

DOING BUSINESS IN THE EUREGIO MEUSE-RHINE
The newsletter of the Chambers of Commerce of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine

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CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

WORLD'S TOP SHIP LIFT

[COM: Maastricht, March 17]

The Dutch-Walloon business club is taking a day out on April 15 to look at the ships lifts at the Canal du Centre in Strépy-Thieu. The Canal du Centre was opened in 2002 and it links the rivers Meuse and Scheldt, giving passage to barges with a maximum tonnage of 1,350 tons. It is a key link in Europe's inland waterway network. The most important elements in the canal include: the double ship lift, the highest in the world, which raises the barges to a height of 112 meters to bridge a difference of 73 meters in the height of the terrain: also the canal bridge of Sart, which is the heaviest bridge combination in the world at 80,000 tons - The bridge won a prize in Osaka, Japan; the first prize for extraordinary structures presented by the international federation for structural concrete; and then there is also a famous safety door called Blanc-Pain, which prevents the risk of flooding. This lift and others are on the UNESCO list of for world monuments. The trip starts at 07:15 hrs at the Maastricht Chamber and the bus leaves at 07:45 hrs. The bus will be back in Maastricht at 19:30 hrs. The costs for the day are EUR 150 per person, including a boat trip, catering and extensive technical documentation. Contact Bernard Piëtte (BPiëtte@maastricht.kvk.nl)

<http://www.canal-du-centre.be>

DISTRIBUTION IN THE FRENCH MARKET

[COM: Maastricht, March 17]

There will be a seminar on Thursday April 14 at the East Brabant Chamber of Commerce in Eindhoven, starting at 13:30 hrs and ending at 17:00 hrs. The principal topic will be "Distribution channels in the French market". France, with 60 million consumers, is the third most important market for the Dutch. Exports to France in 2003 were worth EUR 23,267.5m. This was a slight drop from 2002. Imports were worth EUR 14,946m. The seminar will cover approaches to the French market, practical aspects of the market, legal aspects of the market and banking. Contact Bernard Piëtte (BPiëtte@maastricht.kvk.nl) for the details. Costs for the seminar are EUR 50, including documentation.

<http://www.maastricht.kvk.nl>

FACT FINDING IN HONG KONG AND CHINA

[COM: Maastricht, March 17]

There is to be a fact finding mission to Hong Kong and China including the Pearl River Delta and Peking. The number of places is limited to 25 and the offer is valid through April 15, 2005. Costs are EUR 1,595, which includes return flight economy class by Cathay Pacific Airlines and hotel transfers. It also includes group transport in the various cities, hotels on the basis of bed & breakfast and the costs of all events of the program, including receptions and matchmaking. China is the fastest growing economy in the world; it went up 9% in 2004 and there is a growing middle class of around 300 million people. It is the most important market for Europe. Contact Ardy Assink at aassink@maastricht.kvk.nl

<http://www.maastricht.kvk.nl>

NL/NRW COMPETENCE NETWORK

[COM: Düsseldorf, January 31]

The Dutch-North-Rhine Westphalian Competence Network (INTER-NED) has been reinforced. On the Dutch side it has been joined by Grensinfopunt, which is intended to provide information on living, working and doing business across borders and on the German side, the Fachverband Metall NRW, the metalworking industry's association, has joined. This brings the number of partners in the EU-funded (INTERREG IIIA) Dutch/NRW network to 21.

Grensinfopunt brings with it a group of organizations that add depth to Inter -Ned's resources. These include: financial authorities, the office for German Affairs, the office for Belgian Affairs and the Province of Limburg. The metalworking network on the German side adds 3,600 related businesses in North-Rhine Westphalia. The network can be accessed by phone on 00.49.2821/89.44.610, or on line at the link below.

<http://www.inter-ned.info>

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

AACHEN IN AVANTIS WTC

[BIZ: Aachen/Heerlen, December 16]

The City of Aachen is backing the construction of a World Trade Center at Avantis. The committee for Labor, Science and the Economy has agreed to cooperate with Heerlen on this. The new Heerlen/Aachen center will support business in its activities and assist in networking contacts. The project will be of particular importance for the development of Avantis.

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

EUR 50M FOR SPA F1 TRACK

[BIZ: Spa, December 24]

The Formula 1 circuit in Spa, Francorchamps is to get a EUR 50m facelift. 40 New boxes are planned and a new 300-meter long stand. The operating company wants to upgrade the international comfort and safety standards. All should be completed in time for the 2007 Grand Prix.

<http://www.wdr.de>

MBCAC TO COVER CHRYSLER

[BIZ: Maastricht, December 22]

The Mercedes Benz call center in Maastricht is to expand its service coverage in January to take in all of Daimler-Chrysler's customers in Western Europe. In practice, it means that drivers of Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge will be able to call for help. This means an extra 25 jobs at the customer assistance center.

<http://www.brf.be>

LRM STAKE IN DIRESCO

[BIZ: Hasselt, December 22]

LRM is investing venture capital worth EUR 1.5m in Diresco NV, a new Opglabbeek producer of Diresco Stone. This compound stone is made of granite or quartz granules and resins. A unique manufacturing process bonds these two natural materials into an incredibly strong product comparable to diamond. Diresco Stone is more wear- and water-resistant, colorfast and frost and corrosion-resistant than the most durable natural stone and has excellent mechanical strength and dimensional stability. The primary applications are in kitchen services, bathroom furniture, floor tiles and wall covering. A great part of production is exported to North America, the Middle East and Australia. With LRM's participation, the financial structure of Diresco will be strengthened, allowing it to expand its production capacity and increase in growth.

<http://www.lrm.be>

WALLOON BUSINESS

[BIZ: Wavre, December 22]

A new edition of the Walloon Business Web Guide is available from the link below. There has been a print run of 40,000 and the guide contains information on the 540 addresses important to business.

<http://www.uwe.be/guideweb>

SERVATIUS IN VISE

[BIZ: Maastricht, December 21]

The Maastricht housing corporation Servatius is expanding its activities in Belgium and currently discussing the construction of 200 subsidized private houses in Petit Lanaye and Lanaye. Servatius wants to build sheltered houses for the elderly in Lanaken and Riemst, but all depends on negotiations with the Dutch Ministry of Public Housing and Planning and Environment.

In an interview in 'Dagblad de Limburger', Servatius director, Leks Verzijlbergh says that the Ministry may give the housing organizations in the border regions more room for maneuver. The Association is still negotiating on a construction project at the Rue de Hesbaye in Liège (88 apartments for rent and sale above shops), representing an investment of EUR 15m. Mr Verzijlbergh points out that it is difficult to build houses in the EUR 160,000 – 170,000 price class in Maastricht, because of the price of the land. He adds that now the Walloon plans for industrial development in Petit Lanaye have been abandoned, there is no reason why the houses should not be built.

The Liège subsidiary of Servatius will commission the project and the housing trust has to acquire the land for the construction project. If the Visé project gets off the ground, this will be the second big project by Servatius in Belgium. It is scheduled for completion by Q4, 2005.

Another interesting project by Servatius is the refurbishment and development of the Lambertuskerk in Maastricht.

<http://www.limburger.nl>

GE CONTRACT FOR TECHSPACE AERO

[BIZ: Herstal, December 16]

Techspace Aero has signed an agreement with General Electric worth close to EUR 700m for the design, the development and the production of the GENx low pressure compressor stators. The GENx engine will equip the future Boeing aircraft 7E7 and Airbus A350. This success confirms the worldwide recognition of Techspace Aero's expertise in low-pressure compressors for aeronautics propulsion systems. It is also the result of a long and rewarding cooperation between Techspace Aero and General Electric on many programs (CFM 56 and GE 90 through Snecma Moteurs, F110 and CF 34-10 directly with General Electric).

While Techspace Aero has the required technological competence, the short-term planning will be a major challenge for the teams involved. The 5 stators are to be completed to allow the first engine by March 2006. Engine certification is planned for mid-2007. The GENx was selected by Boeing to power the 3 versions of the 7E7 twin-engine family with entry into service in 2008. It will also equip the Airbus A350, which is due to enter service in 2010. This highly fuel-efficient engine, rated at 50,000 to 70,000 pounds thrust, is designed to perform with reduced (up to 15%) fuel consumption.

Techspace Aero designs develops and produces modules and equipment for aircraft and space engines. The company also specializes in the maintenance, repair and testing of engines, as well as in the design and installation of engine test cells. Part of the French Snecma Group (51% of its capital), Techspace Aero shareholders also include the Walloon Region (B-28.37%), Pratt & Whitney (USA-19%) and the Société Fédérale d'Investissement (B-1.63%). With a staff of 1,200, its annual revenues are around EUR 260m.

<http://www.techspace-aero.be>

CAESAR'S PALACE AT MOSAE FORUM

[BIZ: Maastricht, December 15]

A front-page story by John Hoofs in today's Dagblad De Limburger reports that the US/Las Vegas casino business, which runs Caesar's Palace, is considering setting up a major casino in the Bassin area of Maastricht. Clearly there will be regulatory issues to be solved; however, thus far plans involve a hotel, a music and show facility to accommodate between 3,000 – 5,000 and an investment of several hundreds of millions of Euros.

<http://www.limburger.nl>

MONEY FOR SOLLAND

[BIZ: Heerlen, December 10]

Solland Solar Energy BV is a projected, EUR 20m, production facility for solar panels, headed by G. Boxhoorn, a former director of Shell Helmond's solar energy department, at the Avantis Science and Business Park. It is to receive a conditional grant of EUR 400.000 from the Dutch Province of Limburg. The grant requirement is the creation of 150 jobs in the project period through January 1, 2008 and an ensuing 10-year stay on the site. Solland will be producing exclusively under license to Energie Centrum Nederland.

<http://www.limburger.nl>

ON THE WAY TO PLOPSALAND

[BIZ: Hasselt, December 9]

Hasselt's Grenslandhallen and Ethias Arena now form an impressive, 35,000m² complex. The first halls were built in 1983. In 2001, hall four was transformed into a conference hall/theater; and, from 2004, the Ethias Arena, Plaza, the Studio, the Artists' foyer were established. The Plopsaland children's indoor theme park is now underway scheduled for next year with scenes from the world of Kabouter Plop and his pals.

Excellent acoustics, extensive parking for more than 3,000 cars, an investment of EUR 12.5m, additional generous sponsoring by Ethias and employment options mean that the complex is beginning to attract a lot of people and business to Hasselt.

The multifunctional complex also houses one of the biggest hotspots for wireless Internet users in Belgium for 2,500 wireless contacts. The complex offers facilities for fairs, conferences, events, meetings, parties and exhibitions to Flanders and the whole of Meuse-Rhine. The theater has 1,750 comfortable seats. Variable facilities allow for groups of 16,000, 12,000, 6,000 or 2,500 and for parties. It can handle all important indoor Olympic disciplines too.

<http://www.grenslandhallen.be>

STRATEGIC INNOVATION

[BIZ: Maastricht, December 8]

Strategic innovation in Meuse-Rhine is a major, 650-Company, EUR 5.8m project to help the business community to innovate their work processes, products and services. It is supported by funding from the EU's Interreg III A project. The general idea is to structure business and new business development to provide the spearhead for a top-technology regional policy.

The focus is on automotive/mechatronics; IT/electronics; multimedia and the life sciences/chemicals with high-chem and nutrition, product and market-oriented innovation and an image upgrade for Limburg as an inbound investment location. Cross-border operations will be an important activity focus. Projects cover a broad-spectrum innovation program and use DSM research campus synergies.

The 650 companies participating will have the assistance of MERIT, the Maastricht Economic Research Institute for Innovation and Technology. Merit will guide them through the phases, making a diagnosis of their current situation and planning and helping their development with the use of consultants. Focus will be on new products, products clustering and planning for a future of change.

The program was introduced at the Government House in Maastricht by the Provincial Deputy, responsible for Economic Affairs, Mr Martin Eurlings and analogous projects were described by a Norwegian specialist Håkon Finne.

300 companies from South Limburg (NL) will be participating, with 200 from Belgian Limburg, 100 from the Province of Liège and 50 from the Aachen Region. Partners include MERIT, the Limburg University Center in Diepenbeek, SPI+ in Liège and AGIT in Aachen. A watchful eye is being cast over proceedings by Jean Severijns, the provincial official with overall responsibility.

Look at the website for more information:

<http://www.si-emr.org>

NEW PAPER FOR LIEGE

[BIZ: Liège, December 3]

A new paper, Le Jour Liège, has appeared on January 20, published by the Medi@bel Group from Namur. The new title, which is associated with 'Le Jour Le Courier' in Verviers and 'Vers l'Avenir' in Huy-Waremme and Hesbaye is targeting a potential readership of 30,000 in the province. The Friday version of the new paper will be accompanied by 'Keskispass' - a leisure section on what do at the weekend in Liège.

<http://www.rtc.be>

MORE EMISSION CERTIFICATES

[BIZ/INFRA: London, December 3]

The energy giants, E.on and RWE are requesting a lot more carbon emission certificates which will allow them to buy off additional carbon emissions. The probable reason for this is that the company and other energy companies want to burn more coal while the cost of coal is low and the cost of the carbon or emission certificates is also low. It looks as if coal-fired and CCGT plants are set to benefit from the new system.

Source: BBC Newsnight

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/default.stm>

FLANDERS MULTIMEDIA EXPANDS

[BIZ: Diepenbeek, December 2]

Flanders Multimedia Valley in Diepenbeek, the innovation center for the Flemish multimedia industry, designed to promote the industry on both national and international fronts, has concluded an agreement with the Limburg University Center in Diepenbeek, the Catholic University of Louvain and the Universities of Antwerp and Ghent to expand an IT knowledge center for technology marketing in Diepenbeek. The new knowledge center will test developments and technologies in respect of their efficiency and determine whether there is a market for proposed projects. Flanders Multimedia Valley is a cluster organization, which is specifically concerned with the Flemish multimedia industry. It has 160 members throughout Flanders. A large number of them are made up of smaller businesses active in multimedia in the Province of Limburg.

(Source: zi-biz.be)

<http://www.fmv.org/main.htm>

WALLOON EXPORT GRAND PRIX

[BIZ: Thimister-Clermont, December 1]

Nomacorc® is the world's first manufacturer of co-extruded synthetic corks for non-sparkling wines. It is the world leader in this sector, with a market share of over 30%. This synthetic cork is the fruit of the combined experience of the Belgian company NMC S.A. and of the Belgian-American company Nomaco, Inc. both specialists in the extrusion of polyethylene foam.

In 1998, the creation of Nomacorc LLC as an independent company in the US and the founding of a limited company in Belgium in 2000 permitted efforts to be concentrated on the Nomacorc® cork.

Since July 2003 the Les Plénesses zone at Thimister-Clermont in the Verviers region has been home to the new 6,000m² synthetic cork processing plant. Currently Nomacorc employs about 100: in quality control, production, commercial, marketing, logistics and administration.

Of the 15 billion closures produced in the world per year, today 1.7 billion are made of synthetic materials. Fifty percent of the sales volume is made through the Belgian headquarters and is destined for European countries. France is the largest market in the world for the Belgian company in terms of volume, with more than 130 million corks sold in 2004.

<http://www.nomacorc.com>

SCA SOFT WIPES

[BIZ: Stembert, December 1]

SCA has invested 30m to produce a toilet paper with lotion, that is unique in Europe, and it is to increase its production of make-up removal wipes. SCA Hygiène Products paper company (formerly called Mabelpap), has invested in two machines that are unique in Europe; one to increase its production capacity for make-up removal wipes, the other to make a totally new lotion-impregnated toilet paper to respond to market developments. The Stembert factory has set up two new EUR 45m production lines to allow 50% production capacity growth for make-up removal wipes. The project was managed by the Stembert team and included workers who followed training courses in Italy, France and the Netherlands.

Employing 338, the Stembert site produced 52,200 tonnes (or 614 million rolls) of toilet paper in 2003 and 15,750 tonnes of facial products (or 100 million boxes of make-up removal wipes), a sector in which the Group expects an increase of 25% for the next 3 years. This represents 80 lorry loads of finished product per day and 20,000 per year. The bulk of the production from the two machines is intended for export: 95% of the make-up removal wipes and 90% of the toilet paper with lotion.

<http://www.sca.com>

KING'S CHINA CONTRACT

[BIZ/LOG: Liège, December 1]

King Transport, which has branches at Liège Airport and in Hoesselt has just won an important contract with China. The company specializes in warehousing and distribution of fresh and frozen products. From April next year, around 1,000 pallets from China will be held at Liège Logistics ready for dispatch to customers in the Benelux countries and France. King currently achieves annual revenues of around EUR 8m.

<http://www.kingtransport.be>

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

EUR 3M FOR MAASTRICHT-LANAKEN

[LOG: Maastricht, December 22]

The steering group for the Benelux central area Interreg program has given its blessing to the activation of the Maastricht-Lanaken rail line and the project is to receive EUR 3m in European funding as part of the "modal shift for revitalization" project. Supply chain potential for the line would include 9m tons of bulk products for the Southern European market and 25,000 containers for Germany and the Benelux countries. The activated line would also reduce the number of trucks in the area by 300 movements daily, which means that when the project is completed, approximately 500,000 tons of goods would be carried by rail instead of road.

The first train should roll in 2007. Total costs of the program are EUR 14m, with contributions from the province of Limburg (NL) (EUR 2.6m), Prorail (EUR 3m plus implementation), SNCB Belgian rail (implementation), Lanaken (EUR 0.6m), the Flemish region (EUR 3.7m), Ministry of Economic Affairs (EUR 1m), the Water Authorities Limburg, the municipality of Maastricht, the regional development company for Limburg and the Interreg program (EUR 3m).

<http://www.limburg.nl>

ZUID-WILLEMSVAART: 3 BRIDGES

[LOG: Hasselt, December 16]

Three new bridges are to be built over the Zuid-Willemsvaart canal. They will be in Tongerlo (2005), Beek (2006) and Voorshoven (2007). The new bridges will allow barges to pass one another, which has been impossible thus far, and they will be raised to 5.5 meters.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

EUREGIOBAHN TO LANGERWEHE

[LOG: Aachen, December 10]

The Euregiobahn railway now goes from Herzogenrath and Merkstein and it will be extended to Eschweiler/Weisweiler and Langerwehe by 2007.

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

LAMPIRIS INTO POWER

[INFRA: Chaudfontaine, December 4]

Lampiris, a Chaudfontaine-based company active in telephony and IT billing, has received a license to sell electric power in Brussels and the Walloon country. Lampiris has also concluded an agreement with ALG Négoce to supply natural gas to the same two regions. (Source: zi-biz)

<http://www.lampiris.be>

INTERELECTRA TO SELL WATER

[INFRA: Hasselt, December 1]

The Limburg (B) intercommunal utility is going to sell water to the Flemish government, which has sold its shares in the Flemish water company to Interelectra. This means that the entire water chain from drinking water, wastewater through to the purification of wastewater is within one company. (Source: TVL in Zi-biz)

<http://www.zi-biz.be>

BTK MOVES TO ALLEUR

[LOG: Alleur, December 1]

BTK transport has moved from its location in Grâce-Hollogne to the old M-Distribution buildings in Alleur. There have been a number of changes and the company now has 400m² of offices and a 5,000m² warehouse. BTK wants to specialize more in groupage, redistribution, and value-added work. It is no longer a question of simply providing warehousing. BTK is active in Belgium and internationally in Germany, Spain, Austria and France, where the company recently opened a new office in Naintré near Poitiers. BTK makes 350 trips daily and has consolidated revenues of EUR 37m.

<http://www.truck-business.be>

EUR 740M FOR MULTIMODALITY

[LOG: Brussels, December 1]

The Transport Committee of the European Parliament has approved a budget of EUR 740m to the Marco Polo II project. This project is designed to support combined and multimodal transport to relieve the burden on the highways. The decision, taken on November 23, has to be approved by the European Parliament and the European Council of transport ministers. The second phase of Marco Polo is to run from 2007 to 2013; one of the priorities will be the development of highways at sea.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/marcopolo/index_en.htm

LIFE SCIENCES AND SCI-TECH

MOBILON AT AVANTIS

[SCI-TECH: Heerlen/Aachen, December 21]

An ultramodern science museum, Mobilon, with mobility as its theme, is scheduled to open at the Avantis science and business park in 2008. It will represent an investment of EUR 30m and provide 60 jobs. The initiative has been taken by the City of Aachen, the RWTH University in Aachen and the Parkstad Limburg Development Company. Currently, talks are ongoing with train builder Bombardier, the Ford Research Lab in Aachen, Airbus ICT, Cerobear (which makes ceramic ball bearings for Formula 1 cars), Vodafone and Q-Park, all of which are based in the area.

There is increased Euroregional interest in the project, as Mobilon is interested in the Port of Liège. The Bremen company Perti & Tiemann, who is the entertainment issue specialists, is expecting 450,000 visitors per year to the project. 50-60% of the initial EUR 30m investment will have to be paid for by business. Mobilon is expecting connections with the World Trade Center and, in the long-term, a new hotel with conference facilities and light rail connections to Parkstad and Aachen.

<http://www.avantis.org>

HATCHING BIOTALENT

[BIZ/LIFE-SCI: Maastricht, December 30]

The Maastricht BioPartner Center, a life-science incubator building, adjacent to the University Hospital and the Faculty of Medicine, was officially opened on December 17. The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs set up the BioPartner system in the year 2000 and the Maastricht building, with its distinctive red and blue trim, is the sixth nationwide. The BioPartner concept is characterized by its tripartite support system, which assures accommodation, management support and shared, advanced lab facilities for cell therapy and cell culture.

Management support is provided in cooperation with the University of Maastricht, the Limburg Development Company, LIOF and the University Hospital (AZM). This involves starters' advice in business management, including business development, legal and tax matters, patent/intellectual property protection and also human resource management. In respect of shared facilities, the director, Dr Jan Cobbenhagen, noted in his opening speech that, within ten years, more than 50% of medications would be produced by small companies using biotechnology and that there would be an increasing need for cell culture facilities, where vaccines and medicines could be produced under controlled and traceable conditions. This means GMP, or Good Manufacturing Practice.

The BioPartner Center is developing a GMP technology platform. The first phase, of shared facilities is ready to go, with three cell culture labs and a cold room on the fourth floor. A Decision has also been taken to build GMP cell therapy and cell culture facilities on the fifth floor, which represents an investment of EUR 2m.

At the end of 2005, the facility in Maastricht will have cell culture facilities unrivaled by any other incubator building. There will be high quality facilities along the chain from lab research to process development and pre-clinical trial batches through to small-scale GMP production in clean rooms in the direct vicinity of the University and hospital.

<http://www.biopartner.nl>

BERIA INSURES DRIP

[LIFE-SCI: Liège, December 22]

The Beria 'Droper', produced by a Liège medical device company, provides drip feeds/medications to patients using a patented compression mechanism, and can be used in emergency situations. The patented Drop2Drop flow meter and tubing are integrated, allowing determination and control of the solution under pressure. In the past, the drip solution had to be suspended by hand or hung on apparatus, but with the new compression system this is no longer necessary.

<http://www.beria.be>

MAGNAMEDICS AND BIOPARTNER

[LIFE-SCI: Maastricht, December 17]

A newcomer to the BioPartner center in February will be MagnaMedics from Aachen. It is a specialist in efficient and low-cost diagnostics. Among its products are the MagSi Beads, fine magnetizable particles encapsulated in silica gels, with or without luminescents. As they are easy to handle, MagSi products are ideal for diagnostic tasks, such as separation, transport or labeling. The main area of application is in vitro diagnostics, a global market with above average growth rates. As test reagents, MagSi products are employed in media such as blood tissue, urine or cell cultures. Coated with bioreactive molecules, they bind cells, viruses, DNA parts, proteins and other biomolecules. Most tests are carried out on automated laboratory machines. The start up is scheduled for February in Maastricht, according to Mr Wuttke of MagnaMedics.

<http://www.magnamedics.com>

COAL POWER MINUS CO2

[SCI-TECH: Aachen, December 16]

European power stations are slowly but surely becoming outdated. Experts say that new power stations with a total output of 200,000 MW will be needed by 2020. This is the equivalent of around 200 new large-scale power stations. Since renewable energy cannot close this gap in the short or medium-term, coal power will continue to play a major role. However, carbon emissions make this a problem.

Increased use of coal does not comply with the Kyoto Protocol, which requires worldwide CO2 emission reductions. Power stations have to become more efficient and produce less CO2. Virtually complete CO2 reduction has to be achieved in the long-term, by separation and storage.

Researchers from six RWTH Aachen University Departments (thermal and material transfer; automatic control engineering; jet propulsion and turbo-machinery; ceramic components; technical mechanics; mechanical process engineering teaching and research) are now working on this problem with RWE Power, E.ON, Siemens, Linde as well as 'WS-Wärmeprozess-technik' [thermal process technology] in the new "OXYCOAL-AC" joint venture project.

OXYCOAL-AC will be promoted in an initial phase with EUR 6m from the Federal Ministry of Economy and Labor (BMWA) by the North-Rhine Westphalian State Ministry of Science and Research (MWF) as well as industrial partners. It is the first project that has been approved within the scope of the "Research and development concept for low-emission fossil-fired power stations" (COORETEC), published by the BMWA at the end of 2003.

<http://www.rwth-aachen.de>

NEW MEDTECH/BIZ INTERFACE

[LIFE-SCI: Aachen, December 16]

A new institute has opened at the University of Aachen for technology and development of medical devices at the Aachen Medical School. Developments, such as retina implants, nerve electrode fixation and collagen plasters for wounds are among the technical developments at the University of Aachen. ITEMP, the new Institute that will be supported by the State of North-Rhine Westphalia, will build bridges between research development and industrial applications and use.

The systems to be examined will range from polymer material development through systems connected with physiological functions, cells and tissues through to regenerative medicine and tissue engineering. This will not only involve prototypes, but also the development of new products, for example short-run series for pre-clinical studies and material science analysis and product testing, or systematic risk analysis for medical products. In this, the ITEMP, which is associated with the University Hospital, will be the location for cooperation with industry. The new institute will provide a network with other research institutes, such as the University of Potsdam, turning Aachen into the location for the development of innovative medical devices.

<http://www.itemp.rwth-aachen.de>

GOLD CHIPS

[SCI-TECH: Juelich, December 16]

Modern cars do all the thinking. They automatically keep their distance from objects driving ahead of them. Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) is the name of the farsighted driver assistance system from Robert Bosch GmbH, which enables them to do this. The second generation of this system came onto the market this autumn and in 2006 it will be expanded to form ACCplus. Scientists from Research Center Jülich played a part in developing one of the main components.

These are gold encased chips, only 70 micrometers thick, produced by Professor Arno Förster and his team at the Institute of Surfaces and Interfaces (Tribology) in Jülich and they contain a Gunn-Diode. This is a form of semi-conductor component, able to operate at frequencies from a few GHz up to frequencies in the region of 100 GHz and they are used in a wide variety of units requiring low power radio frequency signals. Gold surfaces allow for the rapid conduction/dissipation of heat.

The chip broadcasts microwaves that are reflected from other cars and this enables the ACC system to determine the position and speed of the car in front. The new system means that the ACC will have a wider range of speeds at which it is active and can be used in stop-and-go traffic. It can also bring the car to a complete standstill in emergencies and when the traffic moves on, it gives a signal to the car to move on that it can move on.

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

GIGA BIOFORUM

[LIFE-SCI: Liège, December 8]

Giga was a focus at the Liège Bioforum, held this year on December 8. GIGA is an Interdisciplinary Cluster for Applied Genoproteomics allowing close cooperation between science and business for research into genoproteomics applied to the biomedical sciences.

The cluster includes 260 researchers in the Center for Biomedical Integrative Genoproteomics (CBIG). It has emerged from a cluster of 26 research units at the University of Liège, in complementary fields of expertise (medicine, veterinary medicine, life sciences, applied sciences and management).

GEE, which has two floors at the GIGA building (3200 m² of offices and laboratories), will host biomedical companies from spin-offs to well-established companies, which provide an incubator building function. Then there are biotech-training facilities.

Giga is a combination of the long tradition of companies in Liège in molecular biology and has invested in some 64 spin-off companies. Eurogentec is a leading example.

Currently, Giga is in operation, but will be regrouped in a single building in the beginning of 2006. It has a global budget of EUR 57m, with important investment from the Walloon Region, EFRD, Meusinvest and Forem. As Giga is taking shape, the University of Liège is taking part in a Euroregional project called Tera-GRID, which is to create an information network between gene clusters in Liège, Maastricht, Aachen and Diepenbeek.

The 9th Bioforum also had a Euroregional focus, taking in activities in Maastricht and Aachen, with 500 people taking part in meetings.

<http://www.giga.ulg.ac.be/extranet/project.htm>

FLANDERS' DRIVE & MECHATRONICS

[SCI-TECH: Louvain, December 1]

Flanders' Mechatronics Technology Center (FMTC) and Flanders' Drive's Engineering Center (FDEC) have signed an agreement to cooperate on a permanent basis. The objective is to make maximum use of the infrastructure and expertise of both operations. The first concrete development of this cooperative program is the use of FDEC's design software by FMTC. FMTC is a research center, set up by Agoria and leading engineering companies in Flanders with the support of the Flemish government. It provides a bridge between scientific knowledge and industrial applications in the area of mechatronics, defined as the field of study involving the analysis, design, synthesis and selection of systems that combine electronic and mechanical components with modern controls and microprocessors.

FMTC carries out mechatronics projects in the area of engine diagnosis, the modular construction of engines and the ongoing improvement of engine performance. These projects will allow members of FMTC and the industry in Flanders to innovate more extensively and rapidly and to remain competitive on the world market.

Flanders' Drive Engineering Center offers a broad range of state-of-the-art facilities for the development and testing of cars and components. Both CAD/CAE design software and unique high-tech testing equipment are available. The facilities can be used to meet the needs of the product developer. This is a great advantage to the customer because he does not have to make the investment himself. Flanders' Drive has established a cooperative agreement with the Lommel test track, which allows members to carry out road tests at advantageous conditions. Flanders' Drive Engineering Center is next to the Ford test track in Lommel. The unique combination of virtual design, laboratory tests and road tests is Flanders Drive's winning card.

<http://www.fmtc.be>

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