

INTEGRATING CLUSTER POLICIES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION PLAN

NEEDS FOR STRONGER EUROPEAN COOPERATION AND CONCRETE ACTIONS TO DEVELOP AND LEVER
EXCELLENT CLUSTERS IN EUROPE FOR THE BENEFIT OF COMPANIES

TACTICS VIEWS ON THE FUTURE EUROPEAN INNOVATION PLAN

The TACTICS INNO-Net is carried out by a consortium of leading European national and regional public authorities and innovation funding agencies responsible for the design and implementation of cluster support programmes in their respective countries/regions. The project is coordinated by OSEO from France and involves as partners: VINNOVA from Sweden, TMG from Austria, Northwest Development Agency from the UK, IWT from Belgium, Veneto Innovazione from Italy, and PAED from Poland.

The TACTICS consortium aims, with the assistance of a Reflection Group composed of external policy makers, at driving forward the European Cluster Alliance established in 2006 under the PRO INNO Europe and gathering more than 80 public bodies supporting cluster initiatives. The main objective is to develop better cluster policies and practical tools in the EU in the coming years for the benefit of European enterprises. The Reflection Group will provide the European Cluster Alliance with advice on policy actions and concrete incentives on various cluster policy issues over the next 3 years.

Based on the work already achieved by the European Cluster Alliance during the last three years, TACTICS aims to become the laboratory for the development and testing of new cluster and innovation concepts and initiatives in the EU. It will design new schemes and policy incentives in view of developing better Cluster policies to support European companies.

INNOVATION POLICIES SHOULD ADDRESS THE CHANGING ROLE OF CLUSTERS TO FACILITATE THE EMERGENCE OF NEW COMPETITIVE INDUSTRIES IN EUROPE

The TACTICS INNO-Net partners welcome the European Commission Communication on Innovation¹ and the Commission Communication on world-class clusters in the EU². As stated in the Commission's review of Community innovation policy, innovation is the driver that will shape the European vision of growth and prosperity.

In addition, the TACTICS partners fully support the policy agenda outlined in the European Cluster Memorandum. This memorandum was endorsed by 60 public bodies representing executing agencies at regional and national levels aiming at promoting European innovation through clusters.

Globalisation (and other forces) have changed the way that knowledge flows today. In the past, knowledge was developed and transferred by people in a rather limited geographical space. Today, knowledge flows across innovation networks and territorial space without borders, which has many implications on the way we think about clusters and cluster policy for the benefit of European competitiveness.

Clusters play an important role as hubs for networking and exchange of knowledge – particularly the “sticky” or tacit knowledge that can only be transferred via people-to-people contacts. As innovation processes become increasingly open, firms, universities and other innovation actors are looking for efficient ways to access globally-dispersed knowledge and collaborate with these specialised knowledge hubs – wherever in the world they are located. Innovation actors are also seeking new ways to access knowledge and involve user communities and innovative SMEs more actively in the innovation process.

Cluster organisations can be helpful facilitators of knowledge exchange and international cluster cooperation. With their proximity to firms, they can help identify relevant partners and initiate trust-building processes. Cluster organisations can also play a role in involving SMEs which have more difficulties to develop international cooperation. Institutionalised support in the partner country is desirable to provide in-country knowledge and contacts, and help to coordinate efforts.

This “new nature of innovation” requires different kinds of support and facilitation mechanisms for (and through) clusters and their members. Cluster policies should support efforts to address new needs, including: strengthening international cooperation, communicating niche strengths and branding, involving users in a more integrated fashion, and developing new service concepts and business models. They can play a role in facilitating opportunities based on technological convergence to meet new market needs.

¹ Reviewing Community innovation policy in a changing world, COM(2009) 442

Cluster policies should also address the need to evaluate cluster excellence and use European Research and Innovation funding more efficiently.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE TACTICS INNO-NET ON THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION PLAN

TACTICS' partners wish to stress the important role that clusters can play as the new innovation ecosystems in Europe and act as implementation channels for delivering efficient Research development and Innovation support.

To this end, cluster support should be an integral part in the forthcoming European Innovation Plan addressing the following main issues:

- Fostering international cluster cooperation;
- Evaluating cluster excellence;
- Supporting cluster marketing and branding;
- Using excellent clusters to address emerging industries including innovative services;
- Channelling RDI funding through excellent clusters;
- User-driven excellent clusters.

In particular the TACTICS project would encourage:

- Further integrating cluster policies within European competitiveness policies (industrial and innovation policies)
- Reviewing cluster support at EU level including new funding approaches, streamlining EU instruments and exploiting complementarities with national and regional programmes (structural funds, regional and national innovation strategies ..)
- Exploiting synergies with other EU initiatives (such as the Regions of Knowledge, INTERREG the EIT and the different JTIs...), as well as with European innovation agencies networks such as TAFTIE, EURADA,
- Channelling EU research and technological development funding and innovation support through clusters
- Stimulating innovative SMEs growth through clusters
- Introducing SMEs in new markets and more added value activities through transnational cluster cooperation
- Exploring new approaches to help cluster members and especially SMEs access finance to facilitate their growth
- Strengthening the international visibility, competitiveness and attractiveness of clusters, possibly through the creation of "clusters of clusters"
- Supporting trans-national cooperation between clusters from the same or different business sectors

- Encouraging the upgrading and excellence of cluster policies in Europe, particularly by supporting clusters in emerging sectors of high economic potential such as eco-innovation or through technology or services convergence such as e health;
- Continuing to develop better framework conditions for firms in Europe and removing existing legal and budgetary barriers preventing cross-border cluster cooperation
- Using clusters to help drive forward innovative public procurement solutions
- Exploring new approaches for the development of “macro-regions” in Europe through cluster cooperation, following the example set by the BSR INNO-Net in preparation of the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan
- Facilitating linkages with cluster policy initiatives in EU neighbouring countries, for instance around the Mediterranean rim and other relevant areas.

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2. VINNOVA-Sweden



3. TMG –Austria



4. NWDA- UK



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