

European Cluster Matchmaking Event: BakanMed Cluster facilitated territorial cooperation:

Thessaloniki 13-14 September 2017



The tenth European Cluster Collaboration Matchmaking mission was a two-day event in Thessaloniki from the 13th to the 14th of September 2017 in the context of the Thessaloniki International Fair. The delegation was composed of 45 clusters from 17 countries from the EU and the Balkan Med region, active in the sectors of creative and cultural industries, smart cities, the circular economy, mobility and automotive sectors. Clusters came from all over Europe (Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, UK, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Sweden) and the Balkan Med region (Serbia, Montenegro, FYROM, Albania etc).

On the first day, the Cluster delegation was hosted by the Centre for Research and Technology (Hellas). The day started with introductory remarks from Dr Ulla Engelmann, Head of Unit for Clusters, Social Economy and Entrepreneurship, DG GROW, European Commission who highlighted several new policy initiatives notably the forthcoming ESCP's for smart specialisation investments and announced the next GROW your REGION event planned in Valencia (8-9 November 2017) <http://ec.europa.eu/grow-your-region>;

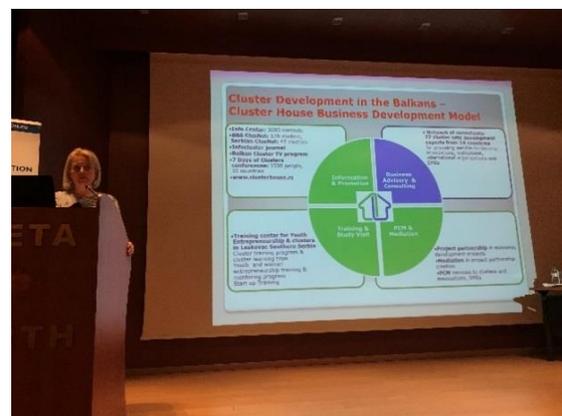


Meanwhile Mr Michailides Constantinos, Head of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Directorate of the event host region, the Region of Central Macedonia, presented an overview of the role of clusters in the regional strategy with a particular focus on the agri-food cluster ecosystem.

A policy roundtable ensued, aiming to illustrate how cluster-based interregional collaboration can foster and improve territorial cooperation in the BalkanMed region with a focus on the support and funding of Interreg programmes, cluster networks and regional smart specialisation strategy implementation. The policy input speakers were George Kostaras from the Region of Central Macedonia, Peter Keller, Head of Unit of the International Cluster Unit of the Hungarian Ministry of Economy, Ales Gnamus from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and Marina Perisic, the Coordinator Specialist in the Division for Competitiveness Clusters from the Agency for Investment and Competitiveness in Croatia. The policy roundtable was closed with a brief Q&A session which dealt with issues such as regional innovation vouchers, internationalisation and the approaches deployed to support cluster development and cluster accreditation policies.



An inter-regional cluster cooperation showcase followed, with three speakers. Evelin Matiaki, Project and Financial Officer from the Balkan Med Interreg programme who showcased five Interreg projects that involve cluster actors from the meta-region, meanwhile Danka Sokolovic, Manager of the Balkan Cluster House in Serbia set out some ideas on how to relaunch cluster policy in the region, and Clio Kraskovic, Communication Officer from the Maritime Technology Cluster FVG S.c.ar.l in Italy illustrated how a regional led approach has succeeded in mobilising actors from the maritime sector to develop cluster cooperation and networking actions with businesses.



Following the coffee break each cluster was given the opportunity to present their cluster via a one-minute pitching session. This allowed the delegates to formulate their matchmaking requests and for cluster participants to better select potential partners.

Thereafter followed two thematic seminars. The first seminar was moderated by Dr Athanasios Konstandopoulos, President of Centre for Research and Technology Hellas and member of the CHORUS cluster and was focused on the circular economy and smart cities. Cluster speakers included Bianca Muntean from iTech Transylvania, Miguel Miñano from CitizeM, Mladen Perkov from Inteligentna Energija and one company, PAKO S.A. from the region of Central Macedonia.

The second parallel session was moderated by Julia Phoca from the Corallia gi-Cluster on cultural and creative industries supported by Prof. Vassilios Makios also from Corallia. Cluster speakers

included Natasa Sivevska from the TTA Textile Cluster, Aymeric Castaing from CATS, Marius Pareščius from the Užupis Creative Cluster and George Nolis from e-gaming Greek company Battlenet. This group was able to provide some concrete examples of cross sectoral collaboration, for example between textiles/fashion and the gaming industry, or through the use of augmented reality in industrial domains or tourism. Meanwhile the industry representative from Battlenet highlighted the linkages between creative industries/gaming events and regional development (tourism).



Three short presentations set the scene for the afternoon. During the first one Mr Athanasios Konstandopoulos, Director of The Centre for Research & Technology, Hellas (CERTH), explained



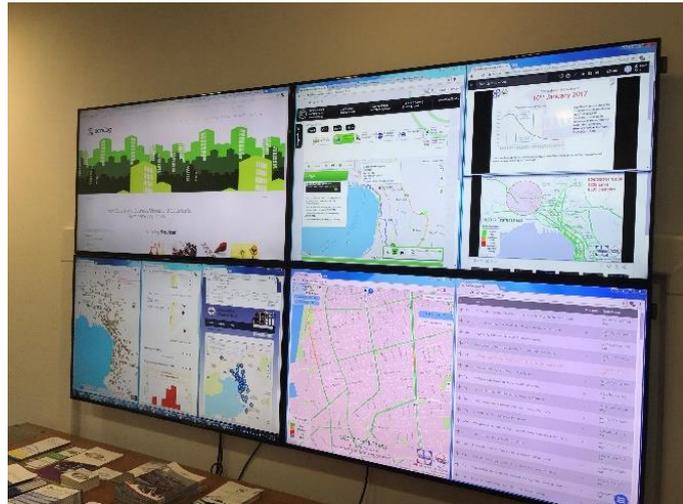
the philosophy of CERTH and highlighted in particular the success factors that underlie effective research and innovation support policies (talent, culture, capital, regulations and network density) and explained how CERTH had become the most successful R&D facility in Greece in terms of the number of H2020 projects (100 to date).

The next speaker Simon Bensasson, Member of the Thessaloniki City Council, presented an overview of the innovation and entrepreneurship support available in the city with a particular focus on incubator support resources.



Finally, **Christophe Guichard**, Team Leader Cluster Internationalisation, DG GROW, European Commission, highlighted the continuous support the EC was providing for the creation of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships to help European clusters develop a joint internationalisation strategy and support SME members to be more competitive in markets beyond Europe via clusters. Some 19 new ESCP-4i will be launched later this year. He reminded attendees that to benefit from future EC funding calls, such as the recently launched Cluster Go International call <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/news/call-proposals-clusters-go-international-defence-security-sector>; on dual use technologies that clusters must be registered on the ECCP.

The final session of the afternoon took the form of three thematic group visits tailored to the sectors of activity of the clusters of the ECCP delegation in CERTH. The first offered visit was focused on the energy sector and provided participants the opportunity to visit the Laboratory for Environmental Fuels and Hydrocarbons, the Solar Furnace, the CHORUS common testing facility, the Smart House and Mobilab.



The second visit offered was focused on the agrofood sector, with a visit of the laboratories of CERTH's Institute on Applied Biosciences (INAB). The participants had the opportunity to exchange knowledge on issues related with food of improved nutritional quality, industry relevant materials, certification of plants, etc. The third visit was on the smart cities and creative industries, where visitors had the opportunity to get acquainted with research teams and their projects, including virtual and augmented reality, multimedia data base and information systems, human computer interaction, etc.

A networking cocktail closed the proceedings of the first day.

Day Two

On the second day, the 45-strong cluster delegation met in the Nikolaos Germanos Conference Centre in the context of the 82nd Thessaloniki International Fair to engage in C2C (cluster-to-cluster) meetings, this time with the support from the European Enterprise Network Hellas and their partners PRAXI Network and SBBE. Over 130 face to face meetings were scheduled on the day. An interactive debriefing session closed the morning session run by Marc Pattinson, coordinator of the ECCP, and Christophe Guichard, Project Officer at DG GROW.



Members of the delegation were asked to give their feedback on the general organisation of the event, their appreciation of the policy content on the first day, the opportunity to engage in business meetings on the second, and finally to offer some recommendations for future matchmaking events. Feedback from the delegation highlighted the usefulness of combining policy and learning opportunities with C2C activities as well as C2B with businesses from the Fair. The thematic focus of the event is also important and needs to ensure scope for both sectoral and relevant cross sectoral exchanges. The Mission ended at 5pm, and participants were given tickets to visit the fair which closed at 9pm.



The Day One seminar power point presentations can be [downloaded from the ECCP platform](#) and the cluster profiles of all registered cluster organisations are also available on the ECCP database.

Further details on ECCP and all previous matchmaking missions can be found on the [ECCP platform](#) along with details for receiving the newsletters and [registering new clusters](#)

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