

News release: July 2018

Regional cluster meeting "Innovative Growth through Cluster Cooperation" was held on 6 of July in Varna, Bulgaria



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The event was organized by [Marine Cluster Bulgaria](#) together with [Green Synergy Cluster](#) and the [Association of Business clusters](#) and was aimed at bringing together cluster managers and representatives of institutions and businesses to discuss cluster policies, funding opportunities, and possible cooperations.

The program was divided into two main topics: "Innovative Growth: New Business Opportunities" and "Financial Support for Clusters". The first part presented Cluster Practices in Determining the Innovative Needs of SMEs within the cluster cooperation project in South East Europe - BLUE NET.

The opportunities of the '[Enterprise Europe Network](#)' Bulgaria: Prospects, Competitiveness and Innovation without Borders were presented, and then was given a good example of an innovative company [Sea Harmony](#)- a company from Varna that has developed innovation for artificial reefs.

Representative of the Bulgarian Furniture Cluster acquainted the participants with the project FORESDA – project that supports the transformation of traditional forest-based industries into sustainable manufacturing areas by an innovative cross-sectoral and transnational approach.

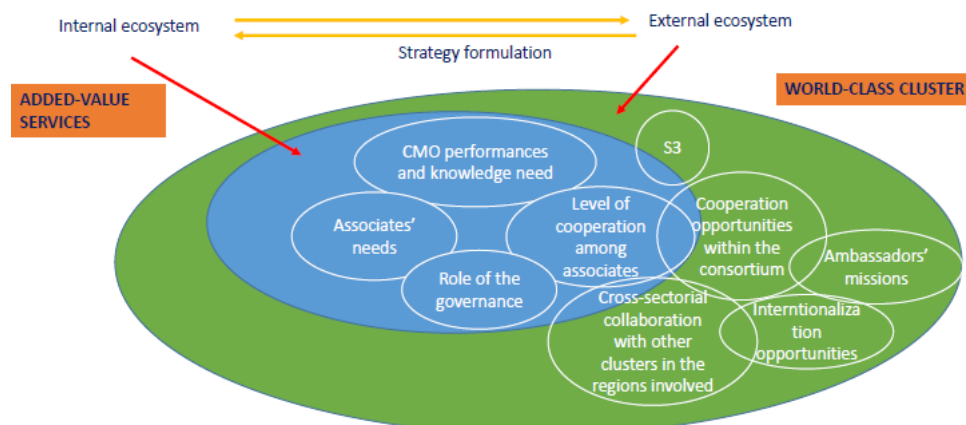
The regional cluster meeting continued with the topic of clusters' sustainability and a systematic approach to achieve cluster excellence presented through the **TRACE-KEI** project. The main objectives of the project for achieving **cluster excellence** and the ways to achieve them were presented:

- Enhancement of partners' management capacity by attending trainings, seminars and meetings with developed clusters
- Build and update long-term cluster strategies
- Developing new and improving existing services offered to cluster members by analyzing their needs and expectations

- Strengthen regional cluster development policies and initiatives by involving institutions at regional and national level

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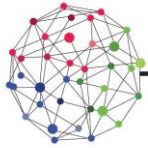
Key steps to achieve cluster excellence under the TRACE-KEI project:

- Identify knowledge gaps and improve the management experience, skills and knowledge of cluster managers
- To attract active participation and members of clusters and to analyze their needs, expectations and perceptions



- Encourage interaction between the cluster and the members as well as between the members themselves
- To promote interaction between clusters and institutions at local and national level
- Identify the role of clusters in the implementation of ISIS

The main findings of the **Grow Your Region** cluster conference, organized by the European Commission in November 2017, in Valencia were presented and discussed:



TracE-kEI



Green Synergy Cluster



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In the last part of the conference, representative of ABC presented news from European Cluster Development Policy and what mechanism will be used for cluster benchmarking. The upcoming call for innovative clusters under OPIC, which is expected to be open by the end of the year was also discussed – a suggestions and some concerns were written down for optimizing the submission procedure and the guidelines.

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