

A Platform to Promote Europe's Chemical Attractions

The European Chemical Site Promotion Platform (ECSPP; The Hague) was launched in September, 2005 by a group of chemical site management organizations, to promote Europe as an attractive and competitive region for new chemical investment. Its members were concerned that international chemical investment trends were shifting to other regions, and that the advantages of investing in Europe were being overlooked. "There was a need for an organization that takes the interests of sites into account from an investment location point of view, in an increasingly tough market," ECSPP treasurer Fred du Plessis says. "A perception exists that Europe is no longer an attractive investment location. That may be true for some basic petrochemicals and intermediates, but not for specialties and other downstream products," du Plessis says. ECSPP is a nonprofit organization, funded by members' subscriptions, and has a five-member, elected executive committee. Part of ECSPP's role is as a one-stop information platform, providing new investors with everything they need to know about chemical sites in Europe. "There was a lack of information about what is available here," du Plessis says. Europe has had to adapt to structural and geographical shifts in the global chemical industry, but the region still has a lot of strengths and selling points, which ECSPP aims to communicate. "There has not been a falling off of industrial investment in the chemical industry in Europe over the last five years," du Plessis says.

Du Plessis cites the Chemelot site at Geleen, the Netherlands, operated by DSM and Sabic Europe. Chemelot has switched its emphasis to performance materials, while maximizing the ben-

efits of integration with the site's basic chemical operations. "Europe's big core strength is integration," du Plessis says. "It has a mixture of integrated clusters such as Antwerp and Rhine-Ruhr, and integrated complexes such as BASF's *Verbund* site at Ludwigshafen. You can save a lot of money producing at these sites because you don't have to move intermediate products long distances." This can help compensate for the labor and feedstock cost advantages of the Mideast and Asia, he says.

ECSPP has grown over the last two

the world. ECSPP has close links with "complementary" organizations such as the European Chemical Regions Network (Halle, Germany), which plays a political and lobbying role with the European Commission in Brussels, du Plessis says.

BASF Española, a BASF subsidiary, became ECSPP's first Spanish member earlier this year. The company is aiming to attract third-party investors to its Tarragona, Spain manufacturing complex. Tarragona is the biggest chemical-producing location in Spain,



Seeking inward investment: BASF Española's site at Tarragona.

years to 30 full members, including site management companies, infrastructure providers, private-public partnerships such as Chemsite (Marl, Germany), regional development agencies, and port authorities. Membership is split among locations in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the U.K. ECSPP has launched "an aggressive membership acquisition campaign" that targets at least 50 full members by the end of 2008, du Plessis says.

The ECSPP executive committee plans to launch 3-4 projects over the next few years. They include an exercise to benchmark Europe against other investment regions around

having originally been promoted in the 1970s by the Spanish government. However, direct government support has since ended, and today there is no umbrella organization promoting Tarragona externally as a chemical investment location. "That's a phase companies at Tarragona will probably think about starting," du Plessis says. Manufacturing at Tarragona is split mainly between two integrated, multi-producer sites, the 'southern polygon,' where BASF, Basell, Celanese, and many other companies are located, and the 'northern polygon,' where Dow Chemical and Repsol Quimica are the biggest operators. "About 40% of the land at the southern polygon is unutilized," du Plessis says. —IAN YOUNG