



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
ENTERPRISE AND INDUSTRY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

SMEs and Entrepreneurship
SMEs: Clusters & emerging Industries

Announcement

Stakeholder Workshop organised by the DG ENTR of the European Commission

Moving forward the EU policy agenda on cluster excellence

Lessons learned and new challenges at policy and operational level

Brussels, 23 September 2014

Venue: Thon Hotel EU, 75 Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat,
1040 Brussels, Belgium

The European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) co-financed by CIP during the period 2009-2012 was instrumental in promoting cluster management as a key element of the EU strategy aimed to develop more world-class clusters in the EU. In the new programming period 2014-2020, COSME will pursue these efforts on cluster excellence and a number of new Calls for proposals will be launched to provide more opportunities to European cluster organisations to benefit from the ECEI results on cluster benchmarking and cluster manager trainings. The objective of this workshop will be to debate on the next EU agenda on cluster excellence and in particular which additional activities might be worth to explore and implement under COSME both at policy and operational level.

Participation in this workshop is free and interested parties should register at:

ENTR-SMES-CLUSTERS-AND-EMERGING-IND@ec.europa.eu

In the subject line please indicate: **CLUSTER EXCELLENCE WORKSHOP 23/09/2014**

In the email you should provide your full name, title, function and organisation as well as your contact details (email & telephone).

In view of the limited number of places available (max. 100 participants), participation is restricted to max. two individuals from each organisation. The selection will be made on the basis of the date of registration, ensuring to the greatest extent possible a balanced geographical distribution.

The registration deadline is **12 September 2014**.

For the draft programme please see next page.

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ENTR-SMES-CLUSTERS-AND-EMERGING-IND@ec.europa.eu

Workshop

Moving forward the EU policy agenda on cluster excellence

Lessons learned and new challenges at policy and operational level

Brussels, 23 September 2014
Venue: Thon Hotel EU, 75 Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat,
1040 Brussels, Belgium

Objective

The **European Cluster Excellence Initiative** (ECEI) co-financed by CIP during the period 2009-2012 was instrumental in promoting cluster management as a key element of the EU strategy aimed to develop more world-class clusters in the EU. Today, more than 570 cluster organisations from 36 countries have benchmarked their cluster management performance using the ECEI methodology, and at the same time about 40 cluster instructors have been trained on how to improve the individual management skills of cluster managers. In the new programming period 2014-2020, COSME will pursue these efforts on cluster excellence and a number of Calls for proposals will be launched to give opportunities to additional European cluster organisations to benefit from the ECEI results. The objective of this workshop will be to debate on the **next EU agenda on cluster excellence** and in particular which **additional activities** might be worth to explore and implement under COSME both at policy and operational level.

Draft Programme

Moderator: **Dr. Gerd Meier zu Köcker**, VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH, DE

8:30-9:00	Registration & coffee	
9:00-9:15	Opening	Kirsi Ekroth-Manssila , European Commission

SESSION 1: UPDATED RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CURRENT ACTIVITIES ON CLUSTER EXCELLENCE

In 2013, two independent organisations have been established to follow up the work undertaken by European Cluster Excellence Initiative, namely, the:

- **European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis**¹ that is responsible for further improving and updating the benchmarking tool, and managing the cluster labelling process;

¹ <http://www.cluster-analysis.org/>

- **European Foundation for Cluster Excellence**² that is responsible for maintaining and updating the training materials, and organising trainings for cluster managers on specific topics.

Both organisations have been involved in a number of specific CIP activities on cluster excellence implemented through two CIP Calls for proposals. The **objective of this part** will be to take stock of the progress achieved so far, the lessons learned, as well as any improvements that can be done to increase the efficiency and impact of the work done so far. Furthermore, the main results of a recent study, including policy recommendations, evaluating the performance and impact of the EU activities on cluster excellence will be presented in this part.

Questions

- *What are main results achieved so far in the area of cluster excellence, what is the view of practitioners and users of these initiatives, and what can be improved?*
- *What are the lessons learned, and in particular, do cluster organisations need additional services to help them acquiring the next label of cluster excellence?*
- *What are the weakest areas with respect to cluster management observed so far and what training activities can be implemented to tackle this issue?*
- *Which indicators can be used by cluster organisations to better assess the impact of their management efforts to SMEs competitiveness?*

9:15-10:15	Key note presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Lämmer-Gamp, European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis • Reza Zadeh, European Foundation for Cluster Excellence • Alasdair Reid, Technopolis Group, Results from the "Evaluation and impact of the EU cluster excellence initiatives"
10:15-10:45	Panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Butler, North East Process Industry Cluster, UK • Zsuzsanna Pintér, INNOSKART cluster, HU
10:45-11:00	Q&A with the audience	

COFFEE BREAK

² <http://www.clusterexcellence.org/>

SESSION 2: FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXCELLENT BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES TO SMES THROUGH CLUSTERS

Many cluster organisations today are providing a number of business services to their SMEs to facilitate access to markets, access to finance, technology transfer etc., and increasingly position themselves as key agents for promoting re-industrialisation of their regions. For that, they develop specific services to foster for instance cross-sectoral cooperation, spot new business opportunities for their members and develop the necessary skills of their staff to successfully respond to such challenges. At the same time, others are struggling to develop from scratch similar services ignoring previous efforts and therefore waste time and resources. Thus, it would be worth and useful to all EU cluster organisations to have a typology of the best services provided today, which will inspire all interested cluster organisations and help them implementing such services in an efficient way. The **objective of this part** will be to discuss which would be the most promising business services to look at, which cluster organisations should be selected for this analysis, and which EU actions can be implemented at EU level such as a study and new type of projects putting in place mentoring (twinning) schemes between cluster organisations. A recent national-based study³ will be presented to shed some light on the type of business services that are currently provided, and the methodology that can be used for that purpose.

Questions:

- Which are the main and most promising business support services that EU cluster organisations offer today? Would it be useful to look also at cluster organisations outside the EU?
- Are there any emerging sector-specific needs of SMEs that could be addressed by new services and how this information can be collected at EU level for some sectors?
- Would it be necessary to launch specific actions under COSME 2015 to support mentoring (twinning) activities, including visiting schemes for cluster managers from less advanced to more advanced cluster organisations to learn how to develop excellent business services in their domain of interest?

11:30-12:00	Key note presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philippe Lefebvre, "Excellent business services through clusters: the French experience", French Cluster Observatory, FR
12:00-12:45	Panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Gottschald, Chemie-Cluster Bayern, DE

³ "Recueil de pratiques remarquables mises en œuvre par les pôles de compétitivité en matière d'actions d'accompagnement des PME et ETI."

http://competitivite.gouv.fr/documents/commun/Documentation_poles/etudes_rapports/Recueil-pratiques-poles-janvier-2014.pdf

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberto de Cominges Barreiro, CEAGA cluster, ES
12:45-13:00	Q&A with the audience	

LUNCH BREAK & COFFEE

SESSION 3: STRIVING FOR EXCELLENT CLUSTER POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

National and regional governments in the EU are interested today, more than ever before, to develop ambitious cluster policies and programmes. The question is how they can do that more efficiently taking into account their own regional priorities, specificities and time constraints. To deal with such issues, some first actions have been explored in the framework of the Nordic-German-Polish project⁴ (NGP) and a first version of a Stress Test for cluster policies⁵ has been developed. Moreover, the European Cluster Observatory currently works on the best policy framework conditions for facilitating the emergence of new industries through clusters, and this work will be tested in association with some EU regions selected on a voluntary basis (the so-called "model demonstrator regions"). The **objective of this part** will be to explore if it is necessary to pursue this work (by capitalising on the results obtained so far) and develop a benchmarking methodology for cluster policies as well as advisory services to cluster policy makers on how to develop excellent cluster policies always respecting their regional specificities.

Questions:

- *Would it be worth to take up the NGP results mentioned above and further work at EU level to develop a European benchmarking methodology for excellent cluster policies and programmes?*
- *What type of advisory services could be developed in the future to assist cluster policy makers to develop excellent cluster policies?*
- *What actions could be launched to encourage regional and national governments to incorporate into their programmes specific actions to support cluster excellence and thus get a bigger impact? What could be the role of the European Smart Specialisation Platform⁶ in this context?*

14:30-15:00	Short introduction to the cluster policy excellence activities currently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerd Meier zu Köcker, European Cluster Observatory
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⁴ <http://www.cluster-analysis.org/analysis-of-cluster-programmes-and-policies/the-perfect-cluster-programme>

⁵ <http://www.cluster-analysis.org/analysis-of-cluster-programmes-and-policies/stress-test-your-cluster-programme>

⁶ <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>

	developed under the European Cluster Observatory Key note presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morten Solgaard Thomsen, Ministry of Higher Education and Science, DK
15:00-16:00	Panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Wilson, Basque Institute of Competitiveness, ES • Jan Larosse, Department Economy-Science-Innovation, BE • Susanna Longo, Finpiemonte Spa, ACE EU-Project, IT • Xavier Roy, France Cluster, FR • Alasdair Reid, Technopolis Group, BE
16:00-16:15	Q&A with the audience	
16:15-16:30	Closing	Kirsi Ekroth-Manssila , European Commission

Target audience

The total number of participants would be around 100 including cluster policy makers, cluster managers and experts especially in the area of cluster management. The following representatives will be invited either as speakers, panellists or participants:

- Policy makers responsible for cluster policies and programmes at national and regional level, and cluster managers particularly from top performing cluster organisations;
- Representatives from the two generations of the CIP projects working on cluster excellence;
- Experts involved in the current evaluation of the EU cluster initiatives on cluster excellence and cluster internationalisation.