

CLUSTERIX RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the exchange of experience regarding cluster policies and their regional/national implementation in the participating regions, the ClusteriX partners agree on the following recommendations:

I. RELATED TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND ENABLING OF CROSS-CLUSTER COLLABORATION TOPICS

1. Support the development of cross-cluster management platforms and cross-sector/inter-disciplinary open innovation platforms.
2. Create the awareness that clusters must present their specialisation in a better way and make pro-active efforts for more visibility.
3. Improve collaboration and coordination of administrative bodies and policy makers bridging sectors and regions, enhancing the role of institutions that deal with economic development and innovation.
4. Identify cross-sector collaboration opportunities / international smart observation.
5. Support the entrepreneurial education and culture ensuring the development of new value chains.

II. RELATED TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CROSS-CLUSTERING

1. Ensure the long-term commitment of cluster support.
2. Develop new financing mechanisms/cluster programmes supporting cross-sector collaboration.
3. Use public procurement as a driver of innovation.
4. Coordination of funding schemes.

III. RELATED TO CROSS-CLUSTER INTERNATIONALISATION

1. Foster cross-sector internationalisation strategies, also along value chains and generate of critical mass.
2. Support of international cross-fertilization processes and thematic platforms.
3. Support of the development and implementation of joint international collaboration activities between cluster members.

INTRODUCTION

Existing policies and policy instruments do not provide the framework conditions for emerging industries to develop at scales and at speeds that are required to maintain and develop Europe as a region for innovation, jobs and wealth. Clusters and cluster organisations can and should play an essential role in the creation of new linkages to facilitate the development of emerging industries, based on new value chains. These are like DNA chains that create new values by connecting new solutions with each other. The increasing speed of change means that new value chains emerge quickly and have a shorter lifetime than the old ones. As the value chains are getting increasingly global, it becomes most difficult for a single place or a single cluster to host all the necessary competencies in order to stay at their forefront.

Cluster organisations can play a key role to facilitate the creation of new value chains as they can act as bridge-builders that connect companies from different sectors and sub-sectors and regions that have a need to move up in the new value chain. Clusters organisations should build on their local strength and knowledge and have an ambition to develop a position in an emerging industry rather than remain in an existing industry. The most important feature for a cluster is not its current strengths, but the capacity of businesses to capture vital changes and adapt quickly in order to be able to transform and survive.

Clusters should contribute to the further evolvement of branches through cross-cluster interactions or by widening the innovation focus through systematic joining of different branches – either within, but also with other clusters outside their own sector (IT/ digital economy/ healthcare industry/ mobility etc.).

Following the above mentioned thoughts and findings developed by the European Forum for Clusters in Emerging Industries¹, the ClusteriX partners engaged in a vivid dialogue about what is necessary to happen at various levels (cluster organization, local/regional/national/European policy levels) in order to enable favourable conditions for the development of cross-linkages between sectors through clusters.

The result of this dialogue is represented by a set of “ClusteriX recommendations” reflecting the participants’ own views. The recommendations are structured in three main categories, according to the topics approached by the project: identification of cross-cluster collaboration topics, financial support for cross-clustering and internationalization.

¹ http://www.emergingindustries.eu/Upload/CMS/Docs/Policy_roadmap.pdf

I. IDENTIFY AND ENABLE CROSS-CLUSTER COLLABORATION TOPICS

1. Support the development of cross-cluster management platforms and cross-sector/inter-disciplinary open innovation platforms.

The reason behind the need for such a development is to support more effective interactions between sectors both old and new one). Such platforms could be based on the principles of “Open labs” concept and bring actors from various industries and services in the middle of co-creation communities developing new products and services. The discussion clearly showed a need for exchange of experience both in order to improve the management of clusters through mutual learning and the use of synergies as well as to trigger ideas for cross-cluster collaboration.

We see several ways to support these platforms, on one hand by setting-up initiatives and specific communication actions to raise the awareness of the actors potentially involved, by creating special websites/virtual platforms, by organising local think tanks or mutual visits and regular meeting places for cluster managers providing training, information and space for discussion of collaboration possibilities and matchmaking.

2. Create the awareness that clusters must present their specialisation in a better way and make pro-active efforts for more visibility.

We all agree on the clear need for a better communication of "what the cluster stands for", i.e. its industrial, technological or organisational specialisation, in order to improve the options for finding the right partners based on existing competences/activities/services.

This recommendation can be brought into practice

- by showing good examples of clusters that are able to successfully communicate their missions and activities,
- by addressing such issues at cluster managers events and eventually leading to further developments in training activities of the cluster management,
- by using the good models in platforms and
- by developing systematic analytic instruments to spot industrial/technological developments opening opportunities for emerging industries. It is advisable to empower the cluster organisations to support the development of new competences of their members, to develop specific executive training for

companies in order to create new linkages making use of, for example, the good practice Competence Mapping, or of tailor-made coaching. It is particularly important to involve the pro-active, committed enterprises in this process at an early stage in order to trigger concrete co-operation opportunities and both broaden and improve the offer for the actors in the region.

3. Improve collaboration and coordination of administrative bodies and policy makers bridging sectors and regions, enhancing the role of institutions that deal with economic development and innovation.

This recommendation is born out of the acknowledgement that traditional political and administrative responsibilities according to sectors, NACE codes or territories can considerably hamper the necessary support of emerging industries, cross-sectorial and cross-regional collaboration. There is a special need to raise awareness, re-think traditional structures, but also to provide incentives for better coordination and collaboration of different governmental bodies, different departments or agencies. It would be beneficial to start a broad dialogue on new approaches relating to NACE classifications so that emerging industries could be much better spotted and analysed statistically. Also, it is necessary to provide an overview on a territory going beyond the sectorial expertise.

The potential means to implement this activity are related to raising awareness, providing political support based on incentives and close monitoring of progress in order to enable inter-governmental and cross-department collaboration. The coordination and creation of framework conditions for collaboration of economic development and innovation institutions can also be a solution, just like allowing and acknowledging the development of cross-industry clusters. Making use of initiatives like EEN, missions for growth can provide additional synergies.

4. Identification of cross-sector collaboration opportunities / international smart observation.

Policy makers could and should play a more proactive role in identifying and stimulating emerging industries, support the development of systematic analytic instruments to spot industrial/technological developments opening opportunities for emerging industries and to allow bottom-up developments. In order to make this happen it is important for regional actors/policy makers to attend (themselves and together with their clusters) match-making activities within RIS3 as well as networking activities where knowledge of common interest in existing and emerging industries can be discussed – at a regional, national and/or international level. By doing this policy makers and clusters might find a common path in cross-clustering activities which lead to enhanced international competitiveness.

Also related to this, the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) of Smart Specialisation Strategies in the regions should be a continuous effort, in which new breakout areas, technologies, subsectors are identified. However, it is important that policy makers care for only the framework of the EDP and let the broad range of stakeholders come to agreements on the new, promising segments of the regional economy.

5. Support the entrepreneurial education and culture ensuring the development of new value chains.

This could be achieved

- by encouraging the promotion of entrepreneurial and innovation culture and risk-taking attitudes in the business world (e.g. by hiring staff with different backgrounds or ensuring inter-disciplinary approaches in education systems),
- by enhancing the role of cluster organisations to support the development of new competences and skills needed by their members for entering new markets: training and coaching on e.g. competence analysis, market/trend analysis, business model development, etc. and
- by creating specific cross-sectorial services for start-ups and spin-offs.

II. II. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CROSS-CLUSTERING

1. Ensure the long-term commitment of cluster support.

It is unanimously agreed that short-term commitment affects the performance of clusters. Therefore it is most important to align cluster policies and programmes to the long-term perspective of smart specialisation and harmonise the operational timeframes. In addition to that, a reliable and lasting support action plan is needed so that stakeholders can count on when planning business both at European and national/regional levels.

2. Develop new financing mechanisms / cluster programmes supporting cross-sector collaboration.

This can be achieved through:

- new cross-cluster programmes; by encouraging cross-linking through new financing instruments based on a value chain approach also supporting the development of new value chains; by developing monitoring and evaluation criteria considering the development of a value chain or the cooperation between sectors;
- the development of innovative financing tools that stimulate and open cross-sector linkages (e.g. innovation vouchers);
- improvement of the access to risk finance.

3. Use public procurement as a driver of innovation.

Public procurement has already been identified as an instrument with a powerful potential to generate innovation, but it still remains difficult or it is not very widely known how to apply it in the most efficient and appropriate manner. It is important to create specific demand aggregation programmes, to generate common definitions of requirements for products/services, promotion of harmonized quality and regulatory standards. Inspiring examples brought into the partnership are the close collaboration of the Region of Southern Denmark with hospitals and the Welfaretech Cluster, the support of test-beds by TILLVÄXTVERKET, e.g. implemented in the Region Skane, and the training of public procurers developed by VINNOVA.

4. Coordination of funding schemes.

This recommendation has a major importance since it could

- foster connections between administrations/Ministries (A2A) : Cross-department collaboration of administrative departments, e.g. enabling funding for cross-sector collaboration projects of agricultural units and companies,
- enable collaboration with the agencies that attract foreign direct investment,
- spur new linkages, more funding opportunities available for feasibility studies, proof of new solutions and proof of cross-sectoral concept-type projects.

In the long run, trans-border coordination of funding schemes would be beneficial as well, e. g. in the form of simultaneously scheduled calls or even joint calls by authorities.

III. CROSS-CLUSTER INTERNATIONALISATION

I. Foster cross-sector cluster internationalisation strategies, along the value chain, and generation of critical mass.

The discussions related to this recommendation were carried around the good practice from ERAI concerning the IDP (International Development Plan), the joint initiative France Green Plastics and the developments generated by DG Enterprise & Industry in supporting the development of European Cluster Strategic Partnerships. Another possible activity to foster such strategies can be the organisation of peer learning workshops on new international linkages.

2. Support of international cross-fertilization processes and thematic platforms.

The development of a tool to identify strategic partners across sectors and regions through the RIS3 platform can have a positive impact on encouraging cooperation between European regions on common themes of their smart specialisation strategies. We also consider that a good coordination between the several European initiatives regarding internationalisation can be of benefit of such support processes.

3. Support of the development and carrying out (at regional/national/European level) of joint international collaboration activities between cluster members.

The support of the movement of entrepreneurs across borders (including facilitation of interaction with potential partners through clusters) can influence positively their international business developments. We also believe that it is important to provide holistic/integrated and sustainable support for SMEs going international (avoiding "one-shot" and facilitating the implementation of a strategy on the long-term, proposing a step-by-step process).

Conclusions:

Some of the above policy recommendations are already included in the regional implementation plans that the partners developed during the project lifetime and are reflected through different implementation measures. This demonstrates the commitment of the partners to strive for a further stage of cluster development, also by continuing the cooperation and the learning approaches that were at the core of the ClusteriX project, be it directly at bilateral level or entering together in new partnerships that envisage European territorial cooperation.