to promote and develop key elements of its industrial competitiveness. The Regional Planning Committee (CIDAT) meeting on 13 December 2002 decided on **a new industrial strategy based on the development of competitive clusters** to increase French industrial potential and create the conditions to foster the emergence of new activities with a high international profile. This strategy is based on active partnership between manufacturers, research centres and training bodies.

A **competitive cluster is defined as a geographical concentration of businesses, training centres and public and private research units working in partnership on innovative projects.**

THE COMPETITIVE CLUSTER STRATEGY

Competitive clusters hence use a partnership approach and define joint, innovative projects. This **strategy** was developed by the Interministerial Regional Planning and Development Committee (CIADT) meeting of 14 September 2004. It meets three main aims:

- To increase the economy's growth potential
- To more effectively combat deindustrialisation and relocations
- To maintain our technological expertise at the highest level.

The development strategy for competitive clusters also takes place in the European level in keeping with the goal set at the Lisbon Summit in 2000 to make Europe the most competitive economy in the world.

Following a call for projects launched on 2 December 2004, the government published [a list of the economic development projects](#) granted the “competitive cluster” label by the Interministerial Regional Planning and Development Committee meeting of 12 July 2005. The selected projects cover both emerging technological fields such as nanotechnologies, BI technologies and microelectronics and existing areas such as motor vehicles and aeronautics.

Each approved cluster will be individually monitored by a co-ordination committee set up by the region’s prefect. This committee will be responsible for drawing up a framework contract to define the cluster’s operations, strategy, research priorities and performance evaluation criteria.

There are two main types of clusters:

- Very high-tech clusters with an international profile
- Clusters built on a “classic” industrial basis in French areas of specialisation or development.

SUPPORTING AND FINANCING COMPETITIVE CLUSTERS

Competitive clusters can take a wide range of legal forms: association under the association act of 1901, economic interest grouping (EIG) or scientific interest grouping (SIG).

The government provides three public structures to underpin the competitive cluster policy. These structures are designed to step up:

- The involvement of public research in programmes that foster partnerships between public laboratories and corporate laboratories and hence contribute to technological transfers of the results of public research to the business world: the National Research Agency
- The development of R&D with projects implementing major development programmes alongside private financing: the Agency for Industrial Innovation
- Support to SMEs: the OSEO group.

A total of €1.5 billion has been earmarked for the clusters from 2006 to 2008, including €300 million in social security and tax exemptions. A full €400 million will be in appropriations from different ministries and €800 million will be financed jointly by the National Research Agency, the Agency for Industrial Innovation and the OSEO group.

WEBSITES

- ↻ **Site on the promotion and development of competitive clusters**, French Ministry of the Economy and Finance
<http://www.competitivite.gouv.fr/>
- ↻ **Le retour de la politique industrielle en France (The return of industrial policy in France)**, French documentation website
<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/dossiers/politique-industrielle/poles-competitivite.shtml>

LEGISLATION

- ↻ **Circular of 2 August 2005 on the implementation of competitive clusters**
<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/WAspad/UnTexteDeJorf?numjo=PRMX0508671C>

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- ↻ **La France et ses pôles de compétitivité (France and its competitive clusters)**, Problèmes économiques, February 2005
- ↻ **A armes égales (On equal terms)**, report to the Prime Minister by Bernard Carayon, la Documentation Française, 2006, 118 pages
<http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/064000728/0000.pdf>