

EU4SportsClusters Alliance celebrates its Final Conference in Brussels

Brussels was the scenario of the EU4SportsClusters Alliance final conference, which was celebrated last 22nd November in coincidence with the EPSI Annual Conference.

During the conference, the conclusions of the EU4SportsClusters Alliance project were presented by its partners: [INDESCAT](#) (Catalonia), [Sports & Technology](#) (The Netherlands), [EPSI](#) (Belgium), [Cluster Montagne](#) (Auvergne-Rhône Alpes), and [Flanders' Bike Valley](#) (Belgium).

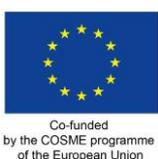
This two-year COSME project, which is part of the Clusters Go International Call, was duly evaluated by two representatives of the European Commission, José Freitas (Policy Officer DG Enterprise and Industry Policy Officer, Unit SMEs: Clusters and Emerging Industries) and Stefania Pantazi (Project adviser of EASME and project officer of EU4SportsClusters Alliance). In general terms, the outcome of the project is regarded as successful because of its direct impact on SMEs. The importance of clusters was highlighted in present and future terms by José Freitas, who remarked the importance of investing in cluster excellence, promotion of cluster collaboration and cross-sectoral value chains. He also encouraged the continuation of the consortium future collaboration and mentioned a possible future call for Strand 2 partners that would be more SMEs-oriented. To end his presentation, he invited the consortium to take part in the EU Industry Day, which will be hosted in Brussels in February 22nd and 23rd 2018.

As Project Officer of the project, Stefania Pantazi tackled the project proceedings and deliverables, and also the different actions that this project involves: 2 Trade missions to China and USA, including the attendance to 2 international fairs; 3 market studies to China, USA and Iran; 2 EU matchmaking Event to Iran and Belgium; 1 Guide on EU Funding for sports industry 2014-2020; 4 Training sessions on EU funding, international export groups, learning study tours to other partnerships and reverse missions. After giving some instructions so that the project impact would be shown in its final report, she also mentioned different EASME programmes and opportunities for SMEs.

The initial part of the conference was followed by an overview of the project, presented by the project coordinator. Alex Rivera, Cluster Manager of INDESCAT, analysed the different project actions, the positive results of the project and also its main challenges and barriers. Only the mission to China and USA have involved the participation of 30 European Companies, who have signed 19 different business contracts with stakeholders abroad. A round table followed this overview, in which 4 different European companies ([Kaptiva Sports](#) from INDESCAT, [Baouw](#) from Cluster Montagne, [Inuteg](#) from Sports & Technology and [Bioracer](#) from Flanders Bike Valley) shared their experiences as part of the European delegations that travel to China and USA in two project trade missions and export groups. They highlighted that these initiatives helps them go international and encouraged other companies to join such actions. Besides, they also mentioned that a follow-up is needed and that a more European and cluster support is required to save SMEs' individual efforts and resources.

A final panel discussion closed the conference, in which the different project partners analysed the positive effects of joint internationalization projects and their direct impact on SMEs. The consortium will continue its collaboration in the future through possible relevant calls for the sports industry and also through [ClusSport](#), a Smart Specialization Platform on sport in which all the project regions are involved.

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