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## WHAT DO THE PROJECTS CONSIST OF?

### TTC “TOP TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER”

It was within the framework of this informal cross-border economic cooperation body that the “Towards Top Technology Cluster” TTC project was implemented (2011-2014), co-financed by the INTERREG IV A Euregio Meuse-Rhine programme.

Aimed at the setting-up of cross-border consortia of SMEs and the development of innovative projects in the life sciences, healthcare, innovative materials, ICT and energy sectors, the TTC brings together professional networks, regional development agencies and universities to create a platform for contact and cooperation.

Networking and stimulation of activity are brought about through a combination of three pillars of action:

#### ↳ Networking events

The networking events, which can be single-sector or interdisciplinary, provide an opportunity for both business leaders and university and research centre staff to meet their counterparts from the partner regions with the aim of establishing professional contacts. These networking tools take different forms: public forums (socialising events), meetings between businesses (B2B matchmaking) or workshops designed to seek out partnerships (brokerage workshops). Around fifty events have taken place, with about 3,500 participants.

#### ↳ Business development support (BDS)

Personalised support is then offered to businesses wishing to progress their projects, find partners or establish cooperation partnerships. Interested entrepreneurs are invited in the course of interviews to set out their ideas for development and their ambitions, as well as their assessment of the technical issues and market opportunities. A network of BDS managers that covers the whole of the territory of the TTR-ETAT region and available to entrepreneurs. These meetings enable the project team to assess the cross-border potential of candidates. More than 200 companies have benefited from this type of support since the start of the project.

In this second phase, the BDS managers also developed “technology and market roadmaps” in the cross-border region for several economic sectors in order to identify trends and assess the evolution of the regional economy for the next two, five and ten years. These roadmaps were discussed in roundtable sessions with businesses. This enabled the businesses to develop new ideas and to translate these into concrete project proposals, particularly with a view to the GCS initiative.

#### ↳ Financing tools

Lastly, financial assistance supports the development of projects and the implementation of the SME consortia. Innovation vouchers, with a maximum value equivalent to €5000, are designed to offer rapid assistance to SMEs/universities/research centres in the initial stage of their cross-border activities. The objective is to provide rapid and concrete assistance in accordance with the needs of the cross-border partnerships being set up. In concrete terms, a voucher gives the right to support from a BDS manager or from another structure within the Euregio Meuse-Rhine programme. It can be used to undertake feasibility studies, to search for patents, or for the use of laboratories or testing facilities for prototypes, etc. In total, out of the 31 candidates, 21 were awarded vouchers (eight for high-tech systems, seven for life sciences, five for energy and one for innovative materials), representing an investment of €105,000.

