



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Crossing Borders: Instruments of Interregional Collaboration

Summary



EU Clusters Talks
22 March 2023, 8:30 – 9:45 CET

An initiative of the European Union





Crossing Borders: Instruments of Interregional Collaboration

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform organised this EU Clusters Talk on 22 March 2023, 8:30 – 9:45 CET, to discuss about different instruments of public funding to support interregional collaboration, suggestions on how to improve them, and the role of clusters.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderation: Jennifer Baker

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Industrial Forum: Enhancing cross-border and cross-ecosystem investments
Benoit Esmanne, Policy Officer, DG GROW, European Commission
INTERREG
Estelle Roger, Programme Manager, DG REGIO, European Commission
Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument
Milena Stoyanova, Project Adviser, EISMEA, European Commission
3. Panel debate
Aitor Mintegui, EU Affairs Officer, Basque Country Delegation to the EU
Mervi Karikorpi, Head of EU Innovation & Industrial Policy, Technology Industries of Finland
Marielle Campanella, Head of European Projects, Pôle SCS
1. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Interregional collaboration can help de-risk investments and help with the industrial deployment of new and disruptive technologies.
- The collaboration between the public and private sector is getting more important.
- Valuable instruments for interregional collaboration are the European Innovation Fund, I3 Instrument, cascade funding projects and ClusterXChange programme.
- Usually, collaboration partners are not found in the bordering country, but along the value chain.
- There is a suggestion to have cluster representation in programme committees to strengthen the alignment with the company needs and plans.



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

After the introduction by moderator Jennifer Baker, the following news items were presented:

1. Successful first Cluster Booster Academy with 27 cluster managers from more than 20 European countries took place on 2-3 March 2023.
2. Register now for Clusters meet Regions & Matchmaking in Finland on 25-27 April 2023.
3. Two upcoming outgoing matchmaking events will take place in Morocco and Taiwan at the end of May 2023.
4. Training session on “Environmental, social, and corporate governance: Company reporting and financial providers’ approach to sustainable investments” on 27 March 2023

2. Introduction from the European Commission

Benoit Esmanne, Policy Officer, DG GROW, European Commission

The Industrial Forum is an expert group that gathers all representatives from the industry on European level. It assists the Commission in the implementation of policies and programmes. There is a dedicated **task force for cross-border cooperation and investment**. They work on a report on priority areas for cross-border cooperation, which are **production and use of renewable energy, digital solutions for circularity, and micro-electronics**. It is interesting for the Commission to learn about **concrete project proposals** that demonstrate that cross-border ecosystem collaboration works and what industrial stakeholders can do to help reach the objectives of the European policies.

Estelle Roger, Programme Manager, DG REGIO, European Commission

The **Interreg** programme is the main instrument to cooperate across borders under the cohesion policy. There are 86 programmes with a funding of 10 billion EUR. Interreg gives a **cooperation framework** for national, regional, and local actors. The focus is on the green and digital transition. The **policy objective 1 is of particular interest for clusters**, as it supports the cluster policies. All programmes and calls can be found on www.interreg.eu. She presents the policy learning platform, where clusters can find relevant policy briefs, events, and a good practice database.

Several programmes mention **cluster organisations specifically as target groups**, e.g., Interreg Central Europe or Interreg North-West Europe. There are six examples of cooperation projects addressing cluster policies, which together joined 57 partners from 19 Member States. Among the first projects from the Interreg Europe call, the projects DEBUTING and AccelerateGDT are addressing clusters.

The second Interreg Europe call with a budget of 130 million EUR is now open for applications until 9 June 2023.

Milena Stoyanova, Project Adviser, EISMEA, European Commission

She presents the **Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) instrument**, a new instrument of the cohesion policy to **scale up innovation projects** for the development of European value chains. It is a place-based programme, so the location to be supported is of particular interest. The instrument seeks



an interregional quadruple helix ecosystem, including researchers, businesses, civic society, and public administrations. Clusters are well positioned as **bridge builders** for all these actors.

The I3 Instrument was created to increase the competitiveness and resilience of EU value chains and has the specific objectives of **interconnecting regional innovation ecosystems**, supporting demonstration, commercialisation and scale-up of interregional investments, and creating synergies with other EU programmes and strategic priorities.

There are **upcoming calls in May/June and autumn 2023** in three thematic areas, which are digital transition, green transition, and smart manufacturing. The calls are divided into strands: support for investments in interregional innovation projects in shared smart specialisation areas; support for investments in interregional innovation projects for the development of value chains in less developed regions; and capacity building for the development of clue chains in less developed areas.

3. Panel debate

The discussion among the panellists focuses on the advantages of interregional collaboration, the effectiveness of different funding programmes, governance models, and how to measure the performance of interregional collaboration.

All panellists see **clear advantages of interregional collaboration for the green and digital transition**. Aitor Mintegui highlights that there is a huge need for investment and to develop new technologies and green business models. The current investment landscape is fragmented. Interregional collaboration can **help de-risk investments** and help with the industrial deployment of new and disruptive technologies. For regions, it can be instrumental to have access to specific research centres, demonstrators, and infrastructures that are only available in your partner regions.

Mervi Karikorpi adds that we see increased political tension and competition in the world that reveal market failures. Projects of common European interest can address those market failures. She confirms that the **collaboration between the public and private sector is getting more important** to scale up innovation for the green and digital transition.

Marielle Campanella explains that as a cluster, one of the key goals is to support their members in their growths, which can happen when they leave the regional borders. For example, they push companies to collaborate with others through financial support of the DREAM Eurocluster. One of the Eurocluster's goals is to demonstrate how digital technologies can reduce resources in manufacturing processes. Clusters help find the **right partners** for the companies from other regions and countries.

Talking about the effectiveness of funding instruments, Aitor Mintegui shares that the Vanguard Initiatives values the **I3 instrument**, as the collaboration is designed along the value chains. He explains that in many cases, collaboration partners are not found in the country with which you share a border, but **along the value chain**. In addition, he sees the **INNOSUP cluster-facilitated projects** as an interesting instrument. From the Vanguard Initiative perspective, they work on collaboration based on smart specialisation strategies.

Mervi Karikorpi shares the companies' point of view, which starts from their value chains and explores which kind of business and networks they want to build in the future. She supports instruments that follow this **network approach**. From a regional point of view, regions want to have successful



companies located in their territory. For example, the **European Innovation Fund** can work well for regions that have companies that plan major investments. Due to these different approaches, we should look at the whole landscape of instruments and use a mix.

Marielle Campanella agrees that INNOSUP was a successful tool, which is now continued to a reduced extent in the Euroclusters programme. In addition, she speaks about the **ClusterXChange programme**. Its goal is to support cluster members in building relationships with other cluster members in other regions. Clusters are funded to elaborate missions into other ecosystems. This exchange is a success if you find the right companies, however, the administrative processes are too heavy.

Looking at the governance model for interregional collaboration, Aitor Mintegui highlights the importance of **public-private collaboration**. He states that it would be good to have **cluster representation in the programme committees** to represent the private side. At regional level, they try to involve the quadruple helix, e.g., for the definition of the smart specialisation strategies. He is in favour to have the private side more integrated into the governance structure at European level.

Mervi Karikorpi says that the governance models should take into account the need to foster public and private investments in a short time frame. For example, cluster organisations have a good overview on business plans and where companies could commit to major investments – a potential that should be used. In the long term, we need a **wider involvement of different stakeholders**, including RTOs that understand which disruptive technologies will come to the market.

Marielle Campanella shares the example of the Silicon Europe Alliance, a **network of networks** around microelectronics and IT technologies. Via the alliance and the shared trust, they can interconnect their ecosystems across the different countries for new business relations. They are also engaged on policy level, e.g., they developed a position paper for the Chips Act, and they supported the creation of the Alliance of EU regions for microelectronics. Aitor Mintegui agrees that the **mindset of creating alliances** is the way forward. Networks of networks allow combining capabilities on your own regional level with skills from other regions.

Regarding how to measure the performance of collaboration, Mervi Karikorpi states that the sustainability challenge defines the main KPIs. Based on the feedback from their company members, the European Innovation Fund has positives outcomes as it combines the macro policy level with a bottom-up approach of company solution.

Marielle Campanella explains that their cluster monitors the development of the company consortium after the cascade funding programme has ended. They check whether the funding has helped create **new partnerships** in new markets.

According to Aitor Mintegui, key performance indicators could be the volume of investment, number of new technologies in products, new services and business models, number of collaborations, or CO2 emissions.

Regarding the improvement of EU instruments, he shares that the IPCEIs (Important Projects of Common European Interest) are slow to be implemented and insufficiently focused on SMEs. A new collaborative framework at EU level could allow clusters, SMEs, and knowledge institutes to work together. They should be exempted from State Aid as it is the case for IPCEIs.



Closing the debate, Mervi Karikorpi adds that we should look at how can we increase the European added value globally in the longer term.

4. Funding opportunities

Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Closing the EU Clusters Talk, Nina Hoppmann shares the following examples of funding opportunities:

1. Interreg Europe: [Call for proposals for interregional cooperation projects](#); Deadline: 9 June 2023
2. [Support to Ukrainian companies to integrate into the Single Market](#); Deadline: 27 April 2023, Info Day on 3 April 2023
3. [Support to Ukrainian entrepreneurs - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#); Deadline: 11 May 2023, Info Day on 27 March 2023
4. [Clusters meet Regions: European Clusters Integrating Ukrainian clusters and companies into the EU value chains](#). Unique opportunity to build EU-Ukrainian business relations, and to find partners to trade and invest; 29-30 March 2023
5. Funding instruments for innovation: Explained in [C2Lab input paper](#)