Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference - 20 January 2015, Porto

Parallel Session C4: Blue Economy

"Liverpool, global maritime knowledge hub for Atlantic stakeholders"

Organiser: Liverpool John Moores University

1. Ian Jenkinson, Director of the School of Engineering, Technology and Maritime Operations, Liverpool John Moores University
2. Chris Shirling – Rooke, Mersey Maritime
3. Tine Viveka Westerberg, Vestfold University College (Apologies)
4. Dimitrios Paraskevadakis, Logistics Offshore and Maritime Research Institute, Liverpool John Moores University

1. Key messages

Workshop's three key messages:

1. There is a need to create the infrastructure (R&D, education, and business) around a knowledge based model of industrial development in order to grow existing maritime clusters especially SMEs to achieve high levels of growth in the blue economy in Atlantic Area, and there are significant benefits in developing knowledge sharing between clusters in different regions
2. Leadership training and development programmes designed for employees in cluster SME's has a valuable role alongside a business support programme in leveraging the benefits of a knowledge cluster
3. Blue economy is interconnected for example tourism and leisure, maritime heritage have a role to play in creating an environment which will attract skilled labour but they also help in promoting the region to international business stakeholders.

2. Summary

Summary of presentations:

Presentation 1: A vision for an Atlantic Maritime Knowledge Hub

Professor Ian Jenkinson, Liverpool John Moores University

Professor Jenkinson presented an overview of the existing Maritime Knowledge Hub in the Liverpool City Region and also proposed the team's vision for the development of an Atlantic Maritime Knowledge Cluster that will address the lack of leadership training and skills development in the sector. More specifically Professor Jenkinson highlighted the need to support innovation in SMEs and address skills shortages and skill gaps in the Atlantic Area using the knowledge cluster model which will strengthen the economy and society. Whether these networks would be actively promoted or arise from economic activity or both, the fact of the matter is that clusters have the potential to become significant economic systems and should not stop at the borders between the countries of the Atlantic area.

Presentation 2: Liverpool city region's Mersey maritime cluster

Chris Shirling-Rooke, CEO Mersey Maritime

Mr Chris Shirling-Rooke described in his presentation the role of the Mersey Maritime cluster in supporting: the growth of business (particularly SMEs) in the Liverpool city region, industrial renewal, and regional structural change and competitiveness. He described the various ways that strong partnerships with local and national government, the Port of Liverpool, key maritime stakeholders and supply chains allow the Mersey Maritime to support the maritime cluster through business development, collaboration networks, skills brokerage, access to finance and other bespoke assistance.

Presentation 3: Best practise in Norwegian Maritime Clusters

Tine Viveka Westerberg, Vestfold University College

Tine Viveka's presentation was delivered by Professor Ian Jenkinson who explained to the audience how cluster management is practised in the Norwegian maritime sector and also how networking and cooperation is facilitated by providing a wide range of business and related services. Similarly in Norway with the increasing recognition of the crucial role that knowledge clusters can, and do, play in raising levels of innovation and business performance, it is important that more emphasis is placed on developing the model at a European level particularly between countries and regions with similar industrial clusters.

Presentation 4: Transnational collaboration for the development of a joint Maritime cluster for the Atlantic area

Dimitrios Paraskevadakis, Liverpool John Moores University

Mr Dimitrios Paraskevadakis' presentation dealt with the questions of how to achieve transnational collaboration in the Atlantic area and how to realise the potential of clusters and cluster organisations. He also explained the Atlantic Action plan's framework for transnational collaboration in detail and also proposed a new project idea that would bring together clusters from different regions with their peers from the same or related sectors, in order to develop joint internationalisation strategies targeting specific to the development of a strategic European maritime cluster.

3. Questions and answers

The following important questions emerged from the discussion period following the presentation:

What lessons can be learned from the Liverpool maritime cluster in order to develop a new European maritime cluster strategy in the Atlantic Area?

Answer: *The main objective of the proposed Atlantic Knowledge Maritime Cluster project is to intensify cluster and business network collaboration across the Atlantic area. The concept is to bring together business cluster organisations representing large numbers of SMEs with University's and other education and training organisations in order to effectively: support innovation in SMEs through collaborative research and development and knowledge sharing; address the shortage of high-level technical skills; and deliver to SMEs within the Atlantic cluster; business support, leadership development, and a platform for cooperation. The goal for the project partners to lead a strategy for industrial development based on maritime knowledge clusters*

What is the Liverpool cluster doing to improve collaboration with other clusters in the EU and Internationally?

Answer: *Both Liverpool John Moores University and Mersey Maritime are linked to national and international organisations. For example the University is member of an international network of maritime Universities represented by the International Association of Maritime Universities, and Mersey Maritime has numerous links to EU and international business. By linking maritime clusters in the Atlantic Area the proposed project will address many of the current deficiencies in terms of knowledge sharing and cooperation at a European and international level.*

What trends and challenges need to be considered in order to put in place a favourable cluster environment that helps SMEs to unlock blue growth in the Atlantic Area?

Answer: *Clusters can act as real catalysts for SMEs supporting business development and to help them to gain access to global value chains and to develop long-term strategic partnerships. SMEs in the Atlantic Area need increasingly to integrate their activities into global value chains in order to become and remain competitive and grow.*

Have in the past any similar projects been performed in the Atlantic Area?

Answer: *Indeed efforts have been made in the past to develop projects that would reflect various initiatives of super clusters in the region. Some of the outputs produced provide a very good platform on which to build on a new project with activities that will enable cluster organisations to benchmark current performance using European quality management frameworks for cluster excellence.*

4. Follow up

1. Organise a workshop in Liverpool hosted by Liverpool John Moores University and Mersey Maritime with potential cluster partners and focal point representatives to develop the project idea and circulate a draft proposal with work packages and actions. (March 2015)

2. Finalise proposal agreed (May 2015)

3. Submit a proposal for a workshop at the European Maritime day 2015 (28-29th May) in Pireaus, Greece.

5. Next Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference

Would you be interested in reporting back on the progress made since Porto at the next Atlantic Stakeholder Conference, which is to take place towards the end of 2015 (date and place TBC)? **Yes**