

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

YOUR BIZ FREE ON THE WEB

[COM: Aachen, April 5]

A new service platform, linked below, provides you with an opportunity to present your business on line. Presentation is in the form of a cross-border databank, which permits a targeted search for products, services, brands and suppliers and is of great value to the user. Top registration on well-known search engines also allows your business to be accessed worldwide and registration is free of charge.

By way of comparison, the Aachen Chamber has had an Internet business network since 1995 and by integrating other web databanks has achieved an 8,000-company database, the biggest in Meuse-Rhine. It records 10 million visits annually. Contact the Aachen Chamber (Michael Preising) at intus@aachen.ihk.de to be included. See also the form on the last page of this newsletter.

<http://www.euregiochambers.com>

A SIGNIFICANT VOICE

[COM: Maastricht, March 16]

Meuse-Rhine's Future

Peter Haane's view of strategic development prospects

By Stafford Wadsworth

Historians tell us that if you want to know about the future, you should look at the past. It is certainly true that you can learn a lot from what has been and is being done in business in Meuse-Rhine. One person who has monitored developments for over 20 years is the general-manager of the Maastricht, Heerlen and Limburg Chambers of Commerce. This is a man, who, even if he is not always in the spotlight, is certainly always active behind the scenes: an eminence, in any event, if not an eminence grise. Peter Haane was born and bred in Maastricht and studied Sociology and Economics in Tilburg. After military service and employment with the Ministry of Defense and the province of North Brabant, where he began to work on structural development projects, he arrived back home in Maastricht at the Chamber of Commerce in 1984. Among the highpoints in his career have been assistance to 85 start-ups, construction of business centers and the Dutch MBA project with the University of Maastricht (GSIM). Major construction projects have included the Chamber building on the Maasboulevard, another at the Geusselt, the Technohouse and the business facility in Sittard. This is, of course, on top of committee work on parking, mobility and long-term policy.

The path to development

Peter Haane was the first to commission a strategic development study by Luc Soete, an idea that was later taken on by the Province and LIOF. This very substantial background in the economic development of the province, over more than 20 years, has given him crucial insights that are invaluable for the development of future policy. 'Put people first' is his motto and he says this is what happens in SMEs and at the Chamber. Returning to the theme of strategic development, he notes that, as far as heavy industry is concerned, change is ongoing and he sees that the future is with the SMEs; and he adds here, 'in close cooperation with their customers'. He repeats that it is not necessarily the sector to which an SME belongs that is important, because the needs in particular sectors and, indeed, ideas often develop spontaneously and in response to local demand. The issues to be resolved are those of the red tape involved in setting up new businesses and government interference in their designation. Haane makes the point that government organizations and the Chamber must be public servants, there to assist their members and not make life more difficult for them.

In the context of strategic development again, he is not so convinced by the leisure society - a spearhead in Luc Soete's strategic policy document - because he feels that its coverage, in this area, affects too few people. [Although it would be interesting to have an inventory of leisure/wellness-related facilities in Meuse-Rhine, as PH indicates.

In Liège, this month, for example, it was revealed that there were 160 chateau-type locations able to accommodate groups for a wide range of purposes; the existence of a wellness focus in major companies, like Babor in Aachen, is also something that has not been explored, nor has the networking of spa facilities in the region been undertaken]. However, Peter Haane points to the care sector as being under pressure and says that small-scale leisure/luxury outlets need to be predicated on a more substantial basis. As far as the tourism aspect of leisure is concerned, he adds that there does not seem to be much movement from the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The Eindhoven Perspective

Actually, in the general-manager's view, a disturbing development for this area is that the economic development of Limburg seems to be viewed by The Hague (i.e.: central government) from the perspective of Eindhoven. Mr Haane points out that major policy steps need to be taken. Too much is based on a consumer economy. There is no cycle in this and it does not link in to sustainability - where things are used but not used up. Biotechnology, for example, is interesting but what makes it more interesting is ongoing spin-off from research institutes. In this connection, Mr Haane was pleased by the development of the new Maastricht BioPartner incubator center and notes that Maastricht is a good place to promote such development because of its relatively neutral and central location. Within the context of sustainability, clearly energy is going to be a major factor and, he adds, that if the government wants to insist on people making all sorts of changes, then perhaps they ought to recommend and subsidize the installation of solar panels. He points to the new Solland solar panel production facility at Avantis. If the government has to interfere, then it should do so to facilitate a sustainable economy. The costs can be met by the benefits in terms of the reduction of greenhouse gases. In agriculture too, the government could help by taking VAT off biodiesel and encouraging the growing of oilseed rape to produce it. These are the initiatives that need to be taken, but they need to be taken locally. Silicon Valley is not only model for strategic development.

Meuse-Rhine – the Charlemagne Region

There is a lack of understanding of the context of strategic development in South Limburg at government level. For those on the spot, the obvious next step is for South Limburg and, by extension, the Netherlands with its ideas of a top technology region, to play a key role in the Meuse-Rhine. This Euroregion, the birthplace of Charlemagne and Europe, is reaching critical mass for a major economic take-off: with its 3.7 million consumers, 250,000 businesses including major logistical, life-science and performance materials' clusters, 2 TGV stations, 5 universities (including Aachen - among the world's top 5 engineering schools - and Liège, with world class facilities in aerospace, the life-sciences, naval architecture and veterinary medicine) and ... no congestion. Unfortunately, central government sees no further than Eindhoven. The options are here in Meuse-Rhine, with internships for medical students in Aachen, close cooperation with the universities of Liège and Aachen, cross border legal experience; and a space for the arts to flourish in and take the whole region in their embrace. International business clubs with Germany and the Walloon country are already active. The interest is here but the decisive step has yet to be taken.

WTC Parkstad

The World Trade Center is clearly the focus where crystallization of these ideas can all begin. With the localization of a range of facilities in the new world trade center at the cross border science and business park at Avantis, with its own light rail stop, all is in readiness. Privatize as far as possible, says Peter Haane. We need to bring the best people together in Avantis and step forward from there. Avante!

<http://www.webcontentnow.com>

THE VIEW FROM AACHEN

[COM: Aachen, March 8]

Michael Wirtz, President of the Aachen Chamber of Commerce and Industry, gave his annual address to the Chamber's Annual General Meeting at the Eurogress in Aachen on March 8.

He started off by quoting Fred Irwin, President of the US Chamber of Commerce in Germany, which represents 2,000 US companies in the country. Mr Irwin said: "This country is changing, and there's quite a bit of good news. Germany is a first class location and a lot better than its reputation. It is only a pity that the Germans don't realize this themselves and that those who do will not admit it." So things are looking better, but a positive attitude is required. Mr Wirtz went on in his characteristically positive way to point to what was good and what was bad.

On the export side, things are good and Germany is the world's top exporter again. The labor market is, however, in a bad way and there are more than 5.2m officially unemployed, the highest level of unemployment the Federal Republic has ever known. In the Aachen region, there are 74,000 people out of work. This takes in the region and the city and the districts of Düren, Heinsberg and Euskirchen. The direct costs of unemployment in Germany are more than EUR 8bn annually. Hartz IV is making the market a bit more flexible, but there are problems. By way of example, the business profit tax [Gewerbeertragssteuer] should be abolished, so that business can invest in employment.

Heinsberg has made some progress in this direction. The government, however, is often less than clear in its policy and the visa scandal, unleashing thousands of illegal immigrants from Eastern Europe has not helped. The 'over-lawyering' of society, of which the situation in the US should warn one, is also a problem. For example, if you advertise for young dynamic managers, you can find yourself in contravention of the anti-discrimination law.

Education is clearly an important focus and business in the region has made more than 4,000 new training positions available, which is an increase of 12%, four times above the national average. This is preferable to the bureaucratic device regulating training positions that could have cost between EUR 40m and 50m. On the educational front, there are other disquieting elements, such as the fact that 12% of each school year leaves without any qualification as the result of the failure of schools and families. The organization also leaves much to be desired, because while 700 unqualified young people are waiting for positions, there are 250 places that are not being used by them.

At university level, there has been a change to the bachelor/master system with the majority to complete their studies after a 3-year bachelor program, instead of the current 5-year diploma program. The chairman believes that the master's level for all would have been the appropriate target. The introduction of university fees is also nothing to be happy about. In the Aachen region, the existence RWTH University and a range of other colleges and the research center at Jülich have produced 900 technology-based businesses with 25,000 jobs, which is clearly a major asset. Start-ups have been the region's great success.

Despite lower costs elsewhere, the value chain is well established making the Aachen region a first class location for business. While the location is well served, there are elements in the infrastructure that require attention. Mr Wirtz focused on the shortcomings of the railways and advocated a separation between the infrastructure and operating companies. He also pointed to the requirement for new highway connections. He even advocated a toll on private vehicles.

As regards the marketing of the region, Michael Wirtz brought the focus to bear on the Euroregion and specifically on the Avantis Science and Business Park between Heerlen and Aachen. The World Trade Center at Avantis, with its heliport, is soon to house services from both the Aachen and Maastricht Chambers. The president also quoted the Minister of Economics Wolfgang Clement, who said of the Euroregion, this is one of the most future-oriented innovation and technology locations in Europe. He concluded by inviting friends from Belgium's German-speaking community, the Province of Liège and Belgian Limburg to join in the new development at the heart of the Charlemagne region.

In closing, Mr Wirtz looked forward to next year's Football World Cup and the World Equestrian Games in Aachen, which would attract the attention of the world to Germany. He also looked forward to the advent of Calatrava's new TGV station in Liège next year.
<http://www.ihk.aachen.de>

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

AEROSPACE MATCHES

[BIZ: Jehay, February 7]

Aerospace and defense are major industries in the Walloon country, the former alone fields 52 companies with 5,000 direct employees, 2,000 indirect employees, producing close to EUR 1bn in revenues, 90% of which goes for export. In addition to the Space Science Center at the university, the region is home to European and world players, including Alcatel ETCA, FN Herstal, Forges de Zeebrugge, Sabca, Sonaca, Techspace Aero and Thales. These companies are suppliers on projects as diverse as the new A380 Airbus, the new US forces assault rifle, satellite technology, and a whole range of precision engineering products for customers ranging from NASA to Rolls-Royce.

The session at the Abbaye de la Paix Dieu on February 7 was designed to get the major players together with subcontractors to further develop the integrated value chain within this cutting-edge cluster. The session was organized by EWA, the Walloon aeronautics cluster represented by Pierre-Manuel Jacob and the Walloon space cluster represented by Michel Stassart. Points dealt with were the activities and products of the major partners; subcontracting policy; a list of subcontractors and their current products; a note of what is expected from subcontractors in terms of technologies; certification, service, costs, etc. Certification matching and matching university programs with the industry requirements also came up.

Philippe Schleicher, the president of Techspace Aero, [a man incidentally of great presence, with a penchant for the details of bespoke tailoring] pointed out that it was only a densely woven value chain, linking in businesses from Belgium through to France that could compete with the low-cost dollar-denominated economies of the US and Taiwan. He also added a cautionary note on the plunging dollar and added that exchange rate risk coverage would only last for about another year. Nevertheless, the close-knit market and the high level of professionalism in logistics meant there were still opportunities for the business.

As a footnote, it is worth remembering that other parts of Meuse-Rhine are active in aerospace too, with companies as diverse as Eldim BV in Limburg (NL) - a Center of Excellence for Airfoils, Seals, Compressor Vane Assemblies and Fuel Nozzle Assemblies - and the range of aerospace activities in the Aachen Region, including major carbon fiber production facilities at Tenax Fibers GmbH and CAE GmbH, which works with Thales, training helicopter pilots - whose parent company supplies Airbus with flight simulators.

<http://www.ewa.be>

SCAR CONTRACT TO FN

[BIZ: Herstal/Tampa, Fla., February 4]

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) announced January 21, that it had awarded the contract for the Special Operations Forces Combat Assault Rifle (SCAR) to FN Herstal.

The USSOCOM awarded an Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract after conducting a full and open competition throughout ten months beginning in January 2004. The program will provide the first 21st century modular assault rifle designed and built from the ground up for the finest fighting forces in the world. The SCAR will be made in the United States. The USD 634K (FY05) contract is set to begin immediately and will be managed by USSOCOM.

Specifically, the SCAR L, a 5.56 mm assault rifle, replaces the M4A1, Close Quarters Battle Rifle (CQBR) and Mk12. The SCAR H, a 7.62mm assault rifle, replaces the M14 and Mk11. Both variants of the SCAR will have three-barrel lengths. The SCAR barrel change allows Operators to best tailor the weapon for each operation, using the "standard", the Close Quarters Combat (CQC), or "sniper" barrels. These changes will affect the velocity and directly relate to lethality. Modularity also allows Operators to choose the right time for these tradeoffs. Finally, there is more than 90% commonality between the SCAR L and SCAR H versions.

The SCAR will be built at the FN Manufacturing LLC, plant in Columbia, South Carolina, which employs approximately 500 people. The Herstal Group, a 2,500-person strong corporation, employs nearly 900 people in the United States. The Herstal Group has its headquarters in Liege, Belgium, the heart of Europe, and offices as well as manufacturing facilities in nine other European countries, Asia and North America.

<http://www.defencetalk.com>

TRIANEL TEM TAKES OVER TEET

[BIZ: Aachen, February 4]

The Trianel Energy Management Company (TEM), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Trianel European Energy Trading Company (TEET), took over the portfolio management and financial services business of the Trianel Group on February 1. Financial services comprise trading for third parties, investment decisions and the management of financial portfolios relating to derivatives and emission rights. The establishment of its own subsidiary for portfolio management and trading in the financial products allows the company to put the appropriate focus on these areas of business.

"The actual physical product trading will remain with the parent company", said Sven Becker, general manager of TEET, "this allows us to give optimal care to our customers". The appropriate permit has already been obtained from the Ministry and the move contributes to the growing importance of portfolio management and the use of financial instruments to limit risks.

The services offered by Trianel include advice and active portfolio management for gas and electricity portfolios, as well as generating portfolios. "Today", said Mr Becker, "we observe a increasing demand for these products, in particular on the generating side, which is reflected by Trianel's business". Trianel also offers city power companies and major industrial customers the opportunity to gain experience in the context of virtual portfolio management.

<http://www.trianel.com>

COMPX SELLS THOMAS REGOUT

[BIZ: Maastricht/Dallas, February 3]

CompX International Inc. has announced that on January 24, 2005 it completed the sale of its Thomas Regout operations, conducted at its facility in the Netherlands, to members of Thomas Regout (management), Joost van Luyken (MD), Wiel Soudant (dir rail systems) and Leon Moonen (Rabo credit) for approximately USD 23 million.

The history of Thomas Regout goes back to the year 1834, when they produced nails and spikes. The product line expanded considerably during the second half of the 19th century, with the improvement of metalworking technologies. The switch to the cold rolling technique in 1939 enabled the manufacture of products such as curtain rods and telescopic drawer slides. For the past 30 years, Thomas Regout has specialized in developing and manufacturing telescopic ball-bearing slides.

At first, Thomas Regout supplied its drawer slides and sheet metal products exclusively to the office furniture manufacturing and related industry. As a result of their high quality standards and customer-oriented approach in offering products and solutions, Thomas Regout slides are now frequently used in applications such as photocopying machines, ATM's, cash registers, 19" racks and other electronic equipment for IKEA, VW, BMW, IBM and HP.

<http://www.compxnet.com/index.html>

AIRBUS CARBON FIBER

[BIZ/SCI-TECH: Heinsberg-Oberbruch, January 25]

Tenax Fibers GmbH, the leading manufacturer of carbon fiber in Europe, with a production facility in Oberbruch, is producing carbon fiber for the new A380 Airbus, which, at 170 tons, is 50% lighter than a comparable Boeing. Over 50% of the 30-odd tons of carbon fiber in each plane come from Oberbruch. Worldwide orders for 148 A380s mean work for the 160-strong Tenax team, although the A380 contract uses less than 10% of the plant's production capacity.

Plant production capacity is currently running at 1,900 tons per annum. A new production line, representing an investment of EUR 40m, will create 60 new jobs and increase capacity to 3,400 tons. Aviation, pressure vessels and offshore wind turbines with a span of 50m provide interesting new prospects for the company.

(Source: Aachener Zeitung)

<http://www.tenax-fibers.com>

EUR 16M CCGT NUON PLANT

[BIZ/INFRA: Heinsberg-Oberbruch, January 22]

Nuon, a leading Dutch-based, independent, international group active in the generation, marketing, sale and distribution of electricity, gas, heat and related products and services for millions of customers, is to build a CCGT (Combined Cycle Gas Turbine) power plant, which is safe, economical and environment friendly in the Oberbruch business park in Heinsberg. The new power plant, the largest in the district of Heinsberg, will be a state-of-the-art development.

<http://www.industriepark-oberbruch.de>

POWDER PROGRESS

[BIZ: Liège, January 21]

According to a report on the Liège website Proxi-Liège, OCCHIO, a specialist in high-level powder characterization, using optoelectronics, computer assisted image analysis, geostatistics and raw material characterization, is doing well. OCCHIO is a University of Liège spin-off, set up in 2002, employing five and exporting 80% of its production. It achieved revenues of EUR 92,000 in 2003 and EUR 275,000 in 2004, reaching break-even in just three years. This has allowed them to take on three staff and major commercial partners.

<http://www.occhio.be>

AACHEN SERVER-ON-CD

[BIZ/SCI-TECH: Aachen, January 17]

The PC can be transformed into a server - temporarily or permanently. An operating system can be installed and stay installed. Becker & Partner of Aachen's Server-on-CD only creates a small directory for the system files. All existing files remain untouched by the installation of the server. After rebooting the PC without the CD, the PC runs with its original Operating System.

The installation and maintenance of this system does not require an information technology degree. Becker & Partner was able to reduce the settings needed to a minimum. User-friendly programming makes administration and maintenance easy; hardly more difficult than surfing the web.

Becker & Partner was established in 1984 in Aachen, Germany and are specialists in mobile data systems and SmartCard technology. Becker & Partner is developing, manufacturing and trading both customer products and specific solutions in the field of telecommunications and mobile computing. Becker & Partner's products are distributed in whole Europe. Customers are network operators (T-Mobile, e-plus, O2, Mobistar, Dutchtone, Tele Denmark), providers and distributors.

http://www.server-on-cd.de/english/index_gb.html

NEW BUSINESS SCHOOL

[BIZ: Liège, January 16]

The new Business School at the University of Liège, a combination of the Higher Commercial Institute and the University of Liège's Departments of Economics and Management, has started up. The directors are Yves Crama and Marc Dubru. They plan to work closely with the University of Maastricht, which has already achieved the AACSP accreditation, a direction in which they will now be moving. Programs will include short courses, MBAs, Finance, Insurance and E-business; in short, the provision of top-quality business education.

<http://www.ulg.ac.be>

NEW FOR FRANCORCHAMPS

[BIZ/LEI: Francorchamps, January 11]

There will be a new area for events in Francorchamps. It will include an open-air arena that will accommodate up to 30,000 spectators and, in addition to the open-air stage, there will be a building which will accommodate 3,000 visitors. The feasibility study should be ready in June.

<http://www.brf.be>

STAR ELEC SELECTED BY METZ

[BIZ: Liège, January 11]

In a EUR 1m deal, the Star Informatic Group from Liège, the largest European GIS Vendor, has announced that its Star Elec suite of spatially-enabled applications for the power-supply industry has been selected by Usine d'Electricité de Metz (UEM), in Eastern France.

Star Elec was selected after an intensive public evaluation procedure. UEM is France's largest "Régie Municipale d'Electricité" supplying power to some 300,000 people with a 3,800 km network.

The deal, worth EUR 1,000,000+, will see the deployment of Star Elec applications together with applications for the management of Public Lighting, Urban Heating and Cable TV networks, over a period of 40 months. The project includes the integration of the Oracle 10G-based GIS with information and accounting systems, data capture of some networks and data migration from UEM's existing GIS.

The solution will provide a common platform for all departments at UEM, with the aim to increase efficiencies in communication, network planning, management and maintenance. The configuration will also include Laser-Scan Radius Topology software.

<http://www.star.be>

SWEDISH MATCH IN HOUTHALEN

[BIZ: Houthalen, January 8]

Swedish Match, which produces 650 million cigars annually, is moving its cigar production plant from the Dutch town of Valkenswaard to Houthalen in Belgian Limburg. The management and unions are negotiating to bring the staff jobs and European headquarters to Belgium too.

<http://www.standaard.be>

KAISERBARACKE TO ADD 33 HA

[BIZ/INFRA: Amel, January 5]

The Kaiserbaracke business park in the municipality of Amel is to grow by 33 ha, to attract investments of EUR 40m and produce 50 new jobs. The regional minister responsible has already given the go-ahead. The park is targeting the wood-processing industry - using waste wood for energy and industrial heating.

<http://www.brf.be>

LUXEMBOURG SELECTS IONIC

[BIZ/SCI-TECH: Liège, January 5]

Liège-based IONIC, the world's leader in geospatial standardization for business, has been selected to build an intranet/internet portal for the Luxembourg National Land/Real Estate Registry. This ground-breaking portal will be built incorporating the latest OGC standards, including a transactional Web Feature Service and will allow users to consult and download a variety of disparate sources of geographic data in one common environment. IONIC will form a team with the Sword Group, an industrial provider of custom-made solutions. The Sword Group will implement a solution based on IONIC's RedSpider technology. This cutting-edge state of the art geo-portal will be based on a database whose content is synchronized with the administrations' production databases and stored completely in Oracle.

The portal will allow multiple profiles of users to execute dynamic searches, data retrievals and downloads from the site. The site will also be protected using the latest security web technologies, as implemented by the IONIC RedSpider product line. The ACT-LUX administration chose the IONIC-SWORD solution because of their innovative, international standards-based technology and their expertise and knowledge in interoperability. The portal represents a breakthrough in the way that services are provided to the public.

<http://www.ionicsoft.com>

THE AACHEN REGION

[BIZ: Aachen, January 3]

'Technologieregion Aachen', a new English-German bilingual publication, in a series of monographs on German regions as centers of business activity, has been published by the Aachen Development Agency AGIT, in conjunction with Kommunikation & Wirtschaft GmbH of Oldenburg.

The monograph edited by Victoria Appelbe and Gaby Mahr-Urfels covers 168 pages and includes 30 essays, with attractive illustrations, on the areas of competence and the strengths of the region. It focuses on business, science, new technologies and ideas and also includes leisure and quality of life topics.

Contributions are by authors from the worlds of business and the academy and freelancers [including ourselves. Ed]. The Aachen Region is also shown in its proximity to and integration within the Meuse-Rhine/ Charlemagne Euroregion. 'Technologieregion Aachen' costs EUR 33 from bookstores (ISBN 3-88363-240-6).

<http://www.agit.de>

GROUNDSTAR FOR AIR FRANCE

[BIZ/LOG: Aachen, January 1]

The Aachen-based Inform Software company is to supply its GroundStar system to 15 French Airports for ground handling of the Air France fleet. The Airport Systems Division's product, GroundStar already optimizes ground-handling processes at more than 60 airports worldwide. Inform's Airport Systems Division focuses on the intelligent software system support of planning, operational and administrative processes at airlines, airports and ground-handling companies

Services offered are not limited to the development, customization, interfacing and system integration of software systems but also include consultancy and system support. GroundStar's consultants support their clients during the entire project as competent partners. Feasibility studies and workshops form part of the consultancy services as well as system specifications, project management and turnkey implementation.

After the successful implementation of a GroundStar system, additional support is offered such as a user hotline, 24hrs online support, maintenance and user groups.

(Source: IHK Aachen)

<http://www.groundstar.aero>

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

EUR 5M FOR SPA AIRPORT

[LOG: Liège, February 10]

John Erler writes in 'La Libre Belgique' that funding is to be made available for the airfield in Spa. A total of EUR 5m will be invested by the region before 2012; EUR 3m before 2007. They will be spent on the power network, fuel supplies, safety and security for hangar nr 1, the runway and the apron. The security of the site and the construction of new hangars, parking and parking facilities will also be included.

The stakeholders will be SOWAER, responsible for the management of public airfields in the Walloon country, which will hold 25%. Other potential stakeholders are the Aqualis intercommunal utility, the company that runs the Spa Francorchamps racing circuit, Meusinvest, the Spa tourist authority, Francofolies, Liège airport and Spa-Monopole. The airport is to serve the interest of tourism and provide shelter for 15 aircraft in new hangars. There will also be an attempt to lure in flights by the low price of aviation spirit or kerosene in Belgium, compared with the price in the Netherlands and Germany. It will also be part of a local tourist strategy to promote flights for tourists for sporting activities, including golf.

<http://www.lalibre.be>

NEW TLS WAREHOUSE

[LOG: Liège, January 28]

Transport et Logistique Service (TLS) is going to build a 14,500m² warehouse in Hauts Sarts Herstal next to its existing buildings. The new buildings are, in the first instance, for use by a new French customer, which will use 70% of the space for its logistical business in Europe. This is a long-term project, producing 30 new jobs. The space left over will be used for other businesses, which with TLS cooperates. The company recorded revenues of EUR 23m in the financial year 2004 and currently employs 125 in Herstal and Eynatten. TLS runs the transport activities and Stockage Industriel is responsible for warehousing and buildings. Both businesses are owned by Jean Vincent. By the end of 2005, Stockage Industriel will have 36,500 m² of warehousing and 17,500 m² for outdoor storage. (Source: Truck & Business)

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

REGISTER LOGISTIK

[LOG: Welkenraedt, January 26]

Register Logistik, part of the German Offergeld logistics group, is building a new cross-docking storage space in Welkenraedt with a total surface area of 5,000 m². The level of the investment has not yet been published, but it has been entirely financed by Register. The warehouse will be used as a European platform for the Offergeld distribution network in the Benelux, northern France and Germany. (Source: Truck & Business).

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

FOURTH LOCK AT LANAYE

[LOG: Liège, January 14]

Philippe Bodeux writes in Le Soir that there is European support for the construction of the fourth lock at Lanaye, which will give river traffic from Liège and Belgium access to Rotterdam, the Rhine and the Danube beyond and a gateway to Eastern Europe. Currently, this passage is obstructed by a complex of locks that is not up to the job. The choice is to build a lock 225 meters long and 25 meters wide, which will allow two barges of 2,200 tons in line astern.

The funding required will represent an investment of EUR 70.5m, 10% of which will be for the account of the Netherlands. The European Investment Bank has encouraged the Commission to give the project priority. The preliminary study is ongoing and expected to be finalized in July 2005. The Walloon minister of Transport, Michael Daerden has managed to dislodge EUR 2.26m, or 50% of the cost of the study, from the European Commission. Following the study and the 8 permits required, construction should begin at the latest by 2007 to achieve a 2010 deadline.

<http://www.lesoir.be>

LIFE SCIENCES AND SCI-TECH

THE KANGOO HYBRID

[SCI-TECH: Liège, January 28]

Green Propulsion, an independent specialist, developing cleaner prototype vehicles was founded in 2001 as a spinoff of the University of Liège. Its Kangoo hybrid prototype vehicle, representing an investment of EUR 384,000, is to be presented to the press in Liège February 4. The vehicle based on the Renault Kangoo Dci 1.5 reduces CO2 emissions by 42 to 75%. It was shown at Energex, the first fair for energy, sustainable development and energy production optimization in November 2004 at Brussels Expo.

The Kangoo Hybrid features :

- Li-ions Batteries
- " Combined Series-Parallel " Hybrid powertrain
- > 40 km ZEV range
- acceleration better than diesel 1,5 DCi version
- CO2 Emissions: 93g/km; 3,2l diesel/100km on European cycle; well to wheel (-42%)
- -75% on "The Post" driving cycle.

<http://www.greenpropulsion.be/default.asp>

AZM & UM WITH DSM

[LIFE-SCI/BIZ: Maastricht, January 25]

The University Hospital in Maastricht (AZM) and the university have concluded a public private agreement with DSM to undertake joint research and to develop joint projects. The first concrete project is in biomaterials, which is to make a contribution to the strengthening of biomedical activities in Limburg. In the context of the regional innovation policy, the Minister of Economic Affairs and the Province of Limburg have together made EUR 1.5m available for biomaterials. The total costs for the project are EUR 2.5m. The objective is a long-term strategic cooperation to meet the targets set made by the Lisbon accords.

Smart materials will play a role and DSM will be playing a major role in development with its experience in this sector. The university will add its theoretical knowledge on the biocompatibility of synthetics, the effect of medication on heart rhythms and the mechanisms behind the growth of new blood vessels and the coagulation of the blood.

The university hospital will provide clinical research and new strategies for the control and administration of medication, in addition to the use of medical instruments.

The first three projects will involve the development of a new implant, which will be placed next to the heart muscle. The implant is made of a porous sponge-like plastic that will be charged with medication. After implantation, the medication will be gradually eluted to the heart muscle, allowing regulation of the heart rhythms. The second project is concerned with the eluting of a substance that encourages the growth of new blood vessels and minor vessels locally. The intention is to see whether the perfusion of the limbs can be improved by this. This is principally of importance to patients with diabetes.

The third project relates to new materials, which on contact with the blood, do not lead to coagulation. There is a great need for these materials when blood is in contact with foreign substances, for example when a patient has long-term treatment on a heart-lung machine.

<http://www.unimaas.nl>

TORQUETEC'S POWERTUBE

[SCI-TECH: Jülich, January 1]

The Technical Faculty in Jülich and the TorqueTec company presented PowerTube, their most efficient electrical linear motor at the recent Hanover Trade Fair. Torque motors are particularly suitable for machine tools with rotary tables or swiveling axes, as in high-speed cutting centers or profile milling with swiveling heads in large-scale machining centers. They can also be used as drives for quick run-up axes on turning machines, for dynamic tool magazines in machining centers, in robotics and injection molding machines. Now they are being used in the automotive industry, as a marginal drive for fuel cells or with accumulators and also in the packaging industry. Check the website for information.

<http://www.torquetec.de>

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