



DOING BUSINESS IN THE EUREGIO MEUSE-RHINE
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CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

DUTCH-GERMAN BUSINESS CLUB

[COM: Aachen, May 25]

The Dutch-German Business Club met June 8 in Aachen to look at vocational education and business training in the city.

<http://www.aachen.ihk.de>

THE HISTORY OF THE AACHEN CHAMBER

[COM: Aachen, May 18]

On Tuesday June 15 at the Grand Foyer of the Chamber in Aachen, a major history of the Chamber has been presented. The book is called: '1804-2004 200 Years at the center of Europe: The History of Aachen's Chamber of Industry and Commerce' by Paul Thomas. There is also an exhibition, highlighting events of historical moment in the Chamber's history, which runs through to September in the Chamber Foyer.

<http://www.aachen.ihk.de>

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

NEW GARBAGE PLANT

[BIZ/INFRA: Hasselt, April 23]

The Flemish government has asked the Limburg development company LRM to investigate the market and to find a private partner to develop a company to build and run a pre-processing installation for 150,000 tons of domestic and business waste in Limburg at awaterside location in Genk-South.

The preferred partners for LRM were NUHMA NV and the intercommunal waste processing organization IGS. The LRM subsidiary, Lisom NV was charged with working the project out in detail and applying for permits. On March 18, LRM, NUHMA and Lisom concluded an agreement in which they undertook to find a private partner. This would also allow the intercommunal association to join the new company and the search is now on.

Deadline for candidates is June 4 at 10:00 hrs. Candidates successful in the first stage of the selection procedure will go on to the second, which will be completed by September 30, 2004. Check the link for further information.

<http://www.lisom.be>

SKF TONGRES TO GROW

[BIZ/LOG: Tongres, April 23]

SKF, the Swedish ball bearing giant, with its European distribution center in Tongres, is to expand. Warehouse space is to be increased by 10,500 m² and this will bring with it an extra 30 to 35 jobs. The company also wants to buy a further 10 ha from the city of Tongres to further expand its site. SKF in Tongres employs 200 and the business achieves revenues of EUR 500m.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

BIG ORDER FOR BALTEAU

[BIZ: Sprimont, April 23]

Balteau, the specialist in hydraulics and electrical engineering in Sprimont has won a contract in Vietnam worth EUR 1m, to take part in the construction of a major sewage treatment plant.

<http://www.brf.be>

ALBERT CANAL BIZ PARKS

[BIZ/INFRA: Brussels, April 23]

The Flemish Minister of Planning has taken a significant decision on the further development of the Albert Canal economic network (ENA). The area of focus for the business parks is between the E313 highway and the Albert Canal.

Restructuring along the Albert Canal produces 231 ha; new sites along the ENA another 360 ha. In addition to almost 600 ha of new sites, a regional business park has been selected on the North side of the E313 at Wommelgem-Ranst. The conditions for the potential sites were that they should have multi-modal access or transport distribution and should be water-related sites. In the important Antwerp-Aachen access, there is room for water-related and non-water-related activity and a high-quality rail and pipeline infrastructure.

<http://www.belga.be>

A LOT FOR CHEMELOT

[BIZ: Sittard-Geleen, April 22]

Chemelot, the business park for chemical and allied industries in Sittard/Geleen, can look forward to another 15 new companies locating there in the coming three years and employment for around 250. To achieve this, DSM, the Province of Limburg (NL) and the Municipality of Sittard-Geleen have put EUR 60m on the table, as DSM itself moves out of the chemicals world over the next few years.

As part of the agreement, DSM will make the Chemelot site suitable for other companies; not simply those in chemical production, but also for small innovative companies. They can make use of DSM in Sittard-Geleen's research and lab facilities and there is EUR 5m to attract people to locate to Chemelot. Following Sabic and possibly Sekisui, other companies are expected soon, including Angel Biotechnology.

<http://www.limburger.nl>

NEW HOTEL FOR SNOWWORLD

[BIZ: Landgraaf, April 22]

The Snowworld winter sport complex in Landgraaf is going to start construction of a new hotel at its location in October. The first guests will be welcomed to the new hotel on September 1, 2005. The hotel will be built in a chalet style and linked to the existing restaurant at the bottom of the ski slope. It will have 400 beds with four additional apartments. Prices will range from EUR 50 and 70 a night. The hotel is expected to cost EUR 3.5m and EUR 1.5m will be invested in the extension to the restaurant.

<http://www.snowworld.nl/>

VALUE ADDED AT RECYDEL

[BIZ/INFRA: Wandre, April 21]

Recydel in Wandre near Liège is the product of a public private partnership between the Van Gansewinkel Company, which has a 60% holding, SPAQuE, the public authority's company for improving the quality of the environment, which has 25.1% and the Liège Intradel utility has 14.9%. The company is capitalized at EUR 1.8m and its revenues continue to rise from EUR 981,359 in 2002, to EUR 1,658,022 in 2003. Recydel employs 25. It is concerned with recycling white and brown goods and adding value by selling second-hand equipment with a 6-month guarantee. Sale, sorting, adding value and getting rid of waste are the object of the exercise.

Two new lines were taken into service recently at Recydel, one is specializing in dismantling refrigerators and the other concerned with small electronic units; toys, instruments, telephones, tools, etc., with the aim of keeping dangerous waste out of the environment.

<http://www.vangansewinkel.com/>

OCULUS OPENS IN SITTARD

[BIZ/LIFE-SCI: Petaluma CA/ Sittard-Geleen, April 21]

Oculus Innovative Sciences, headquartered in Petaluma, California, is pioneering innovative technologies that globally re-define the disinfectant and antiseptic markets. Oculus has developed the revolutionary Microcyn disinfectant and antiseptic with broad applications in areas as diverse as the consumer, medical, dental, veterinary, cosmetic, wound healing, food processing and anti-bioterrorism markets. The company has employees and operations in Mexico, Europe and the US and includes two wholly owned subsidiaries Oculus Technologies of Mexico, S.A. de C.V. and Oculus Innovative Sciences Netherlands B.V.

The company investigated location options in Europe and chose Sittard-Geleen, where it has been active since the beginning of 2004. Production will start in mid-2004 and the company will initially employ 15. First contacts with Oculus came from the life-science network of LIOF and Syntens, the company matches the objective of attracting innovative companies in the life sciences, where major growth is expected.

<http://www.oculusis.com>

HARSPER FLAT PANELS

[BIZ: Roermond, April 20]

Harsper & Co Ltd. of Seoul, Korea, a pioneer in developing, manufacturing and distributing flat-panel displays (FPD) for the last 17 years, is going to establish its European head office in Roermond. The company will assemble large-scale plasma screens for a number of European clients. This is the first assembly unit for Harsper outside Korea.

The parts for the screens will be produced by another part of the Harsper Group in Korea and shipped via Rotterdam to Roermond. In addition to assembly, Roermond will also be the European sales HQ, in particular for the French, German and British markets. The Roermond plant is expected initially to employ between 30 and 40, both in production and sales and on the technology side. The investment will be at around EUR 4m in the coming 3 years. The province is providing a subsidy of EUR 3,000 per job, up to a maximum of EUR 75,000.

Harsper looked for other locations in Europe, but decided for Roermond because of the available space on the Natronchemieweg in Roermond-Herten where they have a 1,600-m² plant. Japanese, US and Korean companies dominate the basic materials in this industry, which include glass substrate, TAC (cellulose triacetate) and BEF (brightness enhancement film). Panel component assembly and production, including driver IC's, backlight module assembly and color filter production, as well as the actual panel production, are dominated by South-Korean, Japanese and Taiwan manufacturers. The system assembly industry for large-sized panels, 10.4 inches and above, used in LCD monitors, notebook PC's and LCD TV receivers, is mainly concentrated in these areas too. There is currently a production boom in the industry.

<http://www.liof.nl>

GLASS COCKPIT SYSTEMS

[BIZ/SCI-TECH: St.Trond/Toronto, April 16]

B&A Avionics, a company based in St.Trond, increases flight safety by simplifying cockpit instrumentation. Its glass cockpit systems offer an intelligent alternative to multiple meter and gages and visualize the instruments on a single display at an affordable price. Their universal flight display is an intelligent multifunctional instrumentation display with onboard intelligent electronics.

Earlier this year Toronto-based Luxell Technologies Inc. announced that its operating division, Aktelux, had signed an Memorandum of understanding with B&A AVIONICS. Under the agreement, the two companies intend to explore new business opportunities through the design and development of a family of Multi-function Displays (MFDs).

By marketing common signal processing electronics in various sizes, Aktelux and B&A jointly benefit their high-end aerospace and defence customers with very cost effective MFDs.

About Aktelux

Aktelux designs and manufactures flat panel display technologies and avionics solutions for the defense sector, through Luxell Technologies. More information can be found at www.aktelux.com

<http://www.ba-elec.com>.

EUR 2.5M FOR PEARS

[BIZ: St Trond, April 9]

The Belgian fruit auction (BFV) in Sint-Trond is going to invest EUR 2.5m in the expansion of its pear complex, in a packing department for pears and in the optimization of its trading activities. New activities will take place at the Trost Belgium site in St Trond. The Belgian fruit auction recently bought 16 acres of this bankrupt site for which it was the major candidate. There are 11 on-site buildings, including a canteen, a production hall and warehousing.

In addition to the highly modern pear complex, the BFV is going to build a new packaging department. The pear department specializes in using technology to retain the characteristic green of 'Conférence' pears.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

LIOF STAKE IN HOENS

[BIZ: Maastricht, April 8]

LIOF, the Limburg development company, has taken a 30% stake in the stock of Hoens BV, a trader in technical equipment with its head office in Geleen. The company has branches at strategic locations in the Netherlands and Belgium and employs 120. It provides equipment for the automotive, construction, chemicals, plastics, office machines, engineering and paper industries for SME's and large industrial customers. Hoens recently received a number of major contracts, for companies, including Stork in the Benelux, to deliver tools and technical equipment. The 3-year contract has a total value of EUR 15m. Hoens expects to achieve rapid growth in the near future. The financial support from LIOF will enable the company to achieve market leadership in the Benelux, which will require investment in IT, e-business and innovative logistical concepts.

<http://www.hoens.nl>

SYNTRACK FULLY VODAFONE

[BIZ: Maastricht April 5]

Vodafone has gained full ownership of Syntrack, the Dutch test, training and network contingency center. Syntrack gives Vodafone the facilities to test its innovative mobile services and to train staff. It also serves as a network contingency center in case of possible calamities or network problems.

Syntrack is located in the Centipedes building in the Avantis industrial zone of the international European Science and Business Park in Heerlen/Aachen. The center has mobile trailers available for rapid response in case of network problems. The trailers can even replace parts of the network if necessary. Syntrack was set up in June 1999 as a joint venture between Vodafone, Ericsson and LIOF.

<http://www.vodafone.com>

LIMBURG-VENTURES FOR CILIAN

[BIZ/LIFE-SCI: Maastricht, April 2]

Limburg Ventures BV has announced its first investment since the creation of the fund in 2003. The Maastricht-based venture capital fund led a EUR 5 million series B financing round for Cilian AG, an innovative German biotech company located in Münster, Germany. Cilian plans to start a new lab and related business development activities at the Geleen Research Campus, located on DSM's Chemelot site, north of Maastricht. Limburg Ventures is a joint initiative of DSM and the Limburg Development Company LIOF. The fund was joined in this financing round by a number of existing shareholders including ABN AMRO Capital and Newmex Ventures.

Cilian is developing and marketing biopharmaceuticals produced in its novel, proprietary expression system. Its current product pipeline consists of a proprietary product targeting pancreatic insufficiency and a product treating a specific lysosomal storage disease. The proceeds of this round will be used to advance both products into the clinic and to advance the production platform towards an industrial standard. "We are excited to have access to a biotechnology cluster formed by 300 biotechnology companies, five universities and many research institutes in the Meuse Rhine region," states Marcus Hartmann, PhD, founder of Cilian.

Cilian will be opening a new lab at Geleen at year-end 2004 with the intention of further developing their platform for producing enzymes and proteins.

<http://www.limburgventures.com>

ISOLA SOLD TO TEXAS PACIFIC

[BIZ: Essen/Düren, April 1]

Rütgers AG, Essen, a wholly-owned subsidiary of RAG Aktiengesellschaft, has signed an agreement for the sale and purchase of the business of its wholly-owned subsidiary, Isola AG, Düren - world's biggest in glass epoxy laminates - to a consortium of Texas Pacific Group, a leading US private equity fund based in Fort Worth, Texas, and Redfern Partners, a strategic investor in the PCB industry based in Lake Forest, California.

Both parties agreed to keep the purchase price confidential. Last year's reported sales price was however approx. EUR 235m (see Issue58) The sale is subject to the consent of supervisory bodies and antitrust authorities, and is expected to close in the second quarter of 2004.

Isola AG is the world's leading provider of copper-clad glass-fiber reinforced base materials (glass epoxy laminates) for the production of printed circuit boards. The company has ten production facilities in Europe, Asia and the US, and generated revenues of approximately EUR 380 million in 2003, with a workforce of about 2,400 employees. Texas Pacific Group will maintain the company's manufacturing location in Düren as a key element of Isola's European strategy.

<http://www.rag.de>

MADIBIC HQ IN LUMMEN

[BIZ: Lummen, April 1]

Friesland Madibic Food Service is building its new head office in Lummen. In addition to the existing Madibic location, a contemporary office building is being completed which will be the headquarters for the company in Belgium. Madibic is a department of the Dutch multinational Friesland Coberco Dairy Foods. It has decided to make Lummen its Belgian headquarters. The building, a steel structure, is based on the Mathieu Gijbels NV office building in Opglabbeek. The new building will be completed in 2005 and will represent an investment of EUR 3.2m. Friesland Madibic develops, produces and sells an assortment of dairy products with added value, targeted at professional food service markets, such as bakeries, fast-food chains, hotels, restaurants and the catering industry.

<http://www.kvklimburg.voka.be>

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

3,000 TONNERS AT LIEGE

[INFRA: Liège, April 27]

Liège's autonomous port, the second largest in Europe, in terms of tonnage handled, is building new quays, modernizing its rail infrastructure and developing a new multi-modal platform, as part of the European fund for regional development (EFRD) Meuse-Vesdre Objective II project. The EU is contributing EUR 3.2m to the various dockyards of a total of EUR 13m. A linking element in this project is the increased dimensions of the infrastructures, giving access for example to 3,000 tons barges at its Sclessin location. Studies are ongoing for handling coasters and for extending the dockyard at Monsin to take barges of up to 3,000 tons.

According to Philip Bodeux, writing in Le Soir, Mme Simonet is keen to attract more container transport to Liège. The port of Antwerp has more than it can handle and is looking for space and this is the time for Liège to act. The project is for large multi-modal platforms for business in the designated sites along the Albert Canal at Hermalle (90 ha) and Chertal (160 ha in 2010), when the hot-rolled steel lines come to a halt. It would be possible to develop a major dedicated logistics area also close to the Hauts-Sars location and interesting to Antwerp, which needs the space.

<http://www.lesoir.be>

TNT FOR CLINICAL TRIALS

[LOG: London/Liège, April 16]

In response to changing trends in the global clinical trials market TNT Express has launched a new direct door-to-door service for clinical trials shipments called 'Clinical Express Exclusive'.

Designed to provide transport solutions in developing and more remote areas of the world, the new service is aimed at pharmaceutical companies, central laboratories and contract research organizations engaged in the development of new medicines.

The global Clinical Trials market is changing rapidly with growth rates of over 10% per year but these rates are nearer 100% in developing areas such as Eastern Europe, Asia and South America, which currently make up more than 20% of the market.

Clinical Express Exclusive is designed for the transportation of frozen or dangerous specimens and offers the additional benefits of 24/7/365 collection, paperwork completion and direct priority transit services. Customers not only have access to the expertise of trained TNT Express operatives to answer project management and customer service needs, but also benefit from innovative TNT Express packaging*, dry ice provision and fully completed documentation.

Additionally TNT will continue to provide its 'Clinical Express Network' service - designed for the transportation of specimens and investigative drugs at ambient temperatures. It also offers pick up and delivery on weekdays from central locations.

<http://www.tnt.com>

NYK DC IN GENK

[LOG: Genk, April 9]

Japan-based NYK Logistics is going to open a major new 13,662m² distribution center in Genk. NYK used to be known as New Wave Logistics and is going to use the DC to expand and partly to replace its location in Aartselaar.

The new DC is scheduled to open in June and will form as a central unit for NYK clients, a producer of copying machines and computer hardware. In addition to warehousing, value added logistics will be supplied on location, including assembly, repacking, labeling and testing the products. The owner of the building is the developer and investment company Eurimpro and it expects that the center will soon expand. There is space because the site in Genk has a surface area of 100,000m².

<http://www.nyklogistics.com>

MEGA EWALS IN AUTO LOGISTICS

[LOG: Genk, April 7]

As of April 5, activities, thus far carried out by Acumen Distribution Services Ltd (specialists in automotive component logistics) will be continued by Ewals Cargo Care. This change is a result of the decision of the parent company of Acumen, the British Autologistics Holding, to reduce its activities with Acumen from that date.

49 Acumen employees from offices in Belgium, France and the UK will be employed by Ewals Cargo Care to ensure the continuity.

Acumen trailers will also be integrated into the Ewals Cargo Care fleet, raising the total to 4300 units from 3500. As 3000 of these units are MEGA trailers, this is a further strengthening the position of Ewals Cargo Care as the leading MEGA-operator in Europe.

In the first phase, Acumen activities, with a principal focus on automotive component logistics from and to the UK, will continue as a separate division within Ewals Cargo Care. In the following phase, this business will be integrated with Ewals current traffic-lines. This fits in with Ewals Cargo Care's strategy to take a leading position within the European Automotive transport market, where it already has a well-established reputation.

This expansion of business is complementary to Ewals current activities. Ewals Cargo Care is active as logistic service provider for several industries. With further integration of the cross channel traffic, Ewals Cargo Care will be able to strengthen its position in the cross channel market.

<http://www.ewals.be>

NEW LIMBURG AIRPORT

[INFRA: St.Trond, April 5]

Limburg (B)-based Aercon, part of the Alro metalworking group from Dilsen-Stokkem, and Crown Helicopters are going to invest EUR 12m in air-traffic-related activities at Brustem (a former military air base) in St.Trond. Activities will include pilot training, aircraft maintenance, catering and taxi flights, creating 172 jobs. The move to create an airport company ('BVBA Vliegveld Sint-Truiden') was taken by the City of St.Trond, LRM and the military

Brustem will be a class II airport, handling aircraft of up to 9 tons for daytime flights only. 150 weekly flight movements are expected. The investment is expected to attract national and foreign business to St. Trond.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

LIMBURG (B) BEST DC LOCATION

[LOG: London, April 2]

According to a SWOT analysis by the real estate advisers Cushman & Wakefield Healy & Baker, Belgian Limburg, followed by Liège, is the most attractive place in Western Europe for the location of a new distribution center. All five Belgian provinces are in the top 12.

<http://www.cushmanwakefieldeurope.com>

LIFE SCIENCES AND SCI-TECH

4,000 WIRELESS LIMBURGERS (B)

[SCI-TECH: Hasselt, April 27]

A unique project, established by Concentra Media, Microsoft, Telenet, Siemens, Fujitsu-Siemens and the City of Hasselt and the Flemish government is I-city. I-city starts in Hasselt and Louvain in September and, in June, the partners are setting up a research lab in Hasselt. They are going to determine where the hot spots enabling people to use the Internet on a wireless basis are going to be in Hasselt. This is not just for laptops. PDAs and specially equipped mobile phones will use it. The system will also provide useful and practical tips: When arriving in Hasselt, you can use your PDA to take you to a parking spot for example.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

NASA USES LIEGE RED SPIDER

[SCI-TECH: Liège, April 20]

SPOT Image and NASA (The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration) have teamed up to deploy open standards based OpenGIS Web Coverage Services (WCS) using IONIC's RedSpider Web 3.1. These Web Services are already in use in the latest Open GIS Consortium, Inc. (OGC) Interoperability Program initiative, the OGC Web Services 2 (OWS2) test bed. NASA's contribution comes through their Synergy IV contract with Raytheon, with access to the NASA Earth Observing System Data Pools.

As part of OWS2, these services will support the rapid development and prototyping of open standards for advanced image processing and service chaining efforts by multiple OpenGIS members including Intergraph, IONIC, PCI Geomatics, George Mason University's Laboratory for Advanced Information Technology and Standards (LAITS), and Great-Circle Technologies.

As part of the OWS2 team, IONIC will further enable OpenGIS WCS by leveraging WSDL and SOAP bindings. The OWS2 standards development focus includes image processing service chaining for online raw imagery access, ortho-rectification, mosaicing, coverage portrayal service styling, coordinate transformation/reprojection, and image format transformation.

<http://www.ionicredspider.com>

AUTOMOTIVE ELECTRONICS

[SCI-TECH: Diepenbeek, April 20]

The Louvain nano-electronics research center IMEC and the associated lab, IMOMECE in Diepenbeek, the Institute for Materials Research at the Limburg University center (LUC), the Hogeschool Limburg and Flanders' DRIVE are establishing an automotive electronics center (AETC). This virtual center will make available new test equipment for electronics and expertise in testing methodology for companies active in the automotive industry.

The AETC combines a number of competences around a virtual pool of equipment and know-how that enables it to assist companies in the design and development of electronic components by giving them access to state-of-the-art technology in reliability and materials. In this, the organization is responding to the growing market for automotive electronics, the increasing use of electronic systems in automobiles and increasing demands in respect of safety and functionality made upon the automotive industry.

Flanders' DRIVE will be the point of contact for companies interested in AETC services. The AETC is being established with the assistance of the European fund for regional development (EFRD) and with additional financing from the convention.

<http://www.flandersdrive.be>

A VALVE TO GROW UP WITH

[LIFE-SCI: Aachen, April 16]

Eight out of every 1000 children are born with a heart problem. Of these, every fifth needs a new heart valve. Currently a research team at Aachen's RWTH University is developing a new type of heart valve that grows up with the child's body, made from the body's own tissue. The team is now receiving support from the German Vodafone Charity Foundation, which has donated EUR 65 000. The Development arm of German Children's Heart Centres [Die Fördergemeinschaft Deutsche Kinderherzzentren e. V.] has also been supporting the project since 2001.

At present there are two options in such cases: either a mechanical heart valve implant that requires blood thinning medication for life, or a xenotransplant using a pig's heart. This requires regular replacement since it calcifies rapidly. The ideal is a valve using the patient's own tissue: it grows with the body, is compatible, has a long life span and reduces the number of risky operations.

Dr. Stefan Jockenhövel's interdisciplinary team of has been doing research on heart valves since 1998. The director of the work group "Cardiovascular Tissue Engineering" at the Clinic for Thorax, Heart and Vessel Surgery of RWTH Aachen explains: "Currently our heart valve prosthesis has attained a durability of the gel matrix that is six times greater than anything achieved hitherto". The goal is to test the world's first heart valve made exclusively of the body's own tissue on living organisms as soon as possible.

In addition to the Sponsoring Community for German Children's Heart Centres, who have been with the project since 2001, the German Vodafone Charity Foundation GmbH are now financially involved in the groundbreaking research project. Regina Wiechens-Schwake, Director of the charity states: "We have decided upon this step because this is a young team of scientists who are running a practical research project that will allow many sick children to live a better life". The prosthetic heart valve made completely of the body's own tissue is based on test tissue that has been cultivated and cloned "in vitro" - in a test tube. A gel produced from the patient's own blood is added to the tissue cells. The structure of tissue and hydrogel matrix provides the basis for the creation of the heart valves in a specially developed process.

www.vodafone-stiftung.de

AGROISOLAB AT JUELICH

[LIFE-SCI: Jülich, April 16]

Agroisolab GmbH, which tests nearly all food and agricultural products as well as any biological and environmental materials with respect to their declaration of origin and adulteration, has relocated to Jülich. The ongoing development of its stable isotope technology has made Agroisolab is one of the few laboratories in Europe capable of analyzing isotopes of all bio-elements.

Agroisolab was a logical further development of a successful cooperation between Agrosom GmbH (based in Echem, Germany) and Research Center Jülich.

After merging in 2002, Agroisolab was directly able to meet market requirements from the start with an excellently equipped laboratory and well-trained staff.

<http://www.agroisolab.de>

DENTAL MINI-LASER

[LIFE-SCI: Aachen, April 16]

Scientists in Aachen want to reduce the pain of the dentist's drill with a mini-laser that will be ready for the market in 5 years, according to the project leader Jörg Meister of the University's clinic in a report in the Aachener Zeitung. Current lasers are only available in 15% of all practices for use in combating caries. For problems that lie deeper, the drill is the only answer. The laser causes the caries particles to explode, gently of course, and treatment using it is not only causes less pain; noise and vibration are also absent.

The drill will not completely disappear, because the dentist has to both finish the edges of the tooth with the drill and probe for caries that are deeper. The reason why the laser is not been successful so far is that it is expensive and that it takes up a lot of space.

<http://www.aachener-zeitung.de>

PATIENT INFO EXCHANGE

[LIFE-SCI: Liège, April 2]

Asbl Altem has developed a project to exchange medical information between doctors and hospitals in Liège. The software is usable on mobiles and laptops.

See the website for details.

<http://www.altem.be>

A HEART'S MAGNETIC BEARINGS

[LIFE-SCI: Jülich, April 2 (March 10)]

Roughly 15 million people worldwide suffer from chronic heart disease. For many of them, their only hope of survival is a heart transplant. Currently around 100,000 donor hearts are required annually of which about 2,500 are available. A life-saving alternative is provided by an implantable cardiac pump, which takes over the blood-transport function of the heart. A 2001 US study predicts a long-term annual market potential of USD 6 bn for such devices.

Scientists at Research Center Jülich have developed a unique magnetic bearing for these cardiac pumps. Lightweight, cardiac pumps, using key Jülich technology, operate free of seals, bearings, mechanical friction and wear, pumping the blood in a non-destructive manner and reduce the risk of thrombogenesis in the interior of the pump.

The Research Center has recently been granted European and American patents for these magnetic bearings inserted in cardiac pumps. The Jülich technology is applied in heart supporting pumps developed by a German company (INCOR, Berlin), with which the Research Center has concluded a licensing agreement defining the sales share in this novel type of artificial heart.

The blood pump is implanted next to the heart into the patient's body and directly transports the blood from the left ventricle into the aorta. It thus takes over the pumping function of the heart and helps the patient escape from a life-threatening situation which would otherwise require an immediate heart transplant.

The heart supporting pump with the Jülich magnetic bearing is the first and so far only implantable blood pump worldwide with a rotor on a magnetic bearing licensed for clinical application. More than 100 pumps of this design have already been implanted at various heart centers in Europe and China. In several cases, it was even possible to remove the pump after the patient's own heart had recovered.

Jülich know-how from the magnetic bearing laboratory is being successfully marketed by industry. With vacuum pumps based on Jülich magnetic bearing technology alone, the industry has achieved sales to the amount of several hundred million euros since the early 1990s.

<http://www.fz-juelich.de>

IONIC LEADS IN SOAP

[SCI-TECH: Liège, April 2]

Ionic has been selected by Open GIS Consortium, Inc. (OGC) sponsors to lead the definition and implementation of the Web Service Description Language (WSDL) and Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) bindings for the OpenGIS specification baseline during the current Open Web Services (OWS2) Interoperability Program test bed.

The OGC pioneered the concept of geospatial web services and is now extending protocol support to WSDL and SOAP, which will harmonize the OpenGIS specifications with the larger IT web services environment. Ionic's work will encompass the entire OpenGIS specification baseline including Web Map Service (WMS), Web Feature Service (WFS), Web Coverage Service (WCS), and Catalog Service – Web profile (CS-W).

WSDL/SOAP interfaces are considered a high priority by the OpenGIS community because of their requirement in the U.S. Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA), Defense Information Systems (DISA) architecture, and European IT architectures. IONIC currently offers a SOAP WMS interface in RedSpider Web 3.1.

<http://www.ionicsoft.com>

ALZHEIMER'S: NEURON LOSS

[LIFE-SCI: Maastricht, April 1]

A study, carried out under the aegis of EURON, the international research school, using transgenic mice developed with Aventis Pharma and led by researchers Cristoph Schmitz and Bart Rutten of the Brain & Behavior Research Institute at Maastricht University, and their colleagues*, has led to important new insights into the development of Alzheimer's disease. The results have been published in the April issue of the 'American Journal of Pathology'.

Patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease have two characteristics: abnormal protein deposits (β -amyloid plaques) and neuron loss. The existence of a relationship between the two events had been unclear. While the research cited shows that protein deposits cause neuron loss, particularly in the hippocampus, researchers have discovered that the degree of neuronal loss exceeds amyloid plaque load in a transgenic mouse model of Alzheimer's disease.

The loss of neurons has also clearly been observed in areas of the parenchyma distant from plaques. These findings point to the potential involvement of more than one mechanism in hippocampal neuron loss in this APP/PS-1 double-transgenic mouse model of Alzheimer's disease.

<http://www.euron.unimaas.nl/>

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