

Alps Bio Cluster development of the first European transalpine biotech and medtech network

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Six transalpine regions, representing five European countries, have just formalized the creation of the Alps Bio Cluster, a European cluster initiative that aims to unite research, industrial and training resources in the biotech and medtech sectors over an extended transalpine area.

The following countries and regions are involved in the new cluster:

- France - Rhône-Alpes region
 - Active partners: ADEBAG (project coordinator); LyonBiopôle
- Italy – Lombardia and Piemonte regions
 - Active partners: Bioindustry Park del Canavese SpA; Milan Chamber of Commerce
- Switzerland - Western Switzerland region
 - Active partner: BioAlps
- Austria – Tyrol region
 - Active partner: Tiroler Zukunftsstiftung (Tyrolean future foundation)
- Germany – Bavaria and Upper Bavaria regions
 - Active partners: Helmholtz-Zentrum München (German Research Centre for Environmental Health), Weihenstephan University of Applied Sciences (Faculty of Biotechnology and Bioinformatics)

This rapprochement has emerged from the various partners' desire to develop appropriate and effective methods of cooperation in order to serve a highly competitive sector that has great potential for economic development over the entire area concerned.

The aim is to create the necessary conditions to support the development of SMEs at European and international level by stimulating innovation by means of cooperation within the transnational Alpine area.

The Alps Bio Cluster will be co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) thanks to the Alpine Space programme (European territorial cooperation programme) **at a 76% rate** for three years (2008 – 2011). The total budget of the project is € 1 862 505. During three year, the partners will encourage transalpine cooperation between R&D centres, universities, start-ups and SMEs by creating thematic networks uniting resources from academic, industrial and training environments. This cooperation will therefore take on **a dual transnational and “trans-sectorial” dimension**.

The main working slogan is “*a healthy life at home in the Alps in a natural environment worthy of preservation*” and two networks will be developed:

1. Autonomy and healthcare
2. New diagnosis and therapies

There are two key focuses to the work undertaken. Firstly, the use of new information and communication technologies in the medical sector in order to guarantee improved access to healthcare, this subject being of particular relevance in the Alps where accessibility is a fundamental concern.

Secondly, environmental health problems, where “green biotechnologies” related to the environment meet “red biotechnologies” that focus on healthcare applications.

Events will be planned surrounding these subjects during the entire three-year period in the various regions involved.

In the meantime, the first major step for the cluster involves the **creation of a joint competitive identity** enabling the “Alpine brand” to be promoted in the biotech and medtech sectors both within and outside the Alpine zone.

To strengthen the position occupied by the Alps Bio Cluster, a **territorial survey** will be carried out to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each region, the partners involved and the key players in the sectors concerned. This regional survey will be reinforced by a transnational territorial analysis. This should enable the partners involved to adopt a clear and relevant stance.

And let us not forget that the French, Italian and Swiss partners have already been active within the BioAlpine Cluster for two years now. Extending their cooperation to other European countries represents an important part of the approach and the dynamic of this cluster.

Alps Bio Cluster website: www.alpsbiocluster.eu

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