Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference - 20 January 2015, Porto

D3 - Knowledge clusters to drive investment and employment

Knowledge clusters can enable investment and employment within the implementation of the Atlantic Action Plan. This workshop will explore specific actions that clusters can undertake to mobilise innovation capacity in Atlantic growth markets.

Organiser: Marine South East

1. Jonathan Williams (Marine South East)
2. Carla Domingues (OCEANO XXI)
3. Phil Monbet (Pole Mer Bretagne Atlantique)
4. Cristina Quelle (Campus do Mar)

1. Key messages

<u>High-level leadership is needed to reinforce commitment to Atlantic Area investment potential</u>

There is a widely-held view that the leadership role performed by DG Mare in the development of the Atlantic Action Plan has been highly influential. Continuing EC leadership (from DG Regio, DG Research as well as DG Mare) could be similarly powerful in attracting commitment to the Atlantic Action Plan.

Although growth in SMEs is seen as a political priority, large companies in a region have a critical leadership role to play. Their participation can provide credibility to a project, and they can often exert considerable supply chain pressure. Most big companies (IBM, Siemens, DCNS etc) are multinational and have a greater interest in projects focused on specific growth markets, and promoted by Government bodies, than in generalised regional initiatives.

<u>Formation and operation of a 'meta cluster' could bring multiple benefits</u>

All regions recognise in principle the value of inter-cluster cooperation, both to avoid fragmented investment and to allow promotion of the sea-basin capabilities in a unified way, but there is no common understanding of how that cooperation could best be mobilised.

A 'meta cluster' structure could provide a vehicle for such strategic cooperation, including reaching agreement on value chain definitions so that regional capacities can be analysed and integrated. This work can build on value chain and facility analysis already performed by some clusters. A meta cluster could also build on recent projects such as Atlantic Power Cluster (APC) activities under the Atlantic Action Plan implementation.

<u>Policy alignment and common tools between regions would assist investment</u>

Volatility in policies to support blue growth (eg energy subsidies) is a major barrier to investment in deployment of novel technologies, and equally in building a globally credible capability. If all the

Atlantic Area clusters were able to lobby their respective Governments, and the European Parliament, with one voice, this would be more influential than each cluster presenting its own, discrete case to their own regional authority. In particular the SME engagement of the clusters, collectively, would be very influential on policy makers.

Given the importance of the civic society stakeholders, there is a requirement for socio-economic impact assessment tools. These would provide an evidence base for public engagement, to secure support from civic society and ensure that major developments are not obstructed by adverse publicity.

2. Summary

Jonathan Williams (MSE) presented an overview of the blue economy and highlighted the Blue Growth priorities of particular relevance to the Atlantic Action Plan. He also outlined how investment in Blue Growth can be stimulated by regional knowledge clusters, drawing on the REMCAP project, and gave some examples of cluster activities that target parts of the value chain having strong growth and employment potential.

Phil Monbet (PMBA) presented the specific potential of marine and offshore renewable energy in Atlantic member states, highlighting the distinction between the offshore wind, tidal turbine and wave energy markets. He gave some examples of companies engaged in building capacity in these growth sectors, listed some of the innovation priorities, but also detailed some of the sources of uncertainty affecting investment.

Carla Domingues (OceanoXXI) presented the specific potential of the aquaculture growth market, highlighting the global growth trends in seafood consumption coupled with limited (and diminishing) production in Europe. She detailed some key innovation priorities that can help to address this widening gap, and also emphasised the potential role of offshore aquaculture as a means of addressing the restrictions on near-shore fish farming.

Finally Cristina Quelle (Forum do Mar) presented the important roles of educational and research institutions in supporting the investment needed in the blue economy. She emphasised the need for increased collaboration between institutions, each drawing on its specialist strengths, to enable effective innovation. She also detailed the importance of investment in skills, for example through apprenticeships and higher level degree programmes.

3. Questions and answers

A key topic was the nature and structure of future cooperation-building among Atlantic Area knowledge clusters. There appears to be a strong view that clusters currently operate in a fragmented way, focused on the priorities of their funders, but with inadequate recognition of the wider sea-basin potential.

It was suggested that it may be possible to adapt experience gained in the Baltic Sea Region, particularly regarding formation of the Submariner grouping, but ideally with a greater engagement of business. For example, a common innovation support framework across the Atlantic Area could enable collaborative projects involving partners from the meta-cluster. In this context, the Atlantic

Action Plan involves a wider extent of regions than is covered by the Atlantic Interreg programme (eg APC project), and some expansion of participation may be beneficial.

Links with large companies would be more valuable if developed on a trans-national basis. Most big companies (IBM, Siemens, DCNS etc) are multinational to it makes no sense to engage with them on several regional fronts.

4. Follow up

The following actions will be discussed further among the Atlantic maritime clusters and other stakeholders, with a view to implementing them during 2015:

1. Refinement of a collaborative project to be submitted under the Atlantic Area Interreg Vb Programme, based upon the earlier activities progressed under the E-CASI (European Clusters for Atlantic Strategy Implementation) and the APC (Atlantic Power Clusters) project.

2. Definition of a proposed meta-cluster comprised of clusters across the Atlantic Area, to form a legal entity that can adopt a leadership role in aligning regional policies and promotion of capabilities internationally, learning from the experience in the Baltic Sea Region.

3. Developing with regional bodies options for integration of regional financing resources (eg using ESIF), to create an Atlantic sea-basin fund to support collaborative activities in the marine energy and offshore aquaculture growth markets.

5. Next Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference

Yes, the participating clusters would be interested in reporting back on the progress made since Porto at the next Atlantic Stakeholder Conference.