

Invest in France

Everything you need to do business in France

PORTFOLIO



A trip to Normandy

6 new eco-innovation clusters: Avenia, Dream, Eau, Energivie, Gestion des eaux continentales, Team2.

(see page 2)

50,000 electric vehicles ordered for the French civil service

Clusters close up

Who says water doesn't cluster?

“These are the waters of March, the promise of life,” sang French folk hero Georges Moustaki almost 40 years ago. People have worshipped water since the Stone Age as a giver of life. Now that we take things more scientifically, this interest has hardly faded. Three of the six new innovation clusters created in France this year are dedicated to the management of water resources and wastewater. “We’re actually very complementary,” explains Olivier Robert of the Hydreos cluster in Alsace and Lorraine (see interview below). “We respond to calls to tender together, cooperate on projects and so on.”

Read on page 2

SECTOR SPOTLIGHT

Growing green shoots

Environmental technologies are one of France’s fastest growing sectors. The government, the research community and industry are all firmly encouraging their development and adoption.

Those who still don’t believe that ecology and economy can go hand in hand should ask a resident of Lyon. Until 2005, cyclists were a bit of a rarity in France’s second-largest city. Then the municipality introduced a bicycle sharing system called Vélo’v. Unlike the idealistic, unregulated community sharing programs of previous decades – where most bikes were soon vandalized or stolen – Vélo’v relies on electronic locks, smart cards, telecommunication systems and embedded electronics, as well as a public-private partnership with an advertising company that keeps the scheme cost-neutral for the city. The system has been a huge success. Within a year, the number of cycle rides in the city had increased by 500%, a quarter of which were on Vélo’v bikes. In 2007, Paris introduced a similar bike sharing system of its own, the now world-famous Vélib. Residents and tourists can

hop on one of 20,000 bikes parked at 1,450 stations around the city. Vélib has since inspired similar schemes from Hangzhou to Brussels to Montreal. The French believe passionately that a combination of innovative technology and responsible behavior will deliver continued growth and higher standards of living for both present and future generations. The government has made green growth one of the key components of its economic strategy. Through a mix of generous incentives – ranging from tax breaks to infrastructure and regulations – and direct public sector involvement in research and innovation, France is aiming to strengthen its position as a leader in green business.

Taking action

Defined through an extensive consultation process in 2007-2008, the country’s ‘Green New Deal’ takes a comprehensive

approach to environmental preservation and growth. It addresses renewable energy, clean transport, eco-friendly construction, health, and waste management & processing. These are not empty words. The Green New Deal’s 15 major programs are forecast to generate more than €400 billion in turnover and create 600,000 jobs by 2020. The government will set aside €5 billion from its “national loan” to fund the green growth effort, on top of a similar amount from its economic stimulus plan to support renewable energy. Indeed, its target for 2020 is to obtain 23% of energy from renewable sources, up from 10% today. Impressive means are matched by ambitious targets in every sector. In construction, for instance, the Green New Deal aims to reduce existing buildings’ energy consumption by 38% by 2020 and to build energy-positive

Read on page 2



“The decision to produce the Smart Electric Drive at the Hambach plant in Lorraine is a crucial step for both the mass production of electric vehicles and the future of this ultra-innovative site.”

DR DIETER ZETSCHÉ,
CHAIRMAN OF DAIMLER AG

HERE AND THERE page 2

Opportunity rises in the East

EXPERT INSIGHT page 4

Work and residence permits made easy

Growing green shoots

buildings. More than €200 billion is forecast to be made in private and public investments, with interest-free loans and tax breaks for renovation, and the introduction of stricter environmental standards for buildings.

Green engineering

A key instrument for stimulating green innovation is the research tax credit. In their first year, companies in France can claim 50% of their R&D spending back (40% the next year and 30% from year 3). In 2009, 14,000 companies saved €4.2 billion thanks to the incentive, one of the world's most generous. It's good for business, good for innovation, and good for the planet: 37% of the patents filed in France in 2009 involved eco-innovations.

Interest in green growth also runs high in France's innovation clusters. Twenty-seven of the country's 71 clusters address environmental issues as their primary

or partial focus (see the Clusters close-up, pages 2-3).

Savvy foreign investors are increasingly aware of the opportunities offered by France's green momentum and are playing an important part in the country's transition to sustainable growth. Recent announcements include First Solar's €75 million investment to build France's largest solar panel manufacturing plant and only panel recycling facility in Aquitaine (south-west France) – a project that will create almost 400 jobs. In biofuels, the exemplary €20 million public-private partnership Biocore has united 23 European and one Indian partner to build refineries that produce fuel from agricultural waste. And clean transport will get a boost from Germany's Daimler A.G., which chose France to mass-produce the electric version of its famous Smart ForTwo car (see Regional success story, page 3).

Un-smogmy ride

France is the European leader in electric and hybrid car adoption. Strong incentives and active industry commitment are the keys to this success.

Will the cities of tomorrow bathe in air as crisp and clean as the pastures of the Alps? The French government definitely wants it that way. The bonus system introduced in 2008 rewards purchasers of clean cars (up to €5,000 for models emitting less than 60g of CO₂ per km), while penalizing those buying gas guzzlers (with eco-penalties of up to €2,600). And it seems to be working: in 20 months, average emissions by new cars have dropped by 16g/km, whereas previously they were declining by only 1.5g/km per year. France now has the cleanest new cars in the EU.

Taking the lead, the government recently ordered 50,000 electric cars for its civil servants. Meanwhile, twelve local governments have pledged to build at least a million electric car charging points on their streets and parking lots, both in residential and business areas. Carmakers have got the message. Last year, at the Sustainable Planet trade fair in Paris, PSA Peugeot Citroën announced a multibillion-euro investment plan and

the development of two hybrid diesel cars – the Peugeot 3008 and the Citroën DS5 – due to hit the road in 2011. Peugeot's new electric car, the iOn, will appear on French streets before Christmas this year. Rather than sell it, Peugeot will rent the iOn for a five-year period at €499 per month, maintenance and services included. The group expects to market some 50,000 iOns by 2015. By 2020, it predicts that hybrid and electric cars will make up 15% of the European car market.

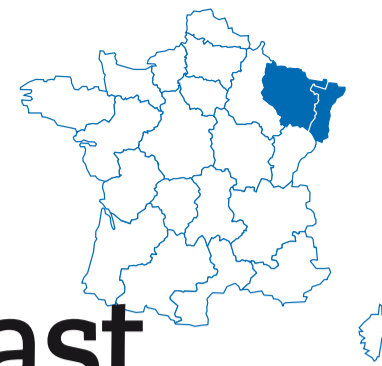
Meanwhile, Renault is preparing an electric Kangoo for the European market in 2011, while its electric Zoé should retail in 2012 for €15,000 (around \$19,300), after the government bonus is deducted. Renault aims to become a leader in electric cars and obtain a 10% share of the global market by 2020.

And it's not just the French. Daimler announced this year that the electric version of its famous Smart Fortwo will be mass-produced at its Hambach site in Lorraine (see interview opposite).

SUN WORSHIPPING

In most industrial economies, the energy sector accounts for 40% of greenhouse gas emissions. Not in France: reliance on nuclear power for almost four-fifths of the country's electricity brings this percentage down by half. Nevertheless, the development of renewable energies is a strategic priority for the government.

Though slightly revised recently, France still has one of the EU's most generous feed-in tariffs for solar power. Private homes with solar panels embedded on the roof, for instance, claim €0.58 per kWh sent onto the network. This policy largely explains why the country's photovoltaic production capacity is growing exponentially: from 81 MW at the end of 2008 to an estimated 850 MW at the end of 2010. And registered projects already amount to an additional 3,000 MW. A success exceeding the most optimistic of expectations.



Opportunity rises in the East

France's rich fabric of local cultures would not be complete without Alsace and Lorraine, the country's "Great East". But, in Europe's industrial heartland, the two regions themselves are hugely diverse.

Sharing borders with Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland, the regions of Alsace and Lorraine were often snared in the turmoil of history. In the First World War, millions of young men were sent here to slaughter. This tragic past might help explain the locals' resolutely international outlook today. Thanks to the European Union and the Schengen zone, people and goods now cross the borders without even noticing.

Exceptional market access

In fact, you can hardly beat Alsace and Lorraine for location. Six European capitals are within 400 miles of these regions. Half of the European Union's GDP is generated in this easily accessible radius.

Distances are further reduced by excellent transport connections. The new TGV Est train line is the fastest long-distance commercial rail service in the world, cruising at 200mph. It whisks passengers from Paris to Metz and Nancy in less than 90 minutes and to Strasbourg in 2hrs 14mins, while Frankfurt is just two hours from Alsace.

The airports of Basel-Mulhouse and Strasbourg offer international connections, while the global air hubs of Paris, Frankfurt and Zurich are all within easy reach by a dense motorway network. And for heavy freight, the River Rhine is Europe's foremost transport waterway. Speed seems to be an obsession here: Alsace is after all where Bugatti Automobiles make the world's fastest production car, the Veyron.

Unsurprisingly, local businesses make the most of such access to a huge market. Alsace has France's most export-oriented economy, in terms of value added per inhabitant. In turn, foreign investors can see the advantage of such a location. In Alsace again, more than 600 international companies account for 44% of all industrial jobs.

A highly diversified economy

Having always been one of the country's industrial heartlands, eastern France is now turning to high-growth businesses to offset the decline of some traditional activities, such as coalmining, steelmaking and textiles.

Read on page 3

Clusters close up

Continued from cover page

Eco-innovation clusters

Eau

In the south of France, spread across the three regions of Provence Alpes Côte-d'Azur, Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées, industrial players have joined forces within a new cluster – simply called "Water" in French – to better manage this precious resource in a part of the country sometimes affected by droughts – and at other times by torrential rain. The cluster's specific focus is on:

- identifying water resources and making them available
- jointly managing resources and usage in conditions worsened by climate change
- reutilizing water from all sources
- developing better approaches in terms of stakeholders and decision-making.

Eau intends to harness the energies of more than 400 businesses and 1,000 researchers to build a leading innovation powerhouse in Europe.

Dream

This poetically named cluster in the centre of France has a down-to-earth mission: supporting sustainable water practices, developing renewable energies and managing natural environments. Its innovation areas cover:

- water & sanitation (integrated management, decision-making tools, phytoremediation)
- waste management, processing and recycling
- biomass-based energy production

THEY CHOSE ALSACE AND LORRAINE

Mittal Steel, Honeywell, Pilkington, Daimler, Sharp, Timken, Hager, Würth, Mars, DuPont de Nemours, Johnson & Johnson, UPM Kymene, Novartis, Siemens, Columbia, Ricoh

Continued from page 2

Local innovation clusters focus on next-generation cars, biotechnologies, water management and advanced materials (see Clusters close-up). Other centers of excellence explore new solutions in energy, chemical engineering, imaging, telecoms, optics & photonics, plastics, wood & paper, glass, agribusiness, metrology, farm protection, household goods, logistics, and business services.

Skills, skills, skills

Businesses appreciate the work morale in Alsace and Lorraine. In some areas, the loss of traditional industries has led to higher-than-average joblessness – and eagerness on the part of workers. Unemployment also translates into extra government incentives for investors.

Highly skilled professionals abound here too. The two regions boast some of France's most prestigious universities and schools, including the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, the Alsace Tech engineering and management schools, the University of Strasbourg, the Ecole des Mines in Nancy and the National Polytechnic Institute of Lorraine.

CLUSTERS IN ALSACE AND LORRAINE

- **MATERALIA** spans the Lorraine and Champagne-Ardennes regions. Its members focus on exploring the future of materials including metals, composites and nanomaterials. They also investigate new processes that can make these materials sustainable.
- **ALSACE BioVALLEY** focuses on biotechnologies and healthcare. It creates new molecules with curative properties, using genetics and chemistry to arrive at medication. It also develops innovative imagery and robotics tools for the medical and surgical professions.
- **HYDREOS** advances our knowledge of water transport and decontamination (see below).
- **FIBRES'** members – including 88 large companies and 34 research institutes – investigate possible innovations in bioresources and green materials in order to protect natural resources and establish sustainable production and consumption practices.
- **ALSACE ENERGIVIE** is dedicated to energy and green technologies. Its purpose is to improve energy efficiency in construction and suggest ways of building low-energy buildings and even energy-positive buildings.
- **VEHICULE DU FUTUR** aims for nothing less than a blueprint for the vehicles of the future. Its 60 large companies, 110 SMEs and 60+ R&D teams explore urban mobility solutions, smart driving systems, urban vehicles and sustainable ground transport technologies.

- microbiological processes for environmental purposes and biogeochemistry
- metrology, including the use of geographic information systems.

In its initial phase, Dream expects to get about 100 small and medium-sized companies on board. Potentially, some 200 eco-focused businesses, accounting for 5,000 jobs, could become members, in addition to 600 locally based researchers.

Hydreos

This new cluster in the east of France takes a more qualitative approach to water cycle management, looking at quality, health, ecosystems and pollutants. Its three priority objectives are:

- control of micro-pollutants and chemical precursors, medical residues and agricultural pollution

- transport networks (biofilms, network management, etc.)
- water and ecosystems (prevention, treatment by wetlands, ecological restoration).

17,000 people in Alsace and Lorraine already work on these issues, including 2,500 researchers. Olivier Robert, the project manager and – for now – only employee of this budding cluster, explains what lies ahead.

What are the main challenges when setting up a new cluster?

Olivier Robert: We're in a phase of exponential growth, which involves several challenges. For one thing, we need to get the attention of the local businesses that should become our members. We already have the major groups: water processing giants Veolia Environnement, Saur and Suez Environnement, and bottled water expert Nestlé Waters, and

Regional testimonial

Being smart in Lorraine

It's decided: Daimler's Smart Fortwo Electric Drive will be produced at Smartville, the famous two-seated car's homestead in Hambach, Lorraine. This greenfield site was chosen in 1994 among 70 possible locations in Western Europe. Sixteen years and 1.3 million little cars later, investors have never regretted their decision. **Jean-Yves Schmitt**, Smart France's head of communication, explains why.

What led the company to pick the site in Lorraine?

Several decisive factors. First, the location. I hate to use a cliché like "at the heart of Europe", but the Hambach business park is truly at the crossroads between our key markets. It's also right next to the autoroute. What's more, this former coal-mining region is full of diligent, mostly bilingual workers. Some 1,600 people work on the site. 20% are women – which is a lot in the automotive industry – and their average age is 37. And finally, we enjoyed consistent support from all government bodies, local, regional and national. This was very important.

Why is the electric Fortwo important for your business?

We first pilot-tested 100 prototypes of the Fortwo Electric Drive (ED) in London in 2007. Now we're starting a larger-scale trial with an upgraded model: some 1,500 cars for corporate fleets. Full-scale production – over 10,000 units per year – will begin in the first half of 2012. This is very timely for Smartville, because it's exactly when we'll be phasing out the second generation of the Smart Fortwo, introduced in 2007, and preparing for the third generation in 2013-14. The Fortwo ED will offset the drop in production of the gas-powered and hybrid models.

How would you assess your industrial experience in France overall?

Two recent announcements by the Daimler group demonstrate our confidence and our commitment to the Hambach site and to our future in France: the decision to produce the electric version of the Smart Fortwo here, as we've just discussed. And the earlier announcement that the third generation of smart cars, due to see the light of day in 2013-14, will also be produced here, in conjunction with Renault.

KEY FIGURES

ALSACE

- Population (2007): **1.83 million**
- GDP (2008): **€52.4 billion**
- **1,200** foreign companies
- **France's second** largest river port

LORRAINE

- Population (2007): **2.34 million**
- GDP (2008): **€57.5 billion**
- **757** foreign companies
- **Six** European capitals within 400 miles

equipment vendors such as Saint Gobin, Endress-Hausser and Millipore. But getting innovative smaller businesses to participate is – after all – one of the clusters' key purposes. For the time being, we have about 60 members, and there are 350 SMEs out there that have plenty to gain by joining Hydreos. In addition, we're building up our team. There should be at least four of us by the end of the year, including the cluster manager starting on October 1.

Which technological stumbling blocks do you aim to remove?

Olivier Robert: We're already one step ahead in some areas, such as agricultural pollutant control. Nestlé Waters has done exemplary work with farmers in the Vosges mountains. But we want to go further, helping define natural corridors of green spaces and waterways, as spelled out by the national 'Green New Deal'.

Regarding medical residues in water, we want to measure their impact with reliable, standardized tools. And we aim to develop purification processes for organic micropollutants.

We're also active in ecological engineering and the natural cleaning of water by wetlands. We'll study a large variety of plants that can be used to decontaminate water in these environments.

In terms of water transport, one of our main specialties is biofilms. We will build models to study the interactions between water and biofilms.

Three other 'eco-clusters' started operating in recent months. Team2, in the north of France, focuses on recycling construction and plastic waste, as well as green products. Energievie, in Alsace, works on sustainable construction (see above). And Avenia, in Aquitaine, seeks to advance geosciences for energy and the environment.

Education in the digital era

The French are very attached to their system of free, public, secular and apolitical education at all levels. It's a civic right, guaranteed by the constitution.

Government authorities in France spent €129.7 billion in 2008 on the country's primary and secondary schools, to ensure quality and affordable education for all 12 million pupils. Even textbooks are free until the end of middle school (age 14-15). University students, even non-EU nationals, pay only nominal tuition fees and enjoy subsidized housing and services.

Private schools – including faith schools – can coexist alongside state schools, but their exams and diplomas must be regulated and recognized nationally. A little more than 2 million pupils attend some 8,900 private primary and secondary schools – out of a total of over 66,200 schools. Freedom of religion also entitles pupils to one day per week of free religious education, outside school hours.

Schools are a springboard into professional and social life. To keep up with the evolution of the economy as a whole, they are massively adopting digital tools in the classroom. Information and communication technologies are transforming the way children are taught. Pupils and students learn to master these new tools and are encouraged to take IT and Internet Proficiency Certificates.

Every student, teacher and parent can now log on to a virtual work environment where they obtain information on school life, coursework provided by teachers, homework, timetables, etc. These digital workspaces encourage families to acquire a PC and internet access in the home, helping to close the digital divide between connected and unconnected households.

€7.7 billion for centers of excellence

On September 27, public research funding agency ANR published a call to tender for €7.7 billion from the “national loan” earmarked for “initiatives of excellence” in research. The objective is to support the emergence of “five to ten world-class centers of multidisciplinary higher education and research”. In total, €21.9 billion from the national loan will go to higher education and research.

France's commitment to education produces notable results – and in particular some of the world's most productive workers. 41% of 25-34-year-olds have a university education, compared with 40% in the US, 23% in Germany and 19% in Italy. Almost a third of the total workforce (32%) is employed in positions related to science and technology.

EXPERT INSIGHT

Work and residence permits made easy

The Karl Waheed law firm specializes in international mobility law. It advises and assists multinational organizations on compliance with French immigration and labor regulations. In 2006, the French government asked the firm to assess the impact of these regulations on the mobility of multinational assignees. The firm's recommendations were then broadly adopted in the groundbreaking *Expatriate Employee* status. Founding partner Karl Waheed offers an update on conditions for companies and their international employees in France.

What recent legal developments have changed the situation for companies bringing in non-EU employees?

A great deal has changed since the Immigration Act of 2006 to make immigration more business-friendly in France. The current government has created several options to permit foreign businesses to send their personnel to France in a manner that is compatible with their corporate culture and yet compliant with French immigration, labor and social security regulations.

The foremost of these options is the *Expatriate Employee* status, which is an immigration category created to respond specifically to international assignments within multinational corporations. These groups need to move experienced technicians and middle-management employees with specific know-how around the world quickly and for short periods. The government now provides fast-track

processing of these applications, with minimum formalities. These assignees are issued a joint work and residence permit valid for up to three years. The status is renewable and the accompanying spouse may work too. The processing time is usually less than four weeks. I don't believe that English-speaking countries can boast a more attractive immigration status for corporate assignees. As a matter of fact, the French *Expatriate Employee* status has become a model at the EU level. The European Commission has proposed a directive to create a European *Expatriate Employee* status, which draws largely on the French precedent.

What are the options for non-EU nationals who wish to conduct business but don't fit the profile of an Expatriate Employee?

The *Skills and Expertise* permit is designed for individuals with skills

that are needed to improve France's competitiveness in the global economy. This status is meant to attract a wide variety of profiles, such as entrepreneurs, writers, scientists, performing artists, and sportsmen... And the list is open-ended. Any accompanying spouse may also seek work.

The current immigration regulations also provide for a 10-year residence status for exceptional economic contributions. This status is offered to foreign investors who will create or save 50 jobs, or make an investment of over €10 million (these thresholds may be lowered in certain parts of the country).

It should also be noted that many categories of individuals coming to study, work (with the exception of *Expatriate Employees*) or be trained in France will no longer be subject to residence permit formalities if their stay in France does not exceed 12 months.

Affordable offices

Cushman & Wakefield's 2010 survey on Office Space Around the World reports an average 11% drop in office rents in Europe last year – and 10% globally. The world's most expensive offices were in Tokyo: almost €1,500 per square meter per year in rent and other occupancy costs. Despite a significant year-on-year drop, London came in second at just over €1,200/m²/year, just ahead of Hong Kong. Rents in Paris, New York and Moscow were similar: around €700/m²/year. Outside Paris, rents got much cheaper: €260/m²/year in Lyon and €215/m²/year in Marseille. A square meter in Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Oslo, Madrid and Seoul all cost around €500 per year. Global warehouse rents tumbled by 5.5% in 2009. A square meter in Paris cost €115 per year, 45% less than at London Heathrow, less than in Geneva, Oslo, Helsinki and Dublin and only a fraction more than in Stockholm, Sydney, Moscow and Madrid.

MIPIM, the trade fair for real estate professionals in Cannes, is the world's largest event of its kind. Last year, it attracted 1,870 exhibitors and 17,600 visitors.

Welcome to france.fr

3,000 pages, 12,000 links and 31 million indexed documents tell you all you need to know about visiting, working, living or setting up a business in France.

Research tax credit maintained

Innovators in France can continue to claim back 30% of their total R&D spending, and this rate is doubled to 60% for research carried out with public-sector bodies. New applicants also get a bonus rebate: 50% in the first year and 40% in the second.

€1bn for Saclay cluster

In addition to the €850 million earmarked for the development of the Paris Saclay Campus, President Sarkozy announced on September 24 an extra €1bn to expand France's premier science and technology cluster.



Publisher:
The Invest in France Agency (IFA)

Journalist:
Andrew Hawker

Design and layout:

SPHERE PUBLIQUE

Printed on recycled paper

Circulation:
7,000 copies in English
3,000 copies in Japanese
2,500 copies in Chinese



FÉCAMP. Five wind turbines – from right to left Alizés, Tourbillon, Mistral, Zéphyr, Brise – stand guard atop the Fécamp cliff. They produce enough energy for 10,000 people's homes: half the local population. Their names were chosen by Fécamp's schoolchildren.



Paris-based photographer, **ANDREW MCLEISH** started taking pictures while studying at the Cambridge School of Art in the UK. After graduating in

2001, he studied at the Beaux-Arts in France until 2004. During this period, he won the Grand Prix Paris Match 'Prix du Public' for student photo reportage and worked as an intern for Magnum Photos in Paris. In 2006, he received the Prix Déclic from the 'Observatoire de l'image' and a special mention in the Young Photo Reporter Award at the International Festival of Scoop and Journalism in Angers for his coverage of the violent anti-CPE demonstrations in France. Andrew's photographs have been projected at the RIP Arles International Photography Festival and *Le Mois de la Photo* in Paris. Working in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe, his photos have been published by the international press.

A trip to Normandy

Normandy... What images come to a French person's mind at the sound of this name? Perhaps the *bocages*, beautiful tree-lined pastures where spotted cows graze and the region's famed butter and camembert find their unmistakable energy. Some will think of picturesque seaside towns like Honfleur and the world-famous Mont-St-Michel – quiet cobbled streets and a lonesome ship passing in the distance. Others will remember Omaha Beach and the tragic destruction of so many lives – a memory that

lives on in the scarred cities of the coast. The region's 3.2 million inhabitants – and the many more who proudly claim *normand* roots – see a more complex picture. Snapshots of daily life in one of the world's most advanced economies, looking out over the English Channel and with Paris just beyond the horizon. A truck factory near Caen (property of the Volvo group). A nuclear science lab in the newly created Nucleopolis cluster. The road past the refineries and plastics plants of Le Havre. The places they go, the things they see.

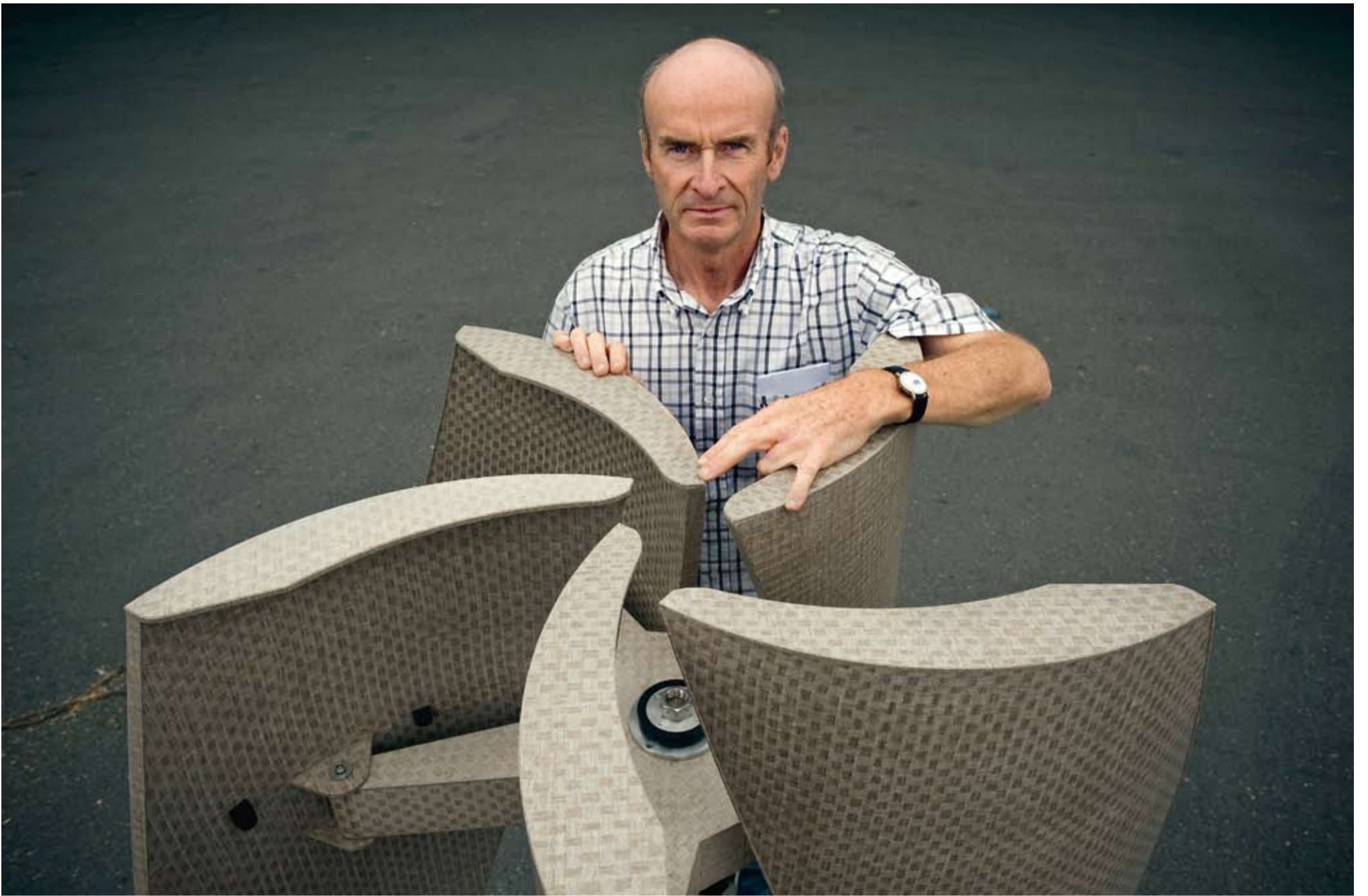


CIRALE (above). A member of Normandy's equestrian innovation cluster (www.pole-filiere-equine.com), Cirale is a renowned research center investigating conditions affecting horses' bones, joints, muscles and tendons. Its findings and diagnoses help improve the performance of racehorses. Cirale is one of the three sites belonging to the *Alfort Ecole Nationale Vétérinaire*. It was created and is financed by the Basse-Normandie Regional Council, with support from the European Fund for Regional Development.



DEAUVILLE. The 36th American Film Festival in Deauville, on the Normandy coast, came to a close on September 12. The festival celebrates independent films, often by first-time directors. Below, jury president Emmanuelle Béart and the prizewinners line up for a photo call.





DEPESTELE. Normandy produces 60% of France's flax. Groupe Depestele is Europe's number two flax producer and covers the whole supply chain, from farming to weaving to R&D. Its wind turbine made exclusively from natural materials (top), built in partnership with LTP, ACT ENER, UMS CNRT and the University of Le Havre, won the JEC Innovation Awards in 2010.



PONT DE NORMANDIE. When it opened in 1995, the Pont de Normandie was the world's longest cable-stayed bridge. The challenge was to span the mouth of the Seine River in one go, 50 meters above sea level, allowing the traffic below to move by unhindered.



LE HAVRE. Le Havre is France's largest deepwater seaport for goods – and the fifth largest in Europe. It can accommodate all types of vessels around the clock, without any tidal constraints. Le Havre handled 74 million tones of goods in 2009, including 63% of France's container traffic and 40% of French crude oil.

Based in the city of Caen, **GANIL** – the National Large Heavy Ion Accelerator – is one of four major labs in the world conducting research on heavy ion beams. Serving French and European research, it has pioneered the study of exotic nuclei. Applications range from radiotherapy to nuclear physics, from condensed matter to astrophysics. Pictured: the cyclotron's high-frequency resonator.

