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Investment Promotion of Western Switzerland

The Greater Geneva Berne Area is born!

In order to strengthen the effectiveness of their investment promotion, the Cantons of Western Switzerland decided, in June 2008, to embark on work aimed at setting up a joint structure for identifying, attracting and securing foreign business investment. After a year of intensive work the task is complete. On January 1st, 2010, the three current structures (DEWS/Fribourg-Genève/Berne) will make way for the Greater Geneva Berne Area!

The new organization, christened the Greater Geneva Berne Area (GGBA), will bring together all the cantons that are members of the Conference of heads of departments of economic affairs in western Switzerland (CDEP-SO), except for the canton of Jura which, for reasons of geographical proximity, has decided to join the Basel Area organization.

The creation of a joint business acquisition structure for the cantons of western Switzerland represents a historic step forward, demonstrating the willingness of the cantons to pool their assets and skills in order to enhance the dynamism of the region.

The mission of this new structure will be to promote a shared image of western Switzerland abroad, and to build up a network and structure to attract companies by integrating the most successful elements of the three hitherto existing models (DEWS/GE-FR/BE). The present skills of the cantons are from now on to be placed at the service of all.

Three markets have been prioritised, namely the U.S.A., France and Germany. Five other markets – Italy, India, China, Brazil and Russia – will also be covered by the Greater Geneva Berne Area, since the new body wants to approach emerging markets. These choices are likely to change: a reorientation may well take place in the coming years in line with the results obtained and trends in the global economy.

A selection has been made from among the representatives of the three existing bodies with a view to renewing their contracts of employment in 2010, in order to retain as many skills as possible in the new structure. This transitional phase in 2010 will have the advantage of guaranteeing the greatest possible continuity of activities in the designated markets, while allowing a year for the new management to settle in.

The budget of the GGBA has been set at CHF 4,130,000, of which CHF 780,000 is allocated to headquarters costs and CHF 3,350,000 to the network of representatives and for marketing expenses. The structure of the headquarters in Switzerland – which will be based in Lausanne – will be deliberately kept lean in order to focus on the activities of identifying, attracting and securing new business investment.

The financial split between the cantons has been drawn up on the basis of an analysis of the attraction-factors of the different localities. In addition, in order to take account of the economic spin-off generated by the businesses setting up in each of the cantons, and thus to maintain a certain balance, a system of retrospective financial re-allocation, based on the total payroll of the incoming companies, will be in place from 2012 onward.

The Cantons of Western Switzerland intend to reinforce their effectiveness in a context of ever tougher international competition for inward investment. This regrouping is an opportunity for western Switzerland to raise its visibility, to assert its political influence and to put across its image more convincingly. This new model for joint investment promotion will be operational by January 1st, 2010.

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