

RETHINKING INNOVATION

DANISH CLUSTERS' RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS



Like the rest of the world, clusters are also affected by the corona crisis. Right now, they are taking action to mitigate the sudden changes which many member companies are experiencing in the current situation. Some services and activities change, new ones are added, and others suddenly become irrelevant.

At a series of virtual knowledge sharing meetings facilitated by Cluster Excellence Denmark, the Danish clusters have shared national as well as international experiences and discussed how they can support companies in this difficult time.

There appear to be four current trends:

Clusters are adapting already planned activities to the new situation:

The authorities' guidelines are followed. Cluster employees work from home but are available to the members. Activities planned before the crisis are adapted to the situation and the new way of life. Some activities are postponed, others are canceled, and many are digitalized.

Clusters develop new activities that can support companies:

There is a difference in how the corona crisis affects clusters' ecosystems across sectors. The Danish clusters show agility in relation to the new situation, and together with their member companies they are in the process of developing and implementing new activities that can support businesses: From innovation collaborations with the healthcare sector, over handheld help for troubled sectors to hotlines for entrepreneurs and businesses.

Clusters find that companies continue to be interested in innovation:

Although there are differences from sector to sector, the clusters generally experience a shift in the mindset of member companies, in terms of readiness for change. Initiatives that have been in the making for a long time are quickly being implemented, and there is still interest in innovation. Some innovation activities are expected to be postponed but not canceled.

Cluster services and activities have been digitalized rapidly:

The situation has "pushed" the development of clusters within digitalization. Cluster services, as we know them, have changed. The digitalization of cluster services has, for the majority, been done by necessity, but with such large gains that many of them are expected to remain digital.

Danish Clusters Rethink the Innovation Toolbox During the Crisis

In Cluster Excellence Denmark, we find that the clusters use the well-documented tools in the innovation toolbox in new ways during the corona crisis. Matchmaking, innovation collaborations, knowledge bridges, access to financing, internationalisation

and anchoring of the ecosystem is used to help companies and (re)create the power of innovation.

In other words: **Clusters work - also in times of crisis.**

matchmaking

business & knowledge
business & public
B2B
business & capital

MATCHMAKING

Matchmaking is a key activity for clusters. Here, the ecosystem players are tied together when knowledge actors are matched with companies. Currently, a lot of handheld matchmaking is taking place in the clusters where companies are matched with the right collaboration partners. An example is the Danish cluster IT Forum which holds facilitated online matchmaking meetings, networking meetings and working group meetings. Welfare Tech has made its online matchmaking platform free of charge for everyone. Here, the healthcare sector, companies and others can meet and request and present solutions.

TRANSFORMATION

Before the Covid-19 crisis, clusters had a key role in helping to transform the companies to circular economy, digitalization, industry 4.0, etc. During the crisis, the clusters are finding that companies are ready for change. Digitalization is key across clusters and industries. For example, Agro Business Park has featured digital platforms as a networking meeting theme to encourage food companies to adapt such tools so they can stay in touch with their customers. CLEAN cluster reports that its circular restructuring activities are still well underway.

transformation

digitalisation
circular economy
industry 4.0
SDGs
climate
etc.

innovation projects

research projects
pre-projects
feasibility studies
bubble projects

INNOVATION COLLABORATION

The Danish clusters offer various collaboration activities, including innovation projects to develop new products, processes, business processes or other business development. Together with a number of member companies and knowledge institutions, the cluster Medtech Innovation Consortium (MTIC) is in the process of developing research and innovation projects which can help mitigate the corona virus damages with various foundations.

KNOWLEDGE BRIDGING, DISSEMINATION AND SHARING

Building knowledge bridges between companies is central to all innovation and a key activity of clusters, also during the corona crisis. For example, the Danish Lifestyle and Design Cluster has established an online retail network between 50 city managers who regularly meet online to exchange ideas, successes and challenges. The Maritime Development Center has brought together experts to help answer members' legal questions. Life Science Innovation North Denmark holds open video conferences where companies can get help. MARCOD collaborates with the local business community to disseminate government aid packages.

knowledge dissemination

knowledge sharing
knowledge bridging

internationalisation

bridging to global markets,
leading knowledge hubs and
value chains

INTERNATIONALISATION

Before the corona crisis, the Danish clusters were active in over 60 countries. With travel restrictions and health risks, internationalisation has changed. Nevertheless, new internationalisation opportunities have emerged. One example is in the Odense Robotics cluster where several robotics companies have experienced international breakthroughs. RoboCluster is working at getting the industry to switch from physically showcasing its products to a digital market platform. Danish Sound Network has held a webinar with an incubator environment and investors and possible investors in Shanghai as a substitute for an innovation camp that would normally have taken a Danish delegation to China and vice versa.

ACCESS TO FINANCING

Accessing the right financing has always been a key challenge to businesses and it has not become less relevant in the light of the corona crisis. Here, clusters are using their key role in the ecosystem to help member companies find the right actors who can help with access to financing, aid packages etc. For example, Lifestyle & Design Cluster is in the process of releasing funds from its own entrepreneurial fund which are distributed to entrepreneurs and participating companies which are challenged by the corona crisis.

access to financing

private and public funding
raising of capital

entrepreneurship**INCUBATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Clusters are supporting innovative entrepreneurs – also during the Covid-19 crisis. At Lifestyle and Design Cluster's design incubator Sylab, personal protective equipment for health care workers is manufactured. Coats are made from surplus meter goods from a rainwear manufacturer, and it is attempted to source materials in Denmark. The cluster Agro Business Park has created a crisis hotline for entrepreneurs in three agrobusiness incubation environments.

BRANDING & COMMUNICATION

Communication is a key task for clusters. Here, the wide contact to members takes place, and new developments are communicated. During the corona crisis, the Danish clusters are considering their communication carefully. The existing communication channels are rethought and used to communicate about aid packages, postponed activities and new opportunities for members.

branding

agenda setting
communication and
exposure
technology and trend
scouting