

# Acceleration is of the essence in Limburg

provincie limburg



(From left to right) Health, Care & Cure, Agro-Food/Nutrition and BioMedical Materials; it all interconnects in the Acceleration Agenda.

**D**utch Limburg has embarked on an enormous 'tour de force'. This mighty operation – aimed at a robust economic injection that will create many new jobs – has its origins in the Limburg Acceleration Agenda, a collaboration of the business community, scientific institutions and government. The Acceleration Agenda details innovative projects to be realised between now and 2012 (and beyond). This article examines three of the total of sixteen projects.

## Health, Care & Cure

The quality of life is a social theme that continues to gain importance. Health care has become a form of new, knowledge-driven industry, with great prospects for the Meuse-Rhine euroregion. For instance, new types of treatment are being developed with the help of cell therapy. And new tissues and organs are being constructed on the basis of cultured cell material. Cells from the human body are being used to make new vaccines against cancer. Limburg is to have a new institute in the field of cell therapy where these new products will be developed and produced. In future the three university hospitals in this euregion will combine forces and merge. And the hospitals of Orbis (Sittard-Geleen) and Atrium (Heerlen/Brunssum/Kerkrade) are also forging strategic alliances, both inside and beyond the national borders. DSM, Philips and Medtronic are leaders in the development of medical technology. Thanks to their high-quality equipment the mobility of patients in the euroregion is a

matter of course. In the field of materials, the science park at Chemelot (Sittard-Geleen) is to enter a joint venture with several major players, including Philips, the RWTH (Aachen), Maastricht University and the IMEC (Leuven). Health tourism is a new industry in South Limburg with a great many additional jobs. Patients from all over the world come to this region to receive excellent qualitative care in 'wellness surroundings'. This will put Limburg on the future map as the World Wide Health Valley.

## BioMedical Materials

The development of BioMedical Materials (BMM) is a prominent feature on the Acceleration Agenda (Chemical cluster). New high-grade materials and bio materials are being developed in Limburg, for instance materials for the precise localisation and measured dosage of medicine. Another example is the replacement through catheterization of arteries of the heart using high-grade synthetic material, so there is no longer a need for heart surgery. At the beginning of 2006 a consortium of biomedical-industrial players (headed by DSM) and scientific institutions formally ratified their collaboration. The programme has a provisional budget of € 120 million and will run for five years. Biomedical materials have the potential to become a good alternative to existing therapies for the recovery or replacement of tissue and organs. This simultaneously connects up to the already mentioned cell therapy in the health, care & cure cluster. For that is the strength of the Acceleration Agenda, it is all interconnected.

## Agro-Food/Nutrition

Agro-Food/Nutrition is a project that for the most part is based in North Limburg. This food region has an economic geographical hinterland of more than 30 million consumers within a radius of 100 kilometres. Today's consumer has an increasing appetite for food supplements and healthy vegetables, in other words: food in combination with health. The economic prospects of this project are huge: between 2000 and 3000 new jobs. The 'Greenport Vision' was unveiled at the end of June 2006. This is a vital step in the development of Greenport Venlo. Not only are new connections being built between the huge markets of the Randstad, the Ruhr and Eastern Europe, but a unique interregional network is emerging of enterprises, research institutes, education and government. These connections and lobby activities provide a perfect synergy resulting in an open innovation space that has value for the markets in agri business, nutrition, fresh food, food and logistics. The Acceleration Agenda is a catalyst for further development and turnover (from 1 to 2 billion euro annually) of Greenport Venlo.

For more information contact:  
Province of Limburg, Implementation  
Organisation Acceleration Agenda  
Henk Hoogervorst, director  
Tel: +31 (0)43 - 389 7479  
h.hoogervorst@prvlimburg.nl  
www.versnellingsagenda.nl