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***FEATURES OF THE GRIFFON BUISNESS PARK AS ONE OF FRANCE'S PROMICING
ECONOMIC ZONES***

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Abstract. This article examines the economy of the Hauts-de-France region and proposes improvements to the current economic situation. It presents and substantiates a set of measures that, with an active political program and support from the government and businesses, could significantly enhance the region's attractiveness and attract resources for its development. The article's materials can be used by ministries of economic development, business leaders, and specialized universities when teaching subjects such as "Global Economy," "Investments," "Foreign Economic Activity," and others.

Key words: special economic zone, free trade zone, competitiveness pole, sensitive urban area, global economy, competitiveness.

***ОСОБЕННОСТИ БИЗНЕС-ПАРКА GRIFFON КАК ОДНОЙ ИЗ
ПЕРСПЕКТИВНЫХ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИХ ЗОН ФРАНЦИИ***

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Аннотация. В настоящей статье проведено исследование в отношении экономики региона Hauts-de-France и предложений об улучшении текущей

экономической ситуации. Приведен и обоснован комплекс мер, которые при активной политической программе и поддержке со стороны государства и предпринимателей способны существенно повысить привлекательность региона и привлечь ресурсы для его развития. Материалы статьи могут быть использованы министерствами экономического развития, руководителями коммерческих предприятий, профильными вузами при преподавании дисциплин: «Мировая экономика», «Инвестиции», «Внешеэкономическая деятельность» и др.

Ключевые слова: особая экономическая зона, зона свободной торговли, полюс конкурентоспособности, чувствительная городская зона, мировая экономика, конкурентоспособность.

1. Introduction

An analysis of the experience of creating, regulating, and financing special economic zones in France shows that such structures contribute to the creation of new jobs in high-tech industries, reduce unemployment in the country, address the challenges of innovative economic development as a whole, and conduct research and development in various sectors of the national economy.

France's experience in creating competitiveness poles and special economic zones can be seen as a transition to the practical application of new strategies for innovative, competitive economic development. [4]

The Hauts-de-France region is currently subsidized, requiring ongoing government support. However, by leveraging its geographic, climate, and resource potential, a sustainable business enclave could be created in this area, based on the already established Zone Griffon business park, attracting entrepreneurs and promising talent from around the world. A favorable environment for business development must be created and the project widely publicized in the media. France is considered

by many people around the world to be a prosperous and thriving country, which suggests that many entrepreneurs and young professionals will be willing to take risks and take advantage of the conditions and incentives offered.

The project's implementation requires political support, as well as the development and approval of a regional economic development program based on global experience in free economic zones.

2. Materials and methods

An exclusive program was created in 2025 specifically for entrepreneurs, initiated by CO&LAB (France) and supported by the Laon city administration. Currently, the program is a unique offer, unparalleled in Europe. It combines the innovation of Singapore, the opportunities of Hong Kong, and the conservatism and security of old Europe.

Investors are offered a unique opportunity to open a business in France, take advantage of tax incentives under the program, obtain an investor visa for the entire family, and receive support for the transformation of capital from other countries.

The "To New Heights" program offers the following benefits:

- Facilitated access to the European Union;
- Opportunity to take advantage of the emerging economic ecosystem;
- Simplified integration and citizenship acquisition process;
- Interest and support from the administration;
- Low real estate costs.

Laon is a picturesque city in northern France, in the Hauts-de-France region, prefecture of the Aisne department. Located 155 km south of Lille and 138 km northeast of Paris, at the junction of the A26 "England" motorway and the N2 national highway, the city offers the following features:

- Affordable housing prices: around €750/m² in Laon versus €2,550/m² nationally;
- Low development land prices: around €13/m² in Laon versus €90/m² nationally;
- High availability of land and labor: a large amount of developable land and a ready labor pool;
- Attractive investment climate: lower entry costs for entrepreneurs, new residents, and housing projects;
- Low real estate tax rate (CFE - Cotisation Foncière des Entreprises, the local property tax on businesses in France): below the national average, reducing companies' operating costs;
- Tax incentives for new businesses: the city regularly provides a three-year local tax exemption to companies opening in the city;
- Active local policies: Laon actively seeks out new businesses and supports their creation;
- Retention potential: Affordable housing and training opportunities help retain young graduates and professionals;
- Opportunities for sustainable development: the abundance of land allows for the planning of modern infrastructure (housing, services, transportation) with fewer restrictions. [1]

3. Results

France has free economic zones (FEZs), which are geographically defined areas with preferential currency, tax, and customs regimes. Their purpose is to enhance the economic attractiveness of the zone by supporting existing economic activity and creating new ones.

FEZ activities in France are regulated by the 1996 law "Implementing the Urban Economic Revitalization Pact (Pacte de Relance pour la Ville)." The law defines the basic provisions for the creation of free urban zones. [7]

It was on the basis of this 1996 Pacte de Relance pour la Ville that the Griffon Business Park, a 150-hectare business park, was created in the city of Laon. It is intended for economic activity in the following areas:

- small and medium-sized businesses;
- industry;
- design bureaus;
- research and development.

Dozens of hectares, in the form of modular plots of 2,500 m², have been allocated for the entrepreneurial project. Over 20 large companies have already opened businesses in the business park. The organizers of the business park are the Communauté de communes du Pays de la Serre and the Communauté d'agglomération du Pays de Laon, united within the Syndicat mixte du Griffon. The Aisne Departmental Council, the Hauts-de-France region, the state, and the European Union are also participating in the development of a project of this scale. [6]

- A potential investor can take advantage of the following options when deciding to open a business in the Hauts-de-France region:
- Company formation in the city of Laon;
- Account opening and fund transfers from other jurisdictions;
- Business park tax incentives and accounting support;
- Legal consultations on business matters in France;
- Assistance with leasing and purchasing real estate;
- Assistance in obtaining an investor visa (with the support of the administration);
- Guidance and support during adaptation to the new environment.

Overall, the program, already implemented in the Hauts-de-France region at the Griffon Business Park, opens up prospects for business development in the European Union. The French government provides financial support to participants in such entities, offers significant tax incentives for project participants, and provides administrative support. [10]

Opening a business in France involves the following steps:

1. Preparing documents for registering a legal address;
2. Registering the company's share capital (minimum €1,000) and obtaining a certificate of contribution;
3. Publication in the Official Gazette (JAL) and obtaining a publication certificate containing the following information: company name, legal form (SAS), legal address, share capital details, types of activities, name and address of the president;

4. Preparing documents for the Commercial Register of Companies (RCS): company charter, share capital contribution certificate, JAL publication certificate, founding documents, and Form M0.
5. Obtaining a Kbis statement;
6. Preparing documents for opening a bank account;
7. Preparing documents for the tax office for businesses;
8. Preparing a form for exemption from income tax (1447-C-SD);
9. Completing a set of documents for CAPL/CCI to request subsidies and support.

Businesses also have the opportunity to receive significant tax benefits. Since each project is unique, tax and social benefits depend on many factors: the legal form of the company (SAS, SA, SARL – three different tax regimes), place of registration and location (municipal zone, private territory, priority zone, etc.), the nature of the property (new construction or purchase, with or without renovations), the number of employees and their status (including insurance regime), and the type of economic activity.

Article 44 of the French General Tax Code provides the following: "Enterprises that, by law or by choice, are subject to a real tax regime on their profits and that carry out industrial, commercial, or artisan activities within the meaning of Article 34, are exempt from income tax or corporation tax on their profits, with the exception of capital gains recognized on the revaluation of assets." [8]

This study found that a company is eligible for tax incentives in the Hauts-de-France region if:

- the company has a certain number of employees,
- it maintains a certain turnover,

- it is actually operating in the region (not just having a registered office),
- it is not engaged in financial, real estate, or agricultural activities.

Subject to the above conditions, the following incentives are available to the company:

- exemption from corporate or income tax for 5 years, then a gradual partial exemption over 3 years (60% in the 6th year, 40% in the 7th, 20% in the 8th);
- exemption from corporate wealth tax (CFE) for up to 5 years, then for 3 years on a 70-50-30% scale;
- exemption from corporate income tax (IS) in the regional aid zone (AFR) for the first two years, then for 3 years on a 70-50-25% scale; As part of the aforementioned "Towards New Heights" program, with the support of the city of Laon, investors and their family members are offered a multi-year residence permit in France, the "Talent Passport - Economic Investor" (Agdref code: 4806). [12]

To obtain this residence permit, the following documents are required:

- proof of personal management of the company or ownership of at least 30% of the company's capital;
- proof of the creation or maintenance of jobs, or a commitment to create or maintain jobs for four years from the date of investment in France: a letter of commitment describing annual job creation and a business plan for foreign investments;
- proof of completion or a commitment to complete direct investments in tangible or intangible fixed assets in France for an amount of at least €300,000.

- in the case of an investment project: a certificate of placement of funds in share capital in a personal or professional account with a European Union credit institution. [11]

In the case of an investment already made, any document confirming the investment's effectiveness will be required, including proof of depositing invested funds into the company's account in an amount of at least €300,000. When renewing a residence permit, the investor will be required to provide documents confirming that they continue to meet the conditions that previously justified the permit.

After two years of successful operation, the investor even has the option of obtaining French citizenship through the "To New Heights" program. This involves creating a dossier, which will be reviewed by the prefect before being sent to the relevant ministry. Before submitting this dossier, the prefect will need to secure the support of local authorities and other public/private organizations. This fully complies with Article 21-21 of the French Civil Code: "French citizenship may be granted by naturalization upon proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to a French-speaking foreigner who submits an application and who, through his or her outstanding actions, contributes to the influence of France and the prosperity of its international economic relations." [13]

On October 16, 2012, the Valls Circular was enacted into law to attract highly educated and valuable human resources to the country. This Circular serves as the basis for applications for early naturalization after two years. The concept envisions an exemplary path to integration achieved through:

- outstanding economic success (thriving business, job creation, innovation);
- strong social integration (participation in local life, fluency in French, contribution to public life);

- personal commitment to the general interests of the state.

4. Conclusion

Compared to developed and successful economic zones around the world, the Griffon Business Park is only in the early stages of its development. Clearly, given global experience, this enclave could be used to develop a special economic zone with significant results and achievements, bringing it on par with the world's best SEZs.

How can a region with an unstable socio-economic situation increase household incomes and company profits, reduce unemployment, engage the economically inactive population in business processes, and attract capital to the region?

How can the outflow of students and young professionals to other regions be stopped? How can the abundance of raw materials, grain harvests, beets, milk, and other products be sent to other regions for processing, instead of being sent to other regions for processing, create added value directly in the region, ensuring job growth?

As noted earlier, similar problems have been repeatedly addressed globally, when subsidized regions and countries successfully implemented a range of economic measures alongside an active political program. Singapore, Hong Kong, the Manaus Free Zone (Brazil), Jebel Ali Free Zone, Dubai Multi Commodities Center, FTZ N74 (Baltimore), Zonamerica in Montevideo, Sri City (India), Aqaba (Jordan), and others.

Why should the methods and tools successfully applied in these projects work in the Hauts-de-France region?

First, it's necessary to consider all the mistakes and negative factors that led to the failure of similar projects, including:

- Weak political program and work of regional authorities raising funds in the region;
- Poor control over the expenditure of funds and project implementation;
- Conflict or lack of a regulatory framework;
- Low level of accountability, poor investment and entrepreneurial climate;
- First, creating a government structure, and then forming a free economic zone around it;
- The main industries are not identified, making it impossible to determine the specific objectives of the project.
- Lack of effective cooperation between government agencies.
- Lack of a sound marketing and sales strategy.
- Lack of a project business model.

What economic model is appropriate for taking the region to a qualitatively new level?

In our opinion, the best option is a free economic zone model with mixed participation of the state and investors. In this case, the state plays a role in control, supervision, and support, while the primary management of business processes is transferred to a collective management body created with the participation of the main investors.

The first project cluster could be a trade and warehouse zone, where foreign goods can be stored, sold, and purchased without paying the usual customs duties. Since Laon is located close to major highways, the development of logistics and transport should be less challenging than in other regions.

The second cluster could be an export-processing zone, which is the most common type and promotes industrial development. For example, the potential for developing agricultural processing enterprises will be realized. Furthermore, the UAE's successful experience in attracting foreign entrepreneurs can be leveraged, including ease of business opening, obtaining loans, residency permits, and other services. Given the recent difficulties businesses in the UAE and other countries have been experiencing, this socially vulnerable group of entrepreneurs represents significant potential for the project. [9]

The third cluster could be a joint venture zone, where all the necessary conditions for a business incubator with foreign capital are created. New businesses that open in the market can take advantage of tax and social security incentives, preferential support (construction permits, premises subsidies, free zones in certain areas), and an accessible workforce.

The fourth cluster could be a science and technology zone for scientific research and university-based training. The development of a digital incubator or structured IT cluster should facilitate the creation of startups, digital service centers, regional data centers, and the attraction of young professionals. Students who complete their training locally (IUT, BTS in IT) will plan to stay in the region and find employment.

Furthermore, to attract students, the university needs to conclude international agreements with universities in other countries under the Erasmus+ program, which will attract young professionals from other countries. For example, over half of students from Asian countries (India, China, etc.) who completed similar training under the Erasmus+ program prefer to stay in the host university's country and build their careers there. This is especially true after the merger of the private campus with Picard University.

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Оригинальность 85%