



Tandem

BORDER	France-Belgium
TERRITORY	Nord-Pas de Calais; West Flanders
EUROPEAN PROGRAMME	INTERREG IV A France-Wallonia-Flanders
DATE	2011 – 2014
MAIN PARTNERS	Lead partner: POM West-Vlaanderen (the economic development agency for the Province of West Flanders); operational coordinators: Nord France Innovation Développement (NFID), OCWest – Ondernemerscentra West-Vlaanderen (West Flanders entrepreneurs' centre)
OBJECTIVE	Development of a cross-border knowledge strategy by strengthening the centres of expertise in their role as interfaces between academic institutions and businesses with the potential to innovate
MAIN ACTIVITY	Creation of cross-border "tandems" between centres of expertise and academic institutions in order to support innovative businesses

WHAT DOES THE TANDEM PROJECT CONSIST OF?

The Province of West Flanders and the Nord-Pas de Calais Region boast a dense population of innovative SMEs and an extensive network of higher education institutions and centres of expertise. The latter, whether public or public-private entities, serve as interfaces between SMEs and academia and consequently constitute a crucial link in the chain of development, application and dissemination of knowledge within the regional economy, specifically in the area of supporting businesses in their innovation projects. **Increasing the access of centres of expertise to all of the academic and higher education institutions in the cross-border region seems necessary in order to maximise SMEs' potential for innovation and, more generally, to improve the processes of technology transfer in the cross-border region's economy.**

The Tandem project is led by POM West-Vlaanderen, the economic development agency of West Flanders Province, in partnership with the NFID (Nord France Innovation Développement), a resource centre which supports the implementation of economic development policies (entrepreneurship, innovation and research) in the Nord-Pas de Calais Region.

The project aims at supporting the development of a cross-border knowledge strategy. It does this by fostering exchanges between French and Flemish hubs of competitiveness and excellence, clusters and centres of expertise in important and cutting-edge sectors identified for the two regional economies: ICT and imaging, food and health, textiles and new materials, transport and logistics, and clean technologies.

As a result, the Tandem project has become **the first operational cross-border collaboration between the two regions' knowledge strategies**: the Provincial Economic Impetus Plan in West Flanders and the Research-Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialisation (SRI-SI) in Nord-Pas de Calais, which also has a cross-cutting component called "Strengthening Partnerships with Resources of Excellence in Other European Regions".

"2013 strategic projects" award for the Tandem project by Wallonia and the INTERREG IVA France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen Programme

WHAT STEPS AND ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN?

The Tandem project has proceeded in two stages:

- the development of a model of cross-border cooperation
- the setting-up and development of “tandems” between clusters.

In the first phase, a working group bringing together all of the project’s players sought to develop a model of cross-border cooperation between centres of expertise, academic institutions and businesses that was designed to take account of the existing relationships between these players, their needs and wishes, and specific events or training to be organised in order to promote the creation of cross-border networks. A series of interviews carried out by POM West-Vlaanderen and the NFID with innovation players in the identified fields, as well as a conference halfway through the process on the good French-Flemish and European practices regarding cross-border cooperation in the area of innovation, made it possible to design this model.

On the basis of this model of cooperation, the project partners moved on to set up and develop “tandems” between clusters, taking into account the guidelines and action plans drawn up by the two regional innovation strategies and in liaison with the innovation platforms of the clusters and cross-cutting innovation centres developed by the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis.

Thematic working meetings bringing together the French and Flemish players helped the partners to think about how best to set up “tandems” around key questions: What is their concrete role? What is their relationship with businesses? Which players could work together? At what level could they work together? etc.

The signature of cooperation agreements between players in the same sector concretised and brought media attention to these partnerships. Once set up, these “tandems” have been developed through the establishment of joint activities, notably in the area of research and the provision of services.

Thematic training on “cross-border know-how” has been organised by the Tandem coordinators in order to initiate players into the specificities of cross-border partnerships, such as cross-border cooperation and coordination, cross-border promotion and communication, cross-border intellectual property, and the use of databases on players in innovation on either side of the border; this mapping of R&D skills already existed but was little known about by the French and Flemish players. Lastly, the collaborative workspace known as ASTRIDE (Applications et Services de Travail en Réseau pour l’Innovation et le Développement des Entreprises – Networking Applications and Services for Business Innovation and Development), used by players in innovation in Nord-Pas de Calais, has been opened up to partners in West Flanders to enable all of the players concerned to have a secure shared work platform designed for the exchange of cooperation documents.

WHAT “TANDEMS” HAVE BEEN SET UP?

Cooperation agreements have been signed between:

- Inotep (FR) and Howest (BE) for sustainable construction
- UP-tex (FR) and Centexbel (BE) for textiles
- the MEDEE Hub (FR) and Powerlink (BE) for renewable energies.

In addition, close collaboration exists between the following players:

- the Matikem Hub (FR) and Centexbel (BE) for new materials
- Game IN (FR) and Howest (BE) for video games
- Pictanovo (FR) and Howest (BE) for ICT and imaging
- Cd2e (FR) and Vlakwa (BE) for water management.

WHAT ARE THE FIRST REACTIONS REGARDING THE PROJECT’S EFFECTIVENESS?

The Tandem project was awarded one of the three “Strategic Projects 2013” prizes by Wallonia and its partner authorities in the INTERREG IV A France-Wallonia-Flanders programme and became the programme’s ambassador for 2013.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THIS GOOD PRACTICE BE ADOPTED IN OTHER CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIES?

The adoption of regional innovation strategies is rarely the subject of consultation with neighbouring territories and even less are they included in systems of strategic and operational governance. The Tandem project highlights the complementarities and synergies that are possible between the approaches and players in innovation on either side of the French-Flemish border. This operational cooperation makes it possible to structure and institutionalise relations between clusters and, as a result, to pave the way for a strategic framework for the development, application and dissemination of knowledge across the whole Nord-Pas de Calais and West Flanders region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<http://project-tandem.eu/fr/>

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