



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

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This Newsletter is a common initiative of the Chambers of Commerce of Aachen (D), Eupen-Malmedy-St Vith (B), Belgian Limburg (B), Liège-Verviers (B), and Southern Limburg (NL).

Industrie- und Handelskammer
Aachen



CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

JAN MANS, NEW CHAMBER BOSS

[COM: Maastricht, October 27]

Jan Mans (65) is to be the new chairman of the South Limburg Chamber of Commerce in Maastricht. He will start work in mid-January in 2006. Mr. Mans has been mayor of Kerkrade and also piloted Enschede through a difficult period following the firework explosion disaster (May 2000). He has also been acting mayor of Venlo and played a leading role in the activities of the Meuse-Rhine-North-Euroregion.

(source: Rob Cox, Dagblad de Limburger)

<http://www.limburger.nl>

SENATOR MICHAEL WIRTZ

[COM: Aachen, October 21]

On the evening of Friday, October 21 Michael Wirtz, the former managing partner of the international pharmaceutical company Grünenthal GmbH from Aachen/Stolberg and president of the Aachen Chamber of Commerce, became an honorary Senator of Aachen's RWTH University.

This was recognition, in the words of Professor Burkhard Rauhut, for his extraordinary services in the field of palliative medicine and for the promotion of start-up companies from the university. The Grünenthal Foundation for Palliative Medicine also finances a Chair at the university hospital.

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

A-2 PLATFORM

[INFRA: Maastricht, October 21]

A special business platform is being set up in Maastricht to deal with the A-2 tunnel project, which will be building a tunnel for the A-2 highway that bisects Maastricht. The platform is the initiative of the South Limburg Chamber of Commerce, the Limburg Employers Association, and the Federation of Cooperative Business Associations in Maastricht, and the A-2 Project Bureau.

The object of the exercise is to ensure economic interest during the planning and implementation phase by having active involvement of organized business in the area. The platform will be the contact point for the business community and will present its standpoints and organize communication. The Chamber will provide the secretariat, and the contact person is Frans Koelman (Tel: +31(0)6 54 64 06 40).

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

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

VALKENBURG'S 'TOUR' MILLIONS

[BIZ/LEI: Valkenburg, October 28]

The arrival the 'Tour de France' in Valkenburg, South Limburg at the end of its third stage on 'the fourth of July' next year is expected to attract between 300,000 and 600,000 visitors. This means up to EUR 6m for the local hospitality industry and potential revenues of EUR 20m for the region, according to reports in the local press.

<http://www.valkenburg.nl>

LRM IT FUNDING PROGRAM

[BIZ: Hasselt, October 26]

LRM announced the launch of its IT funding program at the VoKa-KvK Limburg Chamber of Commerce's IT day on October 19. The program will use LRM funding and reflect the agency's intention to invest in innovative sectors such as IT. Jean-Paul De Wachter, founder of the Real Software subsidiary, ASQ, has been employed to manage the fund. LRM doubled its IT portfolio in 2005 by taking a stake in 7 companies (Cegeka, AnaXis, AsicAhead, Summit Engineering, Gia Systems, IPTE en Prato) - producing 800 jobs. Two further stakeholdings are in prospect. LRM has already invested a total of EUR 11,8m in the IT sector and the demand continues to increase. LRM has chosen an integrated approach to the IT sector in cooperation with existing initiatives and IT-competence centers like the University of Hasselt, Higher education in Limburg (B), Gom-Limburg (the development company), Flanders Multimedia Valley and I-City.

LRM has also established an Advisory Committee comprising Stijn Bijmens (Ubizen), Jean-Paul De Wachter, Wim Dewaele (IBBT), Professor Eddy Flerackers (EDM), Jan Genoe (KHLim), André Geboers (Philips) and Tony Verbeke (Siemens) with industrial and networking experience. The committee provides a strategic framework and is called upon for research and guidance for the IT businesses.

<http://www.eyes-e-tools.be>

EUR 40M FOR NEDCAR DISTRIBUTION

[BIZ/LOG: Born, October 26]

Peter Kamps writes in Dagblad de Limburger that the Geleen transport company Langen is investing around EUR 40m in the construction of a major (43,000 m²) distribution center at NedCar in Born. On completion, the center will go on a long-term lease to Mitsubishi and will supply 2,500 European dealers with parts. Mitsubishi estimates that it will create 100 new jobs.

<http://www.limburger.nl>

WALLOON METAL HUB

[BIZ: Liège, October 21]

The 'Walloon Metal Hub' has been set up in a new building with new equipment. It will link 250 researchers from the university and other research centers. This is an essential part of the Liège redeployment program. Guy Fryns, the director, says that he's expecting it to produce new business in five years.

<http://www.crif.be>

ENVIRONMENTAL OK HAUTS SARTS

[BIZ: Liège, October 20]

At the Initiatives Business Fair the Walloon Minister for the Environment Benoît Lutgen issued an ISO 14001, the first to a Walloon business site, to the Hauts Sarts business park in Herstal. The idea is to use synergies in business parks and reduce environmental impact. Hauts Sarts has developed a system of environmental management, and the project will lead to new styles of environmental management, reducing costs and benefiting economies of scale.

<http://www.hauts-sarts.be/>

DYNAFIX IN TOP 500

[BIZ: Puth, October 18]

Dynafix, a South Limburg-based company that specializes in repairing computers and mobile telephones, was, in 41st place, the first Dutch company in the Europe Top 500, published recently. Specializing in after-sales services, it manages after-sales care for high-quality, expensive, consumer electronics for operators, retail organizations, manufacturers, insurance companies, distributors, and private individuals. It carries out high-quality repairs, product updates, and refurbishment services. It also develops and runs efficient web-based applications that illustrate the service process and it completes, manages, and runs all the necessary logistical processes to deliver after-sales service. Five hundred of Europe's fastest growing mid-size companies have created some 130.000 jobs across all industry sectors over the last three years. Not only have these 'champions of growth' grown employment by an impressive 14% annually but they have also increased their turnover by the same amount. These are among the key findings of the 2005 edition of the annual Europe's 500 pan-European ranking of high-growth, job-creating companies, published by Europe's 500 Entrepreneurs for Growth and supported by Microsoft and KPMG.

<http://www.dynafix.com>

NEUMAN & ESSER EXPANDS EUR 1.5M

[BIZ: Übach-Palenberg, October 17]

The Neuman & Esser engineering company, which specializes in compressors and dates back to the early 19th century, is expanding. The company specializes in compressor technology, servicing compressors, and grinding and classifying technology. The order book, which showed a future with a requirement largely for big, heavyweight compressors, made the company decide to expand the central part of its production unit by 900m² for assembly and dispatch.

This development requires an investment of EUR 1.5m to install, among other things, an 80-ton crane that will be able to lift three times its own weight.

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

EUR 43M: SIEMENS-BOMBARDIER

[BIZ/IND: Wegberg-Wildenrath/Erlangen, Oct 14]

The Transportation Systems Group (TS) of Siemens AG is to convert five ICE 3 units for service in France in cooperation with Bombardier Transportation. The Siemens-led consortium and Deutsche Bahn (German Railways) has reached an agreement on a related project that has an order volume of approximately EUR 43 m. This conversion work will be carried out at Bombardier and at the Siemens rolling stock test center in Wegberg-Wildenrath near Mönchengladbach. The ICE 3 trainsets are due to go into service from 2007 in the German-French railway network on a direct Paris–Eastern France–Frankfurt link.

<http://www.siemens.com>

MERIT MEDICAL IN BEEK

[BIZ/LIFE-SCI: Maastricht, October 13]

A contract has been signed by the municipality of Beek and Merit Medical, a US company that produces endovascular instruments for cardiological and radiographic applications. The contract is for the purchase of a 14,000 m² lot at Technoport Europe, adjacent to Maastricht Aachen Airport. The new location means that the company will be able to expand its staff from 20 to 25.

<http://www.liof.nl>

CARGLASS EXPANDS IN HASSELT

[BIZ: Hasselt, October 11]

Carglass, the Hasselt car windscreen repairer owned by the D'leteren, has doubled the capacity and employment at its Hasselt call center. There will be another 40 places and just as many new agents. This means that they will be able to handle more than 300,000 calls annually. In Hasselt the company runs a 15,000m² European distribution center that stores 170,000 car windscreens on a permanent basis. It supplies 650,000 screens annually to branches in Belgium, The Netherlands, France, and Germany.

(Source: De Tijd)

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

NEW BRANCH FOR KUFFERATH AG

[BIZ: Dueren, October 10]

The US branch of the Dueren producer of stainless steel architectural wire mesh (woven metal fabrics engineered for the architecture and design communities) GKD - Gebrueder Kufferath AG is attracting new orders. At its 4,000m² location on the east coast of Maryland, the star French architect Dominique Perrault has created a connection between modern architecture and a production plant. The building is spectacular and is housed in a 50m-long stainless steel facade. The new US plant can be seen on their website.

<http://www.gkdmetailfabrics.com>

ESW STOLBERG TOP YEAR

[BIZ: Stolberg, October 6]

Electronic service Willms GmbH & Co. KG (ESW) is looking forward to its best result in 20 years. The company is particularly successful with its solutions in LED technology, the light-emitting diodes, and includes both Aixtron and Porsche among its customers. The first three quarters of this year have already shown a better result than the whole of 2004, according to a report in the Aachener Zeitung. The company employs 120 and achieves EUR 15m in revenues.

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

WUST TAKEN OVER BY BESIX GROUP

[BIZ: Malmédy, October 4]

The Malmédy construction company Wust has been taken over by the Besix Group. Wust will retain its name and operate independently. It employs 600 and produces revenues in the region of EUR 100m and will have a 10% share in the Besix Group's activities. Wust is, among other things, working on the new TVG station in Liège. Besix covers virtually all fields of construction and employs some 1,500 university graduates and technicians as well as 10,000 workers.

The move means that, among other things, Wust will be quoted on the Cairo stock exchange as well as the Brussels exchange. The history of Besix goes back to the beginning of the century when it was known as the 'Société Belge des Bétons'.

<http://www.brf.be>

NOMACORC EXTENDS IN THIMISTER

[BIZ: Thimister, October 4]

The Nomacorc company, which produces synthetic corks and was founded in the US six years ago by Marc Noel from Eupen, is now extending its premises into Thimister where it is going to set up a production facility. The company is the world leader in the production of synthetic corks. It employs 100 in Thimister.

<http://www.brf.be>

GENK FLANDERS BUSINESS GATEWAY

[BIZ: Genk, October 2]

In 2007, as part of the Flemish government's Limburg plan, Genk will be recognized as the business gateway. The assets of the city are primarily its interesting logistical options in Limburg. In three years time there have been 16 new distribution centers that provide 2,200 jobs. At the same time the city provides alternatives to ease the flow of traffic by the redevelopment of the former coal port. And between Tongeren and Saint Troud there has been a great deal of development in the area of logistics.

A recently published study by the Flemish Institute for Logistics and Buck Consultants shows that approximately 400 existing EDCs in Flanders generate EUR 6.6bn or 4% of Flanders GDP. (Source: Knack)

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

GRUENENTHAL INVESTS EUR 25M

[BIZ/LIFE-SCI: Aachen, October 2]

Grünenthal has invested EUR 25m in its central building in South Eilendorf in Aachen. The modern packaging plant can pack 200–600 packages in blister packs in a minute and then they go on to the racks, which are 26 stories high. The area where pallets are stored is as big as four football fields, and annually 57 million packages are produced and 24,000 pallets ready for delivery.

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

XDC (EVS) BRANCH IN FRANCE

[BIZ: Liège, October 2]

EVS, the Liège-based broadcast equipment company, has set up a branch in France for its digital cinema subsidiary XDC. The company has to equip 300 cinemas in four years. XDC provides digital cinema servers and rents or sells them with projectors. Alain Remond, who has worked for Barco for 15 years, will be the head of the new branch.

(Source: De Tijd)

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

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

AUTOMOTIVE LOGISTICS EUR 5BN

[LOG: Barchon, October 16]

At a conference in Barcelona called 'Automotive Logistics 2010', which was organized by the European car transporter group ECG, it was announced that European logistics operators in the automotive sector will invest up to EUR 5bn in new materials: trucks, trailers, boats, IT systems, and so on, through 2010. The investments, according to the participants, are necessary to keep up with a market on the move and under pressure: pressure of prices because of competition and a constant rise in direct costs for logistical operators as a result of the costs of fuel, energy, and staff.

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

SPHINX DISTRIBUTION, GENK

[LOG: Genk, October 16]

The Maastricht producer of sanitary ware is going to establish a central warehouse and distribution center in Genk for all its Benelux activities. Janssen Logistics from Venlo will be setting up the 30,000m² warehouse in Genk for this purpose, of this space 18,500m² will be rented by Sphinx and Janssen Autos will use the rest for other clients.

Sphinx wants to open the new center in August 2006 and will be working largely with its own staff of 24. (Source: Het Nieuwsblad)

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

MEUSE-RHINE LOGISTICS

[LOG: Liège, October 5]

The 'Heartbeat of Logistics' organization held a seminar at Liège airport recently, to update major players on the logistics sector in Meuse-Rhine. Speakers included Vincent Gernay of Liège airport, Frans Ridderbeekx of the Limburg development company, LIOF, Professor Alex van Breedam of the Flanders Institute of Logistics at Antwerp University and Sophie Houtmeyers, MD of Skechers EDC (European Distribution Center). Victoria Appelbe of AGIT, the Aachen development company was in the chair. Mr Gernay welcomed the group of around 60 participants and talked about plans for the airport's development.

Liège airport focuses on cargo and has seen the figures increase, bringing it into 8th position among European cargo airports today, with around 340,000 tons per annum. Mr Gernay said the airport was targeting 2012, when they wanted to be in 5th place in the European air cargo league, moving 800,000 tons per annum. Currently Liège was home to a number of cargo operators including Sunair, Kallita, Emirates, CAL, Icelandair and Africawest.

Liège airport also had handling operations run by LACHS, a CAL subsidiary and by Swissport. It had its own veterinary inspection post and formed the Walloon logistical hub, with 66% of aircargo transits through the airport. TNT played a key role as an integrator, with its European hub at the airport. Liège is also part of the Paris airports group, ADP and cooperated with the railways, which were moving towards a TGV cargo link for shorter distances (less than 500km). Mr Gernay went on to say that Liège Airport was also keen to cooperate with Maastricht Airport. The next development would be the take over of military facilities on the north side of the airport and the extension of the runway - which still has a legal hurdle to clear.

Frans Ridderbeekx - who pointed out that the Meuse-Rhine Journal was an optimum source of information on the area - went into the cross-border assets of the area in which he was followed by Professor Van Breedam. The Rhine Scheldt Eurodelta, in which Meuse-Rhine is central, produces 12% of the EU's GDP. It has 7% of the community's population, a total of 32m and it covers 2.8% of the EU's service area.

With metropolitan economic regions like Tokyo-Kyoto and Boston-Washington DC, Eurodelta leads the world. As it has no single town with a population of more than a million, it is a metropolitan network, which by virtue of the proximity of EDCs, know-how, attractiveness, the presence of gateways and infrastructure, offers a unique value/selling proposition across the whole range of logistics.

Eurodelta combines know-how and innovation, logistics and new production, as well as postponement, reverse logistics, maintenance and repair. The role of EDCs is crucial in this business and currently there are some 400 of them, employing 25,000 workers in the Eurodelta. The inventory of value added activity can range from product assembly to tuning pianos, customizing is the name of the game.

An excellent example of this type of business is the US footwear company Skechers, which is run by Sophie Houtmeyers. This is a 25,000m² EDC, which provides seasonal work and added value processing and has seen its sales grow by 70%. Skechers also likes its Meuse-Rhine location in Liège because of the multi-modal logistical options available. Incidentally, they now have Christina Aguilera to endorse their footwear in international markets, instead of that other young lady. All in all, this get-together on logistics was an upbeat session, and it was concluded by a tour of the airport and its buildings.

<http://www.heartbeatofbusiness.org>

GENE AGAINST CALCIFICATION

[LIFE-SCI: Aachen, October 16]

Calcification is caused by a protein in the blood called Fetuin-A. At the inter-disciplinary research group of the Helmholtz Association of the University of Aachen scholars, led by Prof. Dr. Willi Jahnen-Dechent, were able to produce a gene using a specially bred mouse, which removes the production of Fetuin-A and reduces the danger of calcification. The extent to which Fetuin-A plays a role in diseases like Arterial Sclerosis has not yet been made clear but the first steps have been taken.

Information from will.jahnen@rwth-aachen.de

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

WALLOON INNOVATION PRIZE

[LIFE-SCI/BIZ: Herstal, October 10]

Kitozyme, a Liège-based company, that extracts biopolymers from crustacean carapaces, has won the Walloon Technology and Innovation prize for 2005. It's a spin-off from the University of Liège and its biopolymers are used in medications, cosmetics, beer, and wine. The biopolymers can help in losing weight and reducing cholesterol. They also serve as food additives. (Source: RTC Liège)

<http://www.kitozyme.com>

DSM, PHILLIPS & CHAIRMAN YEO

[LIFE-SCI: Eijsden, October 4]

A major life sciences project was introduced at the Biopartner center in Maastricht, a custom-designed 5,200 m² building, adjacent to the university hospital and the faculty of medicine, at the beginning of October. The Province of Limburg's business specialist Martin Eurlings presented an overview of the province's cutting edge activities in the life sciences, within its accelerated agenda called " On the way to 2012".

Under the heading of XcellRX, Mr. Eurlings was followed by major players and presentations, including those by DSM and Philips, which took the form of a seminar on the frontiers of the life sciences for the press and other participants. Finally, Mr. Philip Yeo arrived and discussed the attractions of Singapore, which could be reciprocal.

XcellRX embraces three Biotech companies;

- 1) Kinesis from Breda and Maastricht based;
- 2) PharmaCell, a supplier of GMP services and clinical batches
- 3) basic pharmaceutical company in Roermond specializing in dispensing, filling packaging, and labeling of registered pharmaceuticals, new medications for clinical research. The emphasis is on product development.

Biopartner has ample facilities for this type of enterprises. From the journalist's point of view, a particularly valuable, part of the morning and early afternoon, was provided by DSM, DSM's Mike de Leeuw, head of Biomedical materials, gave a structured introduction to his companies life science activities.

Medicine is moving away from its old approach of one size fits all and custom-made projects, dosage and degradation properties are now inbuilt in modern medication enabling targeted, customized treatment. Talking of DSM Mr. De Leeuw said the company had a sound financial position and had leading positions in 75% of its products portfolio in the life sciences, where it was a global industry. It is also spending EUR 300m annually on research. Life science products, nutritional products and performance materials will now be the company's vanguard products, in addition to industrial chemicals. On the Biomedical front the points to remember are that we are living in a period in which aging population and changing life styles lead to an increase of chronic diseases. There is a continued need for advanced therapies to reduce the cost to society and improve patient benefit.

Converging technologies are creating fast growing market opportunities. DSM sees the opportunities for the construction of a sustainable knowledge industry in Limburg and presents an example of the role of its polymers in the development of Biomedical material. Dyneema ultra strong fibers are being used in orthopedic sutures. Solupor micro porous membrane applications are used in transdermal and cardiovascular drug delivery system. DSM also produces Ultra High Molecular Weight Polyethylene for knee and hip implants and has a share in cellulose applications for wound management. Its coatings are used in local drug delivery and in producing polymer scaffolds. The pharmaceutical and medical device industries are converging, creating new high-tech business.

Figures for 2003 showed USD 450bn Pharma market, with a 5% growth, medical devices USD 85bn, with a 10-15% growth, drug device combinations USD 3bn, with a projected figure of USD 20-40bn in 2014, the figures for regenerative medicine were USD 1bn, estimated to be USD 20bn in 2014. This is very big business.

Phillips is strong on the imaging side and Hans Hofstraat talked about their contribution, about molecular diagnostics, about medicine in 2020, about predisposition-focused screening, about a multi model approach, using smart contrast agents, catheter imaging, molecular diagnostics, about mass spectrographic and the care cycle in molecular medicine enabling molecular therapy.

Basically Mr. Hofstraat is talking about looking into the body, targeting with ultrasound and delivering personalized medicine, he also noted that Phillips research lab in Aachen plays its role and he touched on the legal aspects of genetic modification and green genetics.

After the seminar the Dutch government representative, Menno Honing, talked about the government plan of action for the life sciences for 2004-2007. They are supporting entrepreneurship in the life sciences, simplifying legislation, strengthening the knowledge base, strengthening international networks too and providing clear and simple communication. Budgets are in excess of EUR 300m and the growth figures seem to reflect success.

On the partnership front, Singapore is in the ascendant. The Dutch ministry's team and Limburgs top life science entrepreneur, Jan Thio, are back from a visit and they arranged for a visit from Phillip Yeo. Chairman Yeo comes trailing clouds of glory. He is currently chairman of the agency for science, technology and research (A*STAR) and co-chairman of the economic development board in Singapore. Philip Yeo, a Fullbright fellow at Harvard is a graduate of the University of Toronto, Singapore and Harvard, has an honorary doctorate from Toronto, and has been decorated by various foreign governments, including France, Belgium and Indonesia. He has played a major part in the development of Singapore's industrial potential, ranging from aerospace through shipbuilding and engineering to life sciences today.

Biomedical sciences have seen their revenues double from EUR 6 to 12bn. They have set up a 200,000 m² biopolis and are 5th in the world in self therapy. They are looking for partners and they are looking for people. As Chairman Yeo says, if scholars from Meuse-Rhine, decide to spent some time in Singapore, there will always be the added bonus of learning Chinese.

<http://www.biopartner.nl>