

# *Innovative groups of Asturias*



# *Innovative Group*

*of the **Maritime** Sector*

*of the **Automotive Auxiliary** Industry*

*of the **Energy** Sector*

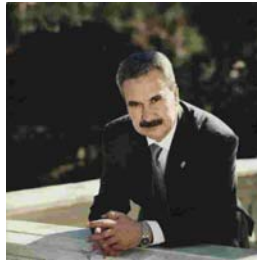
*of the **Wood and Furniture** Sector*

*of the **Food and Agriculture** Sector*

*of the **Chemical** Industry*

*of the **Knowledge** Industry*

***Manuf@cturias***



D. Graciano Torre  
Ministry of Industry and Employment  
of the Principality of Asturias

The rapid appearance of new technologies and accelerated development of new products and markets demands continual modification by every economic agent. The different tools for developing the innovations are not exempt from these changes and must be evolved in a similar way. Highlighted within these new mechanisms is the development of business clusters. These sectorial groups create a very strong interrelationship between businesses, technological and research centres, training centres and public entities within a particular geographic region, with the aim of carrying out joint innovatory projects. The objective is to strengthen all participants, owing to cooperation between the different members within the Group.

### ***The Innovative Groups are turning into an invaluable tool for achieving greater integration and structuring of the Regional System for Innovation***

In the Principality of Asturias, the first steps in this direction have been taking place since 2002, under the Regional Program for Innovative Actions (PRAI), with the aim of creating 4 Innovative Groups or Clusters.

Since then eight sectors have been identified in the Principality of Asturias which are capable of forming an Innovative Group. Since then IDEPA (Institute for Economic Development of the Principality of Asturias) has been carrying out work on developing and strengthening Innovative Groups, turning them into an invaluable tool for achieving greater integration and structuring of the Regional System for Innovation. The development of these Innovative Groups in Asturias is in response to the need for the development of a sectorial policy allowing the formation support means capable of responding to the specific needs of the particular sectors.

The policy for promoting the Innovative Groups (Agrupaciones Innovadoras) in Asturias is not an action taken independently of the Government of Asturias and its Institutions. The Innovative Business Grouping (AEIs) is part of the Plan for Business Development (Plan de Fomento Empresarial), approved by the Government of Spain as a means of driving forward and

---

extending the practice of innovation more quickly within eligible business groups which have aspirations for embarking on advanced, cooperative projects. Likewise, the 2007-2013 program for Innovative Business Groups, (AEIs), elaborated by the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade, intends to favour the creation and strengthening of those groups or clusters that allow businesses; especially SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises); to deal with today's challenges in the areas of innovation, business management, logistics, technological development and internationalization. Within this same program, a Special Registry of AEIs is being created, with the aim of selecting those Groups which qualify as Excellent. The businesses and entities associated with this type of Innovative Group will have additional appraisals in the support programs elaborated by the Ministries of Industry, Tourism and Trade and by the Ministry of Industry and Employment of the Principality of Asturias.

The European Union supports the Innovative Groups as well as the sectorial innovation, and the innovation networks and associations in the public and private sectors for innovation matters, within the VII Framework Program (2007-2013) for Competitiveness and Innovation. Among the projects being undertaken is the creation of European networks of sectorial groups, with the aim of identifying, analysing and sharing emerging opportunities and challenges that we are faced with in the global market. Also of note, is the introduction of prizes for the best manager, the best entrepreneur and the best Cluster network.

Therefore, the Clusters will provide another reference point which will give continuity to the efforts embarked on by any Asturian company engaged in moving toward excellence; an excellence which will only be reached by promoting an innovative culture and by boosting an efficient scientific, technological and innovatory offering.

---



## ***Innovative Group***

# ***¿What is it?***

It is a means for sectorial, economic development, also known as **Cluster, Industrial District or Pole of Competitiveness.**

It is a **concentration of businesses** within a sector or productive activity and in a defined geographic area which act together in promoting business relationships and interconnections beyond those of the strictly contractual, thereby managing **improvements in individual competitiveness.** Normally they operate within the **same value chain**, having common interests, whether the same clients, same area of development, same processes or need to share knowledge, etc.

These businesses are grouped in turn to an **activity structure.** The autonomy of businesses is respected and, **jointly**, they build resources, abilities and competencies which would be unachievable individually, thereby improving the attractiveness of their territory in which they are situated, for future development of productive activities.

As well as the businesses, **agents** also participate, providing regular solutions to common or shared problems of the business groups (technological centres, universities, public Administrations, etc.). The aim is to develop an intense **interrelationship** between these helpful agents and businesses, in such a way that an active **network** is created for the exchange of knowledge and information.



# *Advantages*

- *Improvement of competitive positioning*

---

- *Access to new markets*

---

- *Access and exploitation of high cost resources*

---

- *Access and exploitation of additional resources*

---

- *Increase of innovation and technological development*

---

- *Joint execution of shared projects*

---

- *Creation of economies of concentration and localization*

---

- *Creation and exploitation of new businesses*



***Competitiveness***

***Cooperation***

***Business autonomy***

***Helpful Agents***



# **Key factors** **for success**

***A shared awareness of cooperation as a vehicle for improving individual competitiveness of businesses implicated in the cooperation.***

***The presence of businesses that exert true leaders and people with initiative.***

***The presence of driving forces of initiative that accompany the business leaders of the process.***

***The implication and active participation of small and medium sized enterprises.***

***Development of productive, modern structures in the businesses.***

***Innovation as a key element for maintaining competitiveness of the businesses.***

***Local presence of the offer of advanced services directed to the modernization of the sector.***

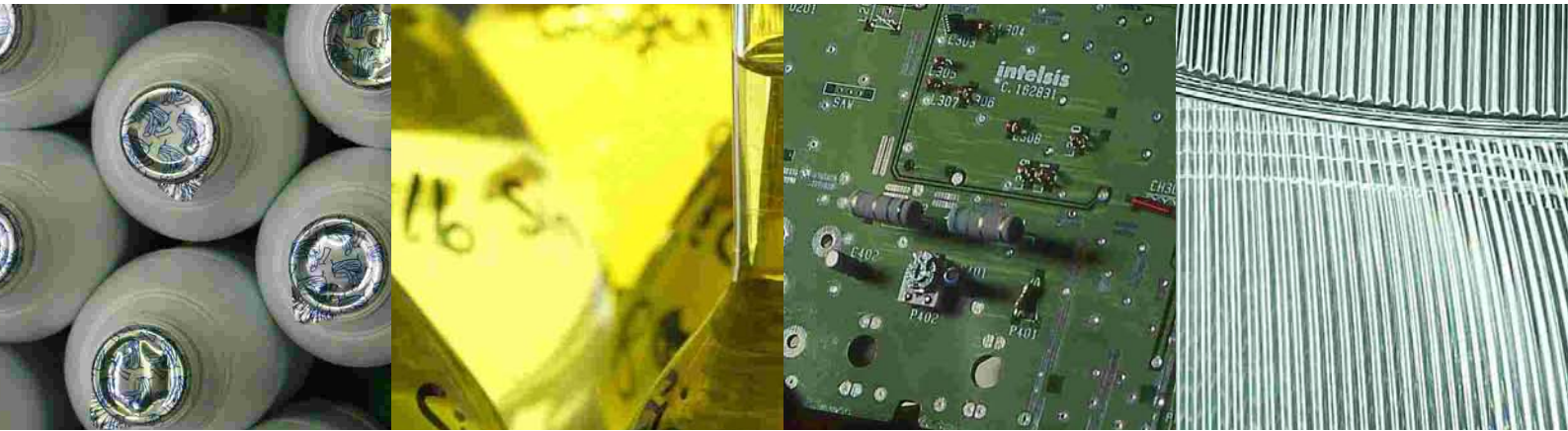
***Participation in global knowledge networks.***

***Participation and implication of all agents, including those for support (technological centres, research centres etc.).***





# *Innovative* **Groups**





## ***Innovative Group of the Maritime Sector***

The Principality of Asturias has **345 kilometres** of coast which comprises **5,6%** of the total Spanish coastline. The maritime sector has always been one of the foundations of the Asturian economy, but the changes suffered to the world economy in recent years demands an **adjustment** to the sector. The development of an Innovative Group favours **modernization** of the sector, meaning that new challenges are dealt with jointly.

With regard to the infrastructures it must be highlighted that the **ports of Avilés and Gijón** are going to benefit from different extension works that will be complemented by the creation of the Area for Logistic and Industrial Activities of Asturias, (ZALIA). Without a doubt, these investments will favour the development of this sector in an important way.

On the other hand, the **Fundación Innovamar**, which supports this initiative, is also promoting the creation of an Innovative Group at national level, from which the different regional groups will be formed.





## ***Innovative Group of the Automotive Auxiliary Industry***

In Asturias, **basic elements** are produced for this industry such as steel, zinc for galvanization and aluminium. Furthermore, other **components** are supplied from this region such as bodyworks, car windscreens and windows, shock absorbers or sintered products for change/token machines. Also of note is the presence of one of the biggest world leaders in two-wheel vehicle manufacturing, producing motorcycles and their spare parts and components for export from Asturias to the whole world.

Nowadays, the most important challenge facing industries in this sector is in **innovation**, so their competitiveness depends on their capacity for developing new products and for continually improving productivity of the design and manufacturing processes. In so doing, the need is highlighted for driving and developing research capacities of the businesses through **cooperation** between them and the important network of **Research Centres** specializing in applications linked with the automotive sector which Asturias relies on.





## ***Innovative Group of the Energy Sector***

For many years, Asturias was the main producer of **energy minerals** of Spain. The presence of the coal-mining industry in the region gave rise to the subsequent installation of power stations and allowed the development of a conglomerate of auxiliary and supply businesses, as much for mining as for the generation and distribution of electricity. Nowadays the Asturian electricity system is very much in **surplus** and the power generated for the region makes up more than 7 % of the total produced for the whole of Spain.

At these times we find ourselves in the process of **rebalancing** the electrical mix in such a way that levels of **renewable energy** will be notably increased in the coming years. In this framework, the **important investments** anticipated for Asturias in the energy sector (regasification and combined cycle plants, biodiesel, biomass, wind farms... ) should allow the **consolidation** of the energy sector and the adaptation of all its agents to society's new demands.







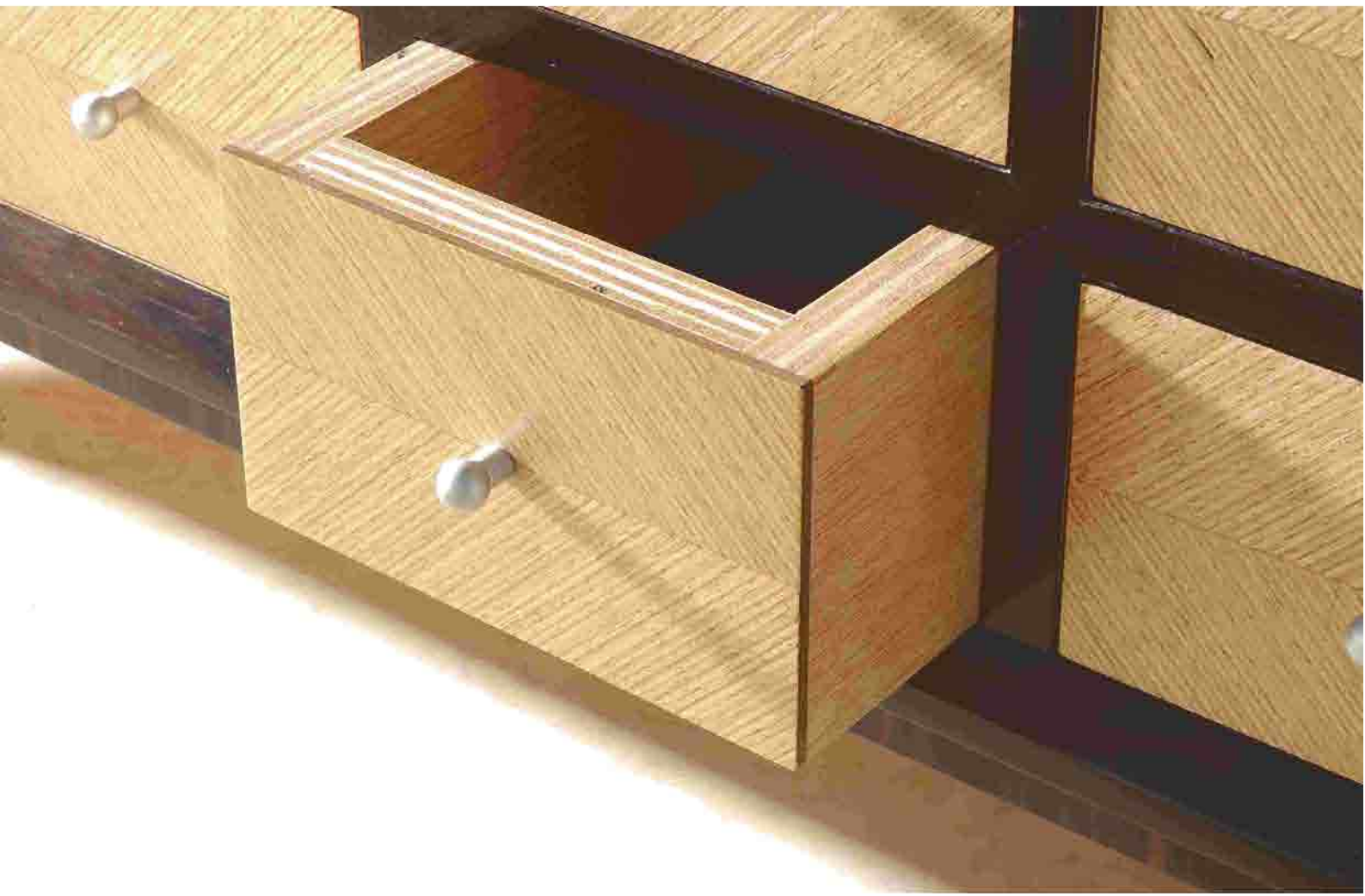
## ***Innovative Group of the Wood and Furniture Sector***

The region of Asturias, by virtue of its climate and geographical properties, has some ideal conditions for the development, exploitation and rational management of its **wealth of forest**, which provides –as well as the consequential economic benefits– other indirect benefits: protection of the environment, contact with nature..., which are to the advantage of society.

This sector incorporates businesses belonging to the different stages in the **wood transformation chain**: forestry exploitation, sawing, manufacture of boards and veneer, carpentry and furniture manufacture; including also the manufacture of wood pulp.

The future **Forestry and Wood Technological Centre** aims to carry out **research, development and innovatory** activities for Asturian businesses, as well as focussing on forest heritage.

On the other hand, the hallmark of quality of **Mueble de Asturias** is attempting to get the businesses which accede to it to differentiate their **quality** and revenue in product **design**, at the same time increasing their **competitiveness**, by having to deal with a series of internal improvements.



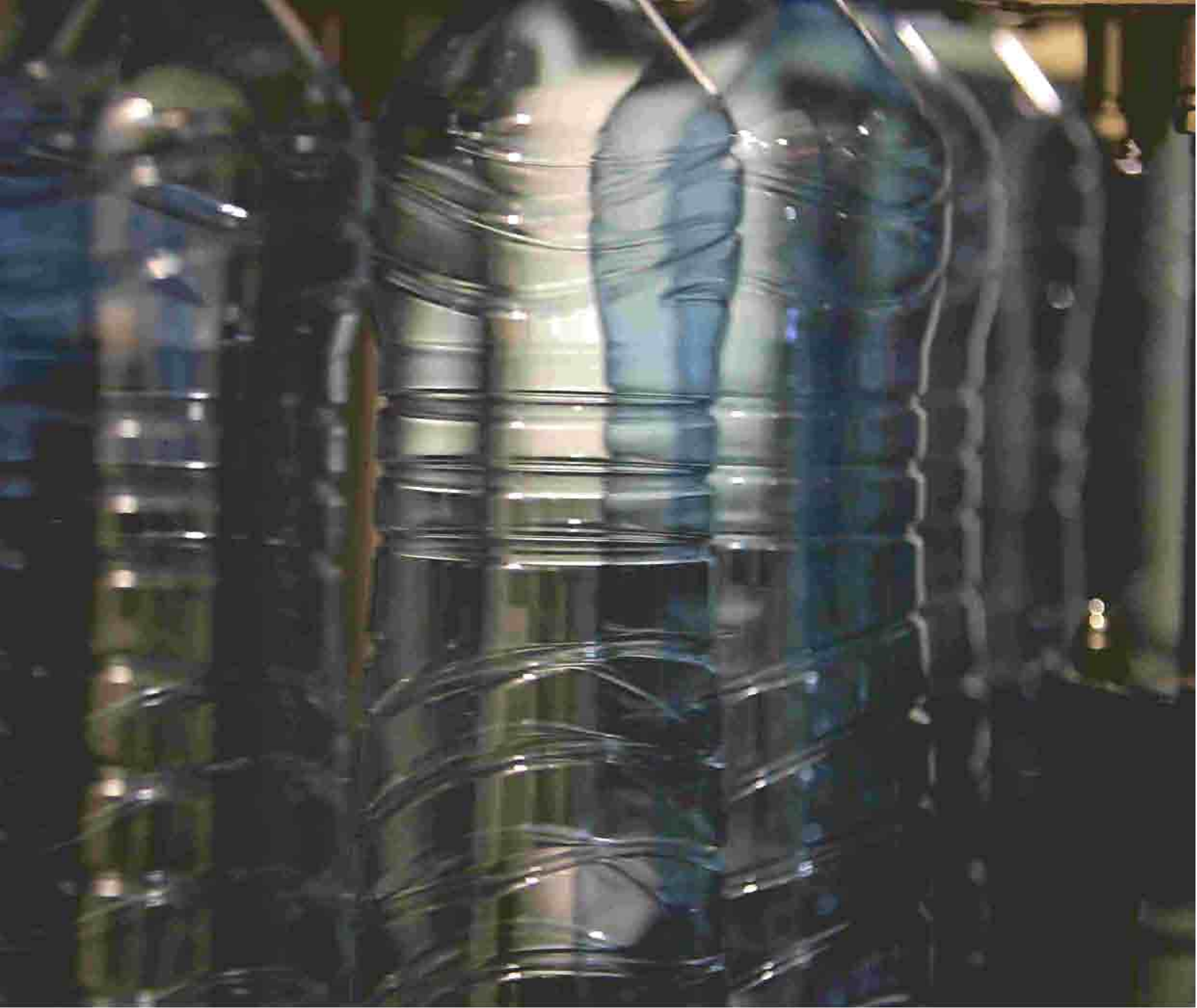


## ***Innovative Group of the Agrofood Sector***

The Food and Agriculture Industry, one of the biggest sectors of the Asturian economy, reached 14% in 2005 of the revenue of the industrial sector and 13% of employment, being the third branch of activity which generates more employment and more revenue in the industry. The dairy industries, with a **solid place** in the national market are, together with the meat processing and drinks producing industries, the main activities of the sector.

One of the keys to the strength of the sector is the **high quality** of the products. Furthermore, it is characterized by a **strong atomization**, so that it is made up of companies, the majority of which are small, family-run businesses.

The Innovative Group of the Agrofood sector also contributes, specifically, to the **cooperation** of the businesses with other agents contributing to their improved competitiveness. Among them, in the Principality of Asturias, are found the following research centres: the Regional Service for Research and Agricultural and Food Development (**SERIDA**), the Dairy Products Institute (**IPLA**), the **Centre of Competence for Milk and Derived Products**, the **Laboratory for the Association of Meat Industry Research** and the **Inter-professional Dairy Laboratory** as well as the centres that are linked to the **University of Oviedo**.





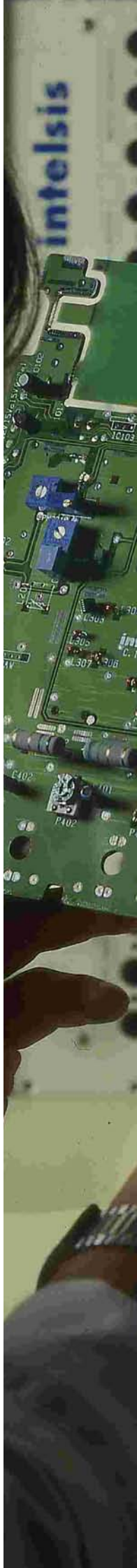
## ***Innovative Group of the Chemical Industry***

The main activities of the chemical industry in Asturias are centred on: **carbochemistry, pharmaceutical products, fertilizers,** and **synthetic fibres.** It is a productive sector, known for its contribution to the **sustainable development** of Asturias and for being an indisputable reference point and standard of diversification and generation of **high value services** in the region with future international expansion.

The chemical industry has become one of the examples of **profitability** of the large investments in Asturias. Furthermore, the economic and technological development of the sector has stimulated the parallel development of other linked sectors, as has happened with the **environmental** industry sector:

The creation of an Innovative Group will also contribute towards counteracting the incidence of the new European Regulations **REACH** over competitiveness of the sector and promotion of the cooperation and interchange of knowledge between its members.

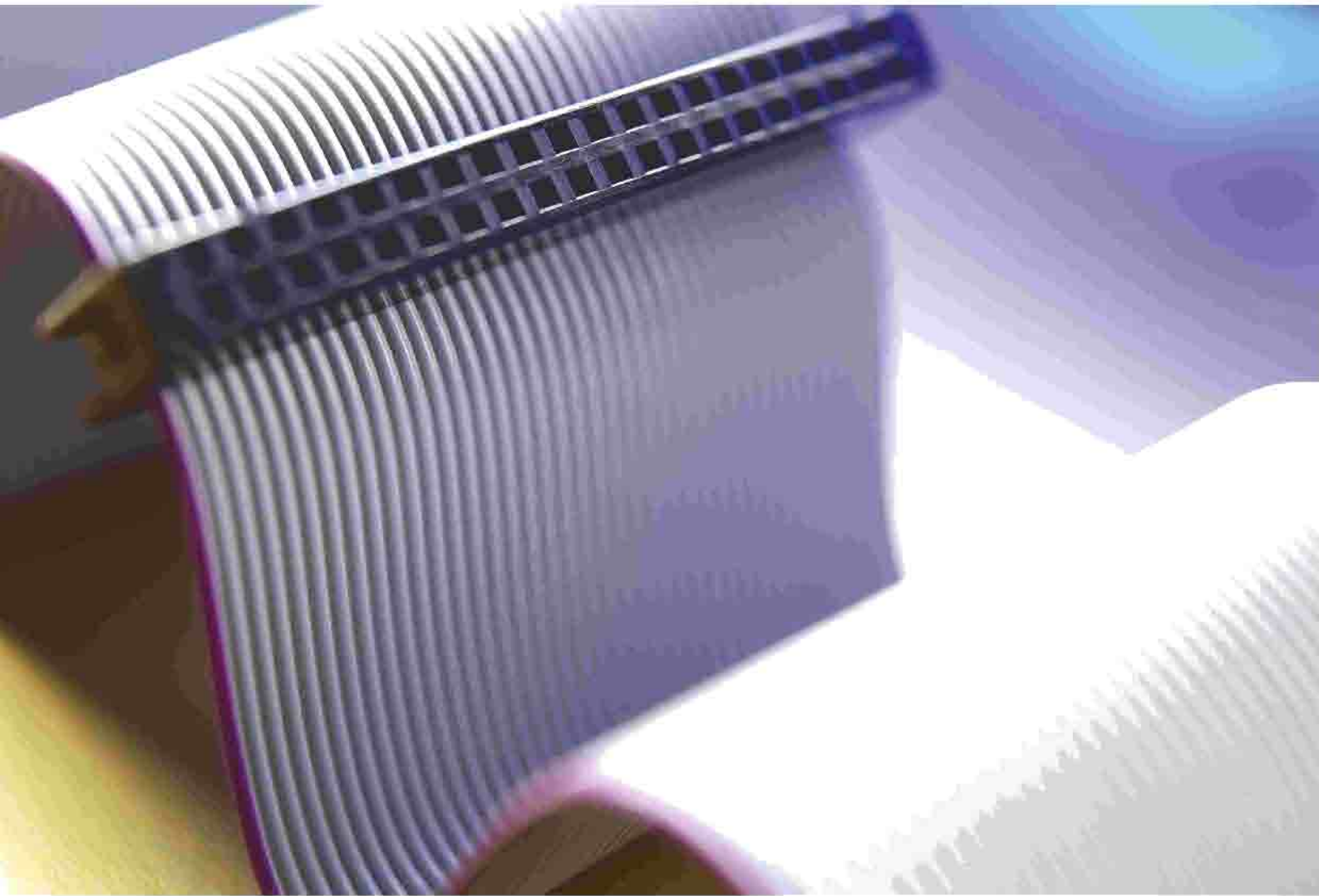
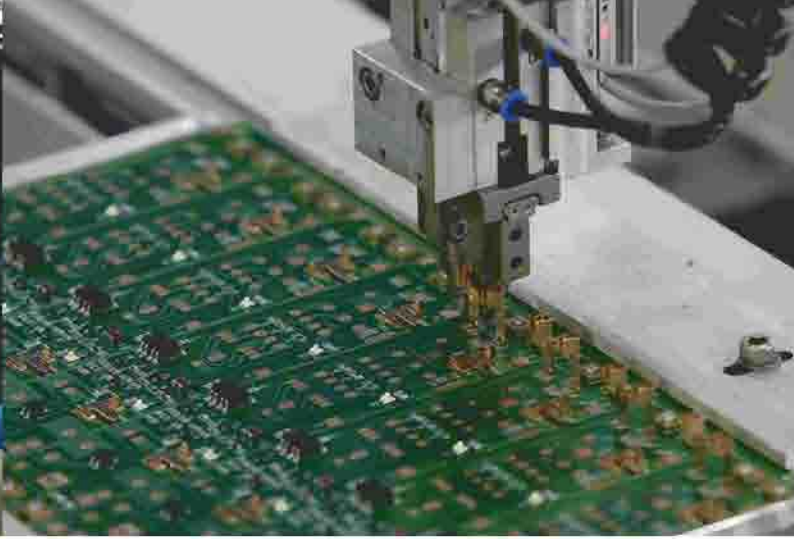




## ***Innovative Group of the Knowledge Industry***

The sector of technology of the information and communications (ITC) has undergone **huge growth** in recent years, with the creation of **new businesses** and the introduction of important companies for which **human capital** is one of the main assets. Specifically, according to the last data from EUROSTAT, Asturias is the 4<sup>th</sup> European region with a greater employment growth rate in this sector.

Asturias has had a **ITC Cluster** since 2004 which groups 60 businesses together. Its mission is to improve **competitiveness** of the Asturian ITC businesses, and assure their sustainable **growth**. Furthermore, the Technological Centre of Information and Telecommunications (CTIC), is in favour of the dynamization of the sector. The Foundation CTIC is the headquarters for Spain and Latin America for the consortium **W3C** (World Wide Web Consortium), the most important international organization with regard to matters relating to the standardization of the Internet.







# *Manuf@cturias*

This grouping is a regional initiative, aligned with the European Technological Platform **MANUFUTURE**. It was developed in 2006 by **IDEPA** and the **Fundación Prointec**, which holds permanent office and assumes leadership of the platform, proposing and developing activities which it undertakes. Likewise, the Fundación Prointec is a member of the Permanent Commission of the National Technological Platform **Manufuture-E**, which is the Spanish mirror of the European one.

Manuf@cturias has its aim of promoting the **renovation, reactivation and restructuring** of traditional industrial sectors through a strategy based on **research and innovation**.

The Asturian industrial business is the main player of this platform and through it; there is the opportunity for accessing the **technological vanguard** presently being defined in Europe. It is an opportunity for differentiating technologically and participating more actively in the Framework Program of R+D of the EU.

Besides, it is a forum where the **interchange of experiences and knowledge** is made easier, among the different industrial sectors, as well as bringing the Public Administration, the University and the Technological Centres closer together.



---

Published by: Instituto de Desarrollo Económico del Principado de Asturias  
Designed by: Jorge Lorenzo diseño y comunicación visual  
Printed by: Eujoa  
D.L. AS/4375/07

---

IDEPA

Instituto de Desarrollo Económico del Principado de Asturias  
Parque Tecnológico de Asturias, 33420 Llanera-Asturias-España

Tel +34 985 98 00 20 Fax +34 985 26 44 55

[www.idepa.es](http://www.idepa.es)