



# PROVENCE PROMOTION

## Pierre Chovelon, interview with the Arbois Europole development manager

### Objective... Earth !

Enormous objective! But the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur -and its 1200 research workers specializing in risk management (the largest concentration in this field) are well qualified in the subject. The Arbois Europole has been working hand in hand with Alcatel Alenia Space, and has controlled preparation of the "Management of risks and regional vulnerability" cluster documentation file. For Pierre Chovelon, this objective consists of developing any system or mechanism for prediction, alert and action in case of natural, urban or industrial risks.



### Pierre Chovelon in a few words

Pierre Chovelon earned a PhD in science (University of Paris XI, specializing in geology and geophysics), and has been working for eight years in the BRGM in the Geothermal, then Water and Energy Departments. He then became regional director of an Environment Design Office in the Suez Group for the next eight years. He joined the Arbois Europole in 1998 where he is now the Development Manager.

### > The theme of this cluster is unique in its kind. Why choose the French Mediterranean coast?

Pierre Chovelon: The cluster quite naturally includes the PACA and Languedoc-Roussillon regions due to their common urban, industrial and technological nature. Moreover, they are familiar with severe weather conditions, making them well qualified for development of this cluster.

### > How many fields are there in this cluster?

- P. C.: There are four:
- natural risks such as flooding, fire, ground movements, etc.
  - urban risks related to fast expansion of medium-sized towns around the Mediterranean basin, capable of destroying the ecosystem;
  - industrial and technological risks (chemical, petrochemical or nuclear site, transport of dangerous materials, etc.);
  - integrated systems and transverse technologies, including a list of all means available for managing risks: observation and sensor systems, secure telecom links, computer data processing systems, decision-making assistance software, etc.

### > How can everyone concerned in a region stretching from Montpellier to Sophia Antipolis be managed coherently?

P. C.: Everyone has his own function: Agropolis in Montpellier has the greatest know how in water management; Alcatel Alenia Space in Sophia Antipolis contributes its knowledge about integrated systems and transverse technologies. The Arbois technological cluster in the geographic center of the region is the project leader (with Alcatel Alenia Space) and acts like a magnet for many companies in the environment and risks sector, and also many research units involved in the subject of risks (38 in the PACA region, 19 in Languedoc Roussillon region), including a large number of prestigious research centers such as the CNRS, CETE, INRA, CEMAGREF, INRS, CEA, INERIS, BRGM, etc.

### > What space is given to training programs?

P. C.: There are 79 different programs in the field of the environment, risks and sustainable development to match needs for technical and scientific skills, ...

### > And what is the position of this cluster with regard to companies?

P. C.: As soon as it was opened, the cluster started to act as an accelerator for projects in the mature phase. About a hundred companies (essentially small and medium-sized companies working alongside large companies such as Alcatel Alenia Space, France Telecom R&D, Société des Eaux de Marseille, Innovène BP, Oxochimie, Total, etc.), work around this cluster. Furthermore, more than 100 projects brought in by companies and research units were submitted in the November 2004 call for candidate projects. This gives a measurement of the reactivity and creativity of companies contacted to create this cluster. Moreover, most of these projects provide highly operational solutions varying from the reprocessing of industrial waste such as heavy sludge containing oil, to fire sensor systems, etc.



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### **Pierre Chovelon, interview with the Arbois Europole development manager**

**> : When will the first repercussions become noticeable?**

P. C.: In November 2005, when two persons will be hired to organize the cluster. It would have been impossible to start so quickly without the assistance of the State, the municipalities and a grant  
The activity of the cluster should create 1 000 jobs per year when it reaches its mature phase (2007).

**> And in terms of image?**

P. C.: The cluster is a strong leader segment and its aim is to give a strong identity to the region by becoming the European leader in the risk management field. It is the only cluster in France promoting ecotechnologies, and its specific nature acts like a federating magnet. The Datar (Regional Development and Action Authority) has already contacted us. An emblematic entity like Météo-France (French weather service) has joined the risks cluster to develop new applications in the climate risks field.

**> What are the risks for this cluster?**

P. C.: Being too large and trying to cover everything! The cluster management and its experts committee will have to choose between projects to assure that the structure does not lose its added value by becoming too dispersed.

**> Do you have any international projects and what role can Provence Promotion play in this context?**

P. C.: Yes, and this is surprising because this is an emerging market! The market potential is more international than national. And this is our main motivation.  
At the moment, this cluster is the only organization in the world that brings together so many skills and know how in risk management. One of our initial ambitions is already to be a world leader and a plan to this effect has already been drawn up with UBI France and Provence Promotion.  
We believe that Provence Promotion is the key to promoting our work internationally, and for bringing all potential players into our cluster.