Becoming an ESCA expert for the benchmarking of cluster organisations

(Terms and Application Forms)

Dresden/Germany, March 02nd/03rd, 2017

ESCA – The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis

ESCA promotes cluster management excellence through benchmarking and labelling of cluster management organisations. Its experts have developed a methodology for cluster benchmarking that has been widely acknowledged in Europe and beyond. This methodology has informed the development of a cluster management quality scheme in the context of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI).

Since 2007 ESCA experts have benchmarked more than 900 cluster management organisations all over Europe and beyond in the context of various projects. The benchmarking is focused on the cluster management organisation that is responsible for managing the cluster and its activities and on the community of the cluster actors. Economic or other effects of the cluster on entire industrial sectors or the development of regional strengths cannot be reliably measured through benchmarking and are therefore not part of the analysis.

The benchmarking covers 40 questions/indicators that analyse the cluster and the cluster management organisation with regard to six dimensions, including the structure of the cluster, governance and strategy of the cluster, financing of the cluster management organisation, services provided by the cluster management organisation, contacts and interaction with relevant players.

Benchmarking for cluster analysis is based on a personal interview with the manager of a cluster management organisation. Conducted by an impartial benchmarking expert the interview (which takes about three hours) captures data on the different dimensions of the cluster. The data is compared to a portfolio of around 200+ clusters from different countries, regarding clusters in the same technology area, the same country (if enough data is available from the particular country), and particular excellence cases. The results of the analysis will draw a detailed picture of the cluster and the cluster organisation in comparison to its peers in terms of the structure of the cluster, cluster management and cluster governance, financing, services provided by the cluster management organisation and achievements of the cluster management organisation. Based on the findings recommendations for further action are made.

Besides organising the processes for cluster benchmarking and awarding the benchmarked cluster organisation with the "Cluster Management Excellence Label BRONZE – Striving for Cluster Excellence", ESCA as well manages the processes for assessing and awarding cluster organisations with the higher degree quality labels according to the ECEI methodology; the "Cluster Management Excellence Label SILVER – Dedicated to Cluster Excellence" and the "Cluster Management Excellence Label GOLD – Proven for Cluster Excellence".

Training of ESCA Benchmarking Experts

Cluster benchmarking interviews are conducted by specifically trained ESCA benchmarking experts. After such a theoretic and practical training the experts have basic background knowledge on the ECEI methodology and are able to conduct the benchmarking interviews and to discuss the results (being documented in a confidential benchmarking report provided by ESCA to the benchmarked cluster organisation) with the benchmarked cluster organisation. Being an ESCA benchmarking expert and having gained further practical experience next steps can be undertaken to become an ESCA GOLD expert for assessing cluster organisations regarding the higher stages of the ECEI labelling scheme.

ESCA experts always work in cooperation with ESCA headquarters. ESCA headquarters will provide all support related to data management and analysis and will assist the ESCA experts in their efforts wherever possible.

On March 02nd/03rd, 2017 ESCA organises a training workshop in Dresden/Germany for interested parties to become an ESCA expert. The training can only take place if a minimum of four trainees register and participate. Registrations are accepted on a "first come, first served" basis and the timely receipt of payment of the registration fee, as only a maximum of 7 trainees can participate.

In order to participate in the training candidates should fulfil the following requirements:

- Professional experience in cluster and/or network management and/or cluster policy or similar experiences (min. 2 years)
- Fluent English Language Skills (oral and written)
- Signed IP agreement with VDI/VDE-IT (to be signed by the employing organisation of the Benchmarking Expert and the Benchmarking Expert) – payment of the participation fee of the training sessions
- Good knowledge of national and European cluster landscape
- Awareness of individual potential conflicts of interest in relation to acting as a Benchmarking Expert

Participation fee is 750 EUR/trainee.

Upon successful participation in this training each participant will receive a certificate, will be listed as ESCA expert on the ESCA webpage, and is allowed to conduct benchmarking projects in collaboration with ESCA.

ESCA Director Foreseen to Conduct the Training

ESCA will send

Helmut Kergel, Director, European Secretariat for
Cluster Analysis and
Deputy Head of Section
"International Technology Cooperation and Clusters"
of VDI/VDE-IT

Helmut Kergel graduated from the Technical University of Berlin in 1986 (Diplom-Ingenieur) in precision engineering. Today he is deputy head of the department "International Technology Cooperation and Cluster" of VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH (VDI/VDE-IT) and director of the "European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA)".

VDI/VDE-IT is a leading service provider in the field of innovation and technology for customers in Germany and all over the world, providing assistance and counselling for the analysis, funding, and organisation of innovation and technology for clients with political, research, industry and finance backgrounds. Besides being involved in the management, coordination and evaluation of collaborative innovation projects on national and EU level, Helmut Kergel was/is as well responsible for a number of international innovation consulting and training projects in several countries, Europe and overseas.

Helmut Kergel was significantly involved in the development of indicators and processes for assessing cluster management quality and benchmarking methodologies in the context of the German program "Kompetenznetze Deutschland" (2007 – 2012), the Pan-European project "NGPExcellence" (2010 – 2011), the "European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI)" (2009 – 2012), and the European Cluster Observatory (since 2014). Since the end of 2011 he is appointed as director of ESCA, Besides coordinating the overall ESCA activities and performing assessments for cluster benchmarking and cluster management performance, Helmut Kergel is as well conducting the training measures for new ESCA experts, policy makers and cluster organisations.

Please see programme below for further details.

Programme

Mar 01, 2017, 20:30 – 22:00 h	**Informal Pre-Evening Get-Together**

Mar 02, 2017, 10:00 – 18:00 h   **Benchmarking Training – the Theory Part**
Introduction to cluster benchmarking and the European Cluster Excellence Initiative
- Cluster Management Excellence – Success Factor of Clusters
- Assessing Cluster Management Excellence – Methodologies and Tools
- Introduction to and discussion of the interview guideline and selected aspects of the data analysis and results presentation

Mar 02, 2017, 19:30 – 21:00 h   **Joint Dinner** (included in the registration fee)

Mar 03, 2017, 09:00 – 13:00 h   **Benchmarking Training – the Practical Part**
Real-life benchmarking interview with a cluster manager: Benchmarking of "Energy Saxony"

Mar 03, 2017, 14:00 – 16:00 h   **Final discussion – De-briefing**
Discuss your experiences with the trainer, further procedures

Location of the Training:

VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH
Office Dresden
Kramergasse 2 (walking distance from main train station)
01067 Dresden

Local contact:
Christiane Demmler
Phone +49 351 486797-10
E-mail: christiane.demmler@vdivde-it.de

Registration form for trainees
(one per person, please make copies):
Mar 02nd/03rd, 2017, Dresden/Germany

First name/surname

Organisation

VAT-no. of organisation
(if available for
international use)

Street address

Postal/zip code

City

Country

Telephone

Fax

E-mail

Signature and date

- Please attach a current CV indicating your qualifications and professional experiences in the area of cluster management and/or cluster policies.

- Please note that it is mandatory to sign an IP agreement (see enclosure) regarding the ESCA benchmarking methodology and its use prior to the training.

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Please call +49 30 31 00 78-154 if you need further information.

Further Important Information

ESCA will collect registrations for the training. In the moment the minimum participation is ensured, ESCA will confirm the registration in written form and will as well send an invoice. The decision whether the training takes place will be made on February 22nd, 2017, the latest. Please go ahead with booking any travel only when you have received a confirmation from ESCA that the minimum number of trainees has registered and the training takes place!

Logistics – Travel to Dresden

Dresden can be reached by train (Dresden main station) and by air (Dresden airport). Hotel recommendation will be given together with the confirmation that the training takes place. The location where the training will be held is in walking distance from the main station.

Another (rather low-cost) possibility for reaching Dresden is to fly to Berlin SXF (https://www.berlin.de/en/airports-and-stations/1872375-2932875-airport-berlin-schoenefeld-sxf.en.html) and to take a coach (www.flixbus.de) directly from the airport to Dresden main station (approx. 2 h travel time, about 9 busses per day). There also is a hotel directly at SXF airport in case an overnight stay is necessary at the airport (https://www.intercityhotel.com/en/hotels/all-hotels/germany/berlin/intercityhotel-berlin-brandenburg-airport).