

Extended Gateways in Flanders

When it comes to logistics, few regions in Europe can measure up to Flanders. Several things combine to make Flanders world class in logistics: a central location, accessibility via international gateways, access to the European market through an exceptionally dense multimodal network, existing logistics experience and expertise, and highly productive, well-educated personnel. With more than 400 European Distribution Centres (EDCs), Flanders also holds a unique position in preparing products for the European consumer. Global supply chains produce goods in basic or generic form in the country of export and then ship them to a European Distribution Centre for finishing. They may be coloured, assembled, provided with new options, repackaged and generally tailored to the European client to respond to specific local needs. Customising products in this way requires a sophisticated combination of production and logistics skills.



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Flanders Logistics

To secure this position for the future and best serve the users of logistics service, the Flemish government and the logistics sector recently created Flanders Logistics. As part of Flanders in Action, the socio-economic plan for Flanders, Flanders Logistics seeks to optimise such key input factors as training, mobility, infrastructure, regional planning and many other forms of peripheral support. Infrastructure investments, refresher courses, bottleneck remedies, employment and prosperity stimulus plans are just some of the areas it focuses on.

Flanders Logistics serves as the umbrella platform for many initiatives designed to strengthen and raise the competitiveness of logistics services in Flanders. These include concepts, projects, joint ventures, events, focus themes and initiatives in the realm of sustainable logistics development. Brainstorming and study sessions have identified seven themes: upping capacity usage in the multimodal infrastructure, streamlining regulations, setting up logistics clusters, locking in alternative forms of financing, stimulating training activities and the job market, encouraging research and development, and raising the effectiveness of communication. For each of these topics, specific projects and activities are being developed and implemented.

Extended Gateways

Flanders Logistics attaches great value to innovation and sustainability. Here, too, Flanders is breaking new ground with the Extended Gateway concept. The uniqueness of this concept lies in the fact that economic growth can be separated to some extent from any social obstacles caused by logistics activities. Combining good flows, the total logistics concept targets improved throughput and use of existing infrastructure – for the present, a major step toward more effective and sustainable logistics.

The Extended Gateway concept brings powerful practical benefits.

The Extended Gateway concept is coupled with powerful practical benefits. For instance, each Flemish province will independently identify and categorise its own logistics hotspots. By mid-2008, the Flanders Extended Gateway map will be ready for companies to consult when searching for the best site to locate their place of business. Policy, practice and considerable creativity are used to target the lowest possible total logistics costs.

Clustering activities will lead to better and less obtrusive utilisation of space, improve vehicle and personnel mobility, and create stimuli for jobs. Extended Gateway Flanders is not only formulating the best answers to today's logistics and business needs, it is providing for a long-term healthy human environment.

The many creative initiatives adopted by Flanders Logistics confirm the organisation's intention of strengthening Flanders' strategic position as the top logistics region for multinational operators of today and tomorrow. The foundation on which this objective will build has now been laid.