

New dimensions for cluster policy

The strategic project CluStrat celebrates its impact at the final conference in Venice

“When starting the project 3 years ago we stepped into unknown land. Today we can say that each partner region has explored the land, laid new seeds and even started harvesting”, said Dr. Petra Püchner, Managing Director of Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum who is coordinating the project. On 18 September 2014, the consortium of CluStrat has shared its results with an international audience of close to 120 participants during the project’s final conference in Venice.

Within the 3 emerging industries of active and healthy ageing, green economy / sustainable development and sustainable / intelligent mobility, the EU-funded project CluStrat has developed new pathways for clusters and innovation policy makers to exploit the related opportunities. The impact of the project becomes visible in each project region. CluStrat has helped to raise awareness of the new opportunities implied by emerging industries for the regions, and the promising role clusters can play in exploiting these opportunities. New approaches on how to activate the potentials of clusters with a view to emerging industries have been designed by cluster policy makers and practitioners, and translated into new actions and measures that were tested in several pilot actions.

The impact of CluStrat is manifold, reflecting the regional diversity across central Europa. For instance, a joint methodology to set up new clusters which live up to the challenges of emerging industries and issues was developed and implemented, leading to new clusters and cooperation in several central European regions. Thus, a new cluster on social innovation was established in the Czech Moravian-Silesian Region. In the region of Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic, a cluster in spa and balneology was prepared, while in Slovakia, an innovation partnership on agriculture and sustainable landscape on regional policy level was launched.

Moreover, a variety of new cross-sector collaborations within, among and beyond clusters were triggered. For instance, in the Italian regions of Veneto, Piemonte and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, a new cross-sector cluster on smart home and housing was prepared. In Baden-Württemberg, the project led to the launch of a new, industry driven cross-sector platform in the field of smart home and living through the Ministry of Finance and Economics Baden-Württemberg. New transnational C2C matchmaking formats were tested at European fairs, including the MEDICA in Düsseldorf and the IFAT in Munich. A strategic partnership on light weight was triggered among Saxony, Upper Silesia, Upper Austria and Slovakia, and new measures for bringing key-enabling technology knowledge to the clusters and their members were developed.

A systemic and cross-disciplinary mind-set and a challenge-driven approach to cluster policy have thus emerged and gradually been taken up in the regions. This novel orientation goes hand in hand with the Smart Specialization Strategies in the region, and supports their effective delivery. “Boosting emerging industries identified during CluStrat Project – i.e. active ageing, green economy and sustainable mobility – and fostering fertilization between them and traditional manufacturing sectors, even now characterizing the central Europe area and above all Veneto Region, means to develop new and more competitive cluster concepts. They have to be based on smart specialisation strategies, enhancing cross-fertilisation between traditional production sectors and technological and innovative ones. CluStrat project has been a great opportunity to work together and exchange

experiences with partners, becoming also a testing ground to develop a new regional law on clusters and able to better support innovation and anticipate new trends” said Mr Antonio Bonaldo, Director of Research and Innovation Dept. Veneto Region, who was hosting the conference and had coordinated the joint strategy development in the project as a work package leader.

Background information

CluStrat is a strategic innovation project implemented through the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The consortium convenes 18 organizations from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Seven institutions from Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Ukraine are involved as associated partners without financial contribution. The three years project has started in October 2011. CluStrat is coordinated by Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum in close coordination and with financial support from the Ministry of Finance and Economics Baden-Württemberg.

Further information: www.clustrat.eu

Participating organisations: <http://clustrat.eu/consortium/partners/>

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