

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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