



STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALISATION

- A TOOL FOR CLUSTERS



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WHY THIS TOOL?

Innovation, innovation and more innovation seems to be the answer for companies that want to be in the forefront of international markets. In order to continuously develop new products, processes and services, the companies need an understanding of international markets, and they need assurance that their products and services are based on the latest global know-how.

More specifically, this means that companies must be able to form partnerships to obtain access to new markets, new knowledge and innovative collaboration agreements within their field. Companies need to have the opportunity of sharing their knowledge and experience, and to find inspiration. They need to have an improved understanding of new markets and new players, who can make a contribution in testing and developing their products and services. The more advanced a company's products and services, the more difficult it can be to enter new markets. This can be due to a number of challenges such as cultural barriers, limited knowledge about key players, or the need for products or services requiring some adaptation to the new market. Clusters can help deal with all of these challenges.

Today, Danish clusters are cooperating internationally with very strong partners such as leading knowledge institutions, companies, and public players within clusters' fields of engagement. Companies participating in clusters benefit from this cooperation, as they are more international when compared to companies outside the

clusters. Danish research show that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹ which are part of clusters experience an increase in their degree of Internationalisation, so that this reaches 14 %² as opposed to the normal 5-6 % for SMEs.³

Danish clusters are generally considered to be popular collaboration partners, and the longer a cluster has existed, the more international requests it tends to receive. But what does internationalisation mean for a cluster in more specific terms? Which countries are right for collaboration? Which partners should one choose? And how do we organise cooperation, study trips, market delegations or innovation collaboration? These are questions that most clusters have had to deal with.

Nine out of ten Danish clusters have international activities.⁴ This tool is prepared by Cluster Excellence Denmark together with a number of Danish clusters, in order to help clusters raise their international involvement to a more professional level. The advice is simple: Use the tool to develop your internationalisation strategy, and choose among the many tempting collaboration requests.

Enjoy the work!

¹ Small and medium enterprises are referred to as SMEs

² Styrelsen for Forskning og Innovation (2015): "Effekter af virksomheders deltagelse i klynger og innovationsnetværk".

³ Aarhus Universitet for Håndværksrådet (2014): "Eksportens DNA"

⁴ Cluster Excellence Denmark (2015): "Performanceregnskab 2015 for klynger og netværk i Klyngekataloget"

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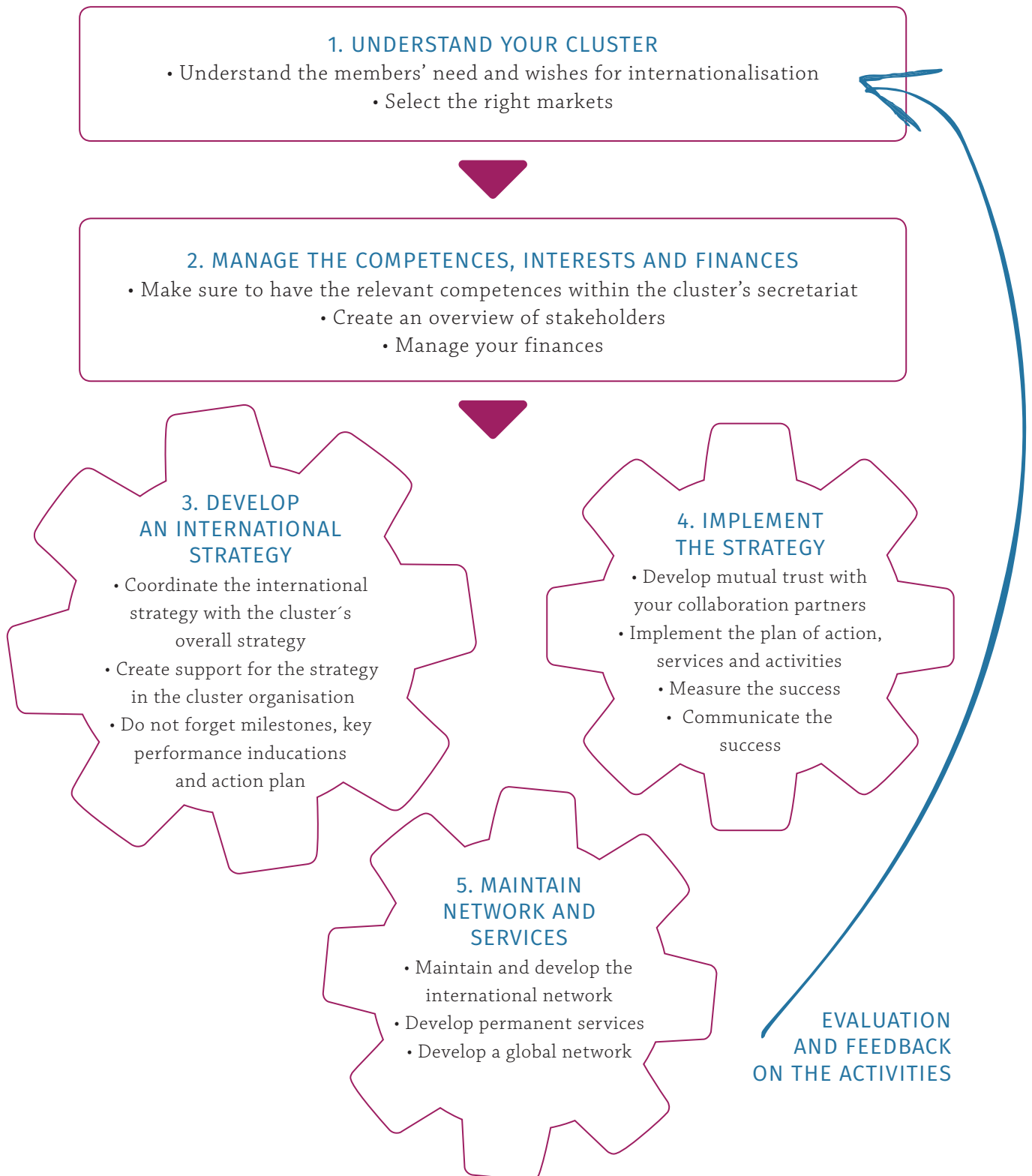
STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALISATION OF CLUSTERS

The starting point of internationalisation for many clusters is typically to initiate various types of international activities (such as study trips, delegations, innovation projects etc) without having an international strategy. This may prove a good way to test some ideas and services, and to get experience with different types of international activities. However, most clusters will eventually feel the need to develop a more strategic path, in order to make the right choices and to use the cluster's resources in the best way possible.

During the last 10 years, more and more clusters have developed strategies for their international work. The following model has been developed, based on these experiences.

As with any other model, this one has to some degree simplified a complex reality, but it does include the most important steps to be considered when developing and implementing an internationalisation strategy. When developing this strategy, it is most important to ensure that the international strategy is closely coordinated with the overall strategy of the cluster, so that the two complement each other. In other words, the international strategy should ensure the realisation of the cluster's overall strategy.

MODEL 1: MODEL FOR A CLUSTER'S INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY



PHASE

1

UNDERSTAND THE
CLUSTER'S NEED FOR
INTERNATIONALISATION

2

MANAGE
COMPETENCES,
STAKEHOLDERS
AND FINANCING

FIVE PHASES IN STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALISATION

Model 1 on the previous page shows the typical complexity and dynamics that many clusters will experience when developing an internationalisation strategy. Several clusters revise their strategy regularly, so it is important for them to check the various elements of the model.

With regard to the development of an internationalisation strategy, it can be an advantage to work with a simpler five-phase model. It is especially important to get the first phase right, so that the strategy can be strongly anchored among the participants of the cluster, and it is also important to be clear about which countries and markets the cluster wants to target.

1 'Understand the cluster's need for Internationalisation' is about gaining a deep understanding of the members of the cluster, and their need for internationalisation. This also includes an understanding of the countries and markets that are suitable for cooperation.

2 'Manage competences, stakeholders and means of financing' is about having access to the right competences and resources to be able to work internationally. This can be resources both internally within the cluster secretariat, as well as externally to stakeholders. Finally, the international work must be financed, which is something to address early in the strategy planning.

3 'Develop an international strategy' is about turning the input on the cluster's needs for internationalisation into a written and integrated international strategy, with broad support among all participants in the cluster. As a part of the strategy, an action plan, as well as a plan of milestones, must be drawn up for all international activities.



3

DEVELOP AN
INTERNATIONAL
STRATEGY

4

IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY

5

MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP
THE NETWORK
AND SERVICES

MODEL 2: FIVE-PHASE MODEL FOR DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

4 ‘Implement the strategy’ concerns how to turn strategy into action through implementing the projects, activities and services. The cluster must decide which types of services are the most appropriate in order to be able to implement the strategy. The cluster must also decide which partners to involve; finally it is important to measure the success, and to let the rest of the world know about it.

5 ‘Maintain and develop the network and services’ is about keeping the international momentum, so that the cluster develops a global network and long-term international services.

PHASE 1: UNDERSTAND YOUR CLUSTER

The first and very crucial phase is aimed at getting an in-depth understanding of the participants in the cluster and their need for internationalisation: What do they want? What can they do on their own? Where do they need the cluster's help for internationalisation?

This phase focuses on mapping the needs of the cluster, as well as connecting these wishes and needs to international value chains that are relevant for the cluster. It is also about the options of innovative collaboration, and finding new markets which were previously undiscovered by the member. This basic knowledge is very vital for the further strategic work.

BACKGROUND: WHY DO CLUSTERS ENGAGE IN INTERNATIONALISATION?

There are many different reasons why Danish clusters engage in internationalisation. In order to map out these reasons, Cluster Excellence Denmark have asked the Danish clusters to share their views on why internationalisation is important to them.⁵ Their experiences typically lead to the following main answers:

A global starting point in the companies: Many cluster managers answers that their member companies are born global, and therefore the cluster needs to meet the companies' need to cooperate with other leading companies within their field.⁶

A global starting point among researchers:

Likewise, many research-driven clusters experience that researchers and specialists are already working on the international scene. Therefore it is natural to them that the cluster should support the international innovation and research activities that are taking place.

Internationalisation matches the needs of the cluster:

This explanation points to the fact that many clusters offer services which cover the entire value chain, from innovation to export, within their respective business sector or scientific field. Therefore internationalisation is seen as an obvious service to the cluster.

Innovative barriers for the companies:

Many clusters experiences that their member companies with innovative products and services can face increased market barriers. These could include required additional tests, or cultural barriers, or simply difficulties in gaining access to new customers.

International branding: The competition on the international market is tough, therefore many clusters try to improve their visibility. This is done, for instance, by attracting big international conferences or by inviting other companies to use their test facilities.

⁵ In a survey carried out in the beginning of 2015, twenty-five clusters answered how they work with internationalisation. The answers from this survey form the basis for developing this Internationalisation tool.

⁶ This result is confirmed by the evaluation of the impact of enterprises' participation in clusters and innovation networks, which shows that 84 % of Danish clusters are engaged in international activities. The Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (2013): "Effekter af virksomheders deltagelse i klynger og innovationsnetværk".

An evaluation from the Nordic Council of Ministers⁷ is supporting parts of this survey by pointing out that many SMEs face barriers in their international work. These appear in the form of a shortage of time; too little capacity; and a lack of funding, partners or the right competences within their companies.

Whether and why internationalisation is relevant to your cluster depends on whether the members have a latent or defined need for internationalisation. In the following section we will present some of the best methods that clusters can apply in order to get an insight into the international needs and priorities of their members.

1.1 GET THE MEMBERS INVOLVED

The members are the cluster's most important resource. Their needs are therefore important when working out the international strategy. There are a number of different methods that can be applied to catch the members' interest and get them involved in international activities. We have collected some of the most interesting methods. These should be considered as a bouquet of different methods from which you can pick those that suit your cluster.



Every year we visit our dialogue members. This is where we ourselves develop, and we develop new innovation projects together with the members. At the same time, we obtain unique knowledge about our members, which we use for our international strategy.

Betina Simonsen, Lifestyle & Design Cluster



1.1.1 MEMBER VISITS

Several Danish clusters have successfully set a goal of visiting a certain number of members every year. The annual visits are used to develop innovation and development projects together with the members, but they are also a good opportunity to get a feeling of what is happening among the members, and what their different needs are. These visits also serve to investigate the members' international orientation.

The cluster secretariat should perform the task of understanding the fairly divergent wishes and needs of the members, and transform them into a shared strategy and actions.



TIPS & TRICKS

Member visits

- Set up the meetings with the members.
- Get the entire cluster secretariat involved in the visit campaign.
- Also try to involve the partners of the consortium.
- Register inputs in the CRM-system or try to systematise them in other ways.
- Repeat the visits annually or every second year.
- Remember to incorporate new knowledge and experience in the secretariat.



PROS & CONS

Pros: You get close contact with the members; you can test your ideas and receive new input.

Cons: It can be very time consuming and can demand many resources. It takes time to plan, carry out and follow up.

⁷BSR Innovation Express Evaluation (2013): "Short summary of results"

1.1.2 PHONE CAMPAIGN TO MEMBERS

Some clusters work with alternatives to direct member visits. An annual phone campaign to members has proven to be an interesting method. In this method the secretariat contacts the members by phone to ask about their needs and priorities. A recommendation the entire secretariat staff is to dedicate one week a year to participate in this campaign.



We always look forward to our annual phone campaign. It is a chance to catch up with the members, and to get a unique insight into their needs and priorities. At this time we are made responsible for the quality of our work as a cluster.

Karen Lindegaard, Welfare Tech



TIPS & TRICKS

Phone campaign to members

- Plan ahead and reserve a time where the entire secretariat is dedicated to the phone campaign.
- Prepare a generic questionnaire, so that the questions and answers can be systematised.
- The permanent secretariat staff should perform this task, not student workers. This ensures that the knowledge harvested will be imbedded in the secretariat.
- Systematise the data in a CRM-system.
- To be repeated, for instance annually.
- Remember to incorporate new knowledge and experiences.

+ – PROS & CONS

Pros: You get close contact with the members, and it is less time-consuming than direct visits.

Cons: It can be very time consuming and demand resources. It takes time to plan, carry out and follow up.

1.1.3 MEMBER SURVEYS

In order to adapt its services and activities, some clusters conduct member surveys, for instance through standardised questionnaires to the members. Use this opportunity to ask about members' international needs and priorities.

EXAMPLE

Innovation Network for Environmental Technologies (Inno-MT) has asked their members the following questions about their international wishes.

Does your company/Organisation have an international focus? (Only one answer: Yes, no, or: this is part of our considerations for our overall strategy.)

What wishes do you have for future international activities of the cluster? (Feel free to check more than one box)

- a) Sector-focused events
- b) Matchmaking events
- c) Individual matchmaking with potential cooperation partners
- d) In Denmark
- e) Abroad (Textbox to be filled out)
- f) Help in seeking project funding (writing applications, finding relevant funds, etc.)
- g) Information about possible project funds
- h) Technological analysis
- i) Market analysis
- j) Supplementary training
- k) Experience exchange groups
- l) Suggestions for other activities (Textbox to be filled out)

1.1.4 BUSINESS SECTOR SURVEY

Besides the direct contact with members like direct visits and phone campaigns, there are other ways to get to know the members' needs and priorities. Some clusters are using business surveys as a method to gain such insight.



We made a survey together with some well-recognised sector associations. The survey gave us a clear impression of the countries and markets that are especially attractive to our members.

Birgit Nøhr, Brains Business



+ - PROS & CONS

Pros: By doing a survey, you can collect a lot of data within a short time period. The answers can be compared.

Cons: The survey does not give the option of integrating new questions along the way. Also, you lose the close relation to the members that you gain by more direct ways of contact.

1.2 KNOW THE MARKETS AND THE OPPORTUNITIES

A deep knowledge of the members appears to be essential to the Danish clusters. When working with an international focus, it is also necessary to look beyond the confines of the cluster. In this area, the Danish clusters have come up with a number of interesting methods.

1.2.1 CREATE AN OVERVIEW OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND USE IT

There is already much knowledge about markets and sectors and clusters available. Spend some time on desk research. It will pay off.

- Market information from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs: Most ministries of foreign affairs (or similar) develop market reports and technology reviews on key foreign markets.
- Check to see whether the chosen countries have an organisation which promotes international investments. (Tip: They often have good and relevant market information available for all. It is typically called something with: "Invest in...".)
- European Cluster Observatory has a well-arranged online library with analysis and publications regarding clusters. See more at www.clusterobservatory.eu
- The right search tools and search engines can take you a long way.

1.2.2 ANALYSE INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION

Make an analysis of the markets that are interesting to your cluster and members (markets here understood broad as technologies, innovations, and commercial markets). A market analysis can be used to get a deeper insight into existing markets, and also to identify new potential markets. It also provides an opportunity to choose markets based on an analysis.



We used a targeted market analysis to identify a new market for our sector. At the same time, it was useful in opening some doors, and providing arguments for why we chose to focus on that specific market.

Jan Neiiendam, Interactive Denmark



+ – PROS & CONS

Pros: Gives a good insight into existing and potential markets.

Cons: Can be costly – especially when if carried out by external consultants.

1.2.3 ANALYSIS BY STUDENTS

Professional market analysis can be very costly for your cluster. But there are alternatives. One method is to engage with students and to work with them to make an up-to-date market analysis for your specific sector. In order to assure a high standard, however, it is important to choose students who are already working on their masters or similar.

+ – PROS & CONS

Pros: The knowledge can be shared among the entire cluster. Students are often highly engaged and interested in showing their skills. Good opportunities to influence cases and markets.

Cons: Students are not professionals; delays can occur and they may need some guidance.

1.2.4 LINK THE STRATEGY TO NATIONAL TRENDS

Denmark has several strongholds. Many clusters have successfully linked themselves to these strongholds such as, for instance, Denmark as a design country: "Denmark means design and quality", "Denmark is green", etc. Find your own niche within the brand, and develop it. This can open doors both nationally and internationally.

6

We are right now participating in building up a Nordic brand within lighting design. This fits into with the Danish and Nordic reputation of delivering design, quality and sustainable products.

Anne Bay, the Danish Lighting Innovation Network

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CHECKLIST AND POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR PHASE 1

- HAVE THE MEMBERS BEEN HEARD?
- DO THEY FIND INTERNATIONALISATION RELEVANT TO THEM?
- WHO NEEDS TO BE INTERNATIONALISED?
- HAVE THE MARKET AND THE OPPORTUNITIES BEEN ANALYSED?

PHASE 2: MANAGE COMPETENCES, STAKEHOLDERS AND FINANCES

This phase is about having access to the right skills and resources to work internationally within the cluster secretariat as well as to work externally with the relevant stakeholders.

Furthermore, the international work must be financed. It is important that this aspect is handled early on in the strategy.

- Employees with international backgrounds.
- Good language skills: English can get you far, but some markets/countries have special language requirements.
- Employee-to-employee training: Often the best and most common way to train new employees in international matters.

2.1 READINESS OF THE CLUSTER SECRETARIAT

The cluster secretariat plays a central role in analysing, developing and implementing the international activities of the cluster. This places huge demands on the cluster secretariat and its competences.



TIPS & TRICKS

to an international well-functioning cluster secretariat

- Make sure that you employ a project leader who is passionate about international matters. Often international projects require travelling and cultural challenges, and can result in unexpected confusions. It is therefore important the employee(s) responsible for international matters are passionate about it.
- Employees with international experience are used to handling the challenges that international collaboration brings. In addition, the cluster can benefit from the employee's international network.
- Employees with international education: International education offers an insight into tools for handling international complexities, and creates an international network which can potentially benefit the cluster.



Are you able to identify design driven business opportunities for SMEs, and to link them to national and international funding systems? D2i is looking for an experienced project leader who can help to develop the design cluster's international profile and can identify and develop new projects that have growth potential within the design cluster.

Extract of a job advertisement for the position of international project leader with Design2Innovate



2.2 INTERNATIONALISATION IS EXPENSIVE – MANAGE THE FINANCES

There are many expenses related to internationalisation. This means that it is important to manage your finances carefully from the start.

Most clusters are financing their international activities through their basic funding. Funding such as regional funds, and EU projects (H2020, Interreg, etc.) are also popular funds. A good method to finance international work is by having a range of funding sources such as basic budgets, regional allocations, EU funds and private co-funding. This way the risk and the costs are distributed. At the same time, this is demanding for the cluster secretariats, as they need to be able to juggle several different financial sources.

Some clusters have a fundraising employee (full- or part-time) whose main task is to find funding for international activities. This is a way to keep track on future calls and projects. Just as with the rest of the cluster's activities, the funding of international activities often turns out to be made up of a patchwork of different sources.

2.2.1 TIPS & TRICKS FOR INTERNATIONAL FUNDING

There are a number of international funding options available for clusters, for instance Interreg, COSME and H2020. The amounts offered are fairly substantial, but competition is tough.



TIPS & TRICKS

International funding

- Check out the latest H2020 calls on the EU "Participants portal" under "Calls for Proposals".
- Be aware of financing levels of the calls. The extent of financing varies greatly for various EU calls, from 25% to 100 % funding.
- Look into the success rate for the call. For some international calls, the chance of success is as low as 6 %.
- Applying for funds requires substantial resources. Make sure that you select your projects and applications carefully.
- Keep a number of potential project partners within reach.
- Use the international strategy to prioritise between calls and projects.

Read more tips and tricks in appendix 3: "Tips regarding Horizon2020"



Most clusters are invited to join many projects. Use the international strategy to prioritise, and choose the projects and consortiums that are suitable for your cluster.



Many people think that H2020 is very complicated to apply for and to administer. The EU Commission has simplified the application process quite a lot, and it is often simpler than some of the other funding schemes such as the Regional and Structural Funds.

Simon Poulsen, Enterprise Europe Network



2.2.2 REGIONAL FUNDS FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

Many clusters get regional (co)funding. Some also have positive experiences in using regional funds for international activities.

- The European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund: These plan to invest more than € 80 billion in the whole of the EU during 2014-2020. The money is aimed at innovation, entrepreneurship, green transition, education and job creation. Several clusters have successfully found funding here.



EXAMPLE

One example of regional funding of international activities is **Growbizz**. Service Cluster Denmark, along with a number of partners, managed to get support from EU's Regional Development Fund and other regional funds. The aim was to help small and medium-sized companies, which provide specialist services around the Capital Region, to establish themselves in new foreign export markets.

2.2.3 CONSIDER PRIVATE CO-FUNDING

Even though most international activities are financed by basic funding and project funds, is it a good idea also to consider private co-funding. This helps to free some resources and ensures stronger commitment from the participants.

There are various models and forms of private co-funding:

- The participants cover their own expenses (salary, travelling, accommodation and spending).
- The participants cover their own costs, and the costs for the activities (for instance hire of facilities, transport, etc.).
- The participants pay their own expenses, the costs of the activities, and the expenses related to planning and organising the activity (the secretariat's expenses for planning and carrying out the activity).

Be aware though that co-financing can also end up excluding some groups of participants.

2.3 COOPERATION PARTNERS

Create an overview of the stakeholders relevant for your international strategy. Map them and arrange to meet the most relevant partners. Keep a number of players at hand, who can support the international projects.

There are many players who focus on international matters. Especially foreign clusters are popular collaboration partners however Enterprise Europe Network, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. have also proven to be strong partners.

Agree on specific targets with your partners. If the targets are defined and agreed upon, the collaboration is usually much smoother.

Make sure you have good chemistry between you. It is always easier to work with people with whom you have a good relationship.



Never work with people that you hate.
They tend to disappoint you.
Micael Gustafsson, Clusterland Sweden



Read more about cooperation partners in the chapter about developing trust, Phase 4.

2.3.1 COOPERATE WITH BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS

Many business associations work internationally. Perhaps they have already analysed the potentials for the sector, and found relevant markets and target groups. If it suits your cluster and your strategy, you can benefit from these analyses and market selections.

EXAMPLE

Close cooperation with business sector associations can consist of:

- coordination between the activities that are offered through the sector association, and those arranged by the cluster;
- agreements to promote and participate in each other's activities.

2.3.2 ANALYSE THE STAKEHOLDERS - USE THE CLASSIC TOOLS

When it comes to internationalisation, there are a number of players in the field. Therefore the challenge is to understand these players, so that their position in relation to the cluster is clear, and it is possible to identify cooperation opportunities and partners. It is important to understand which other international activities the stakeholders can offer to your target groups. Understanding this can help you to estimate how their international activities can suit your purposes and how you can complement each other and seek collaboration.

The stakeholders analysis is an important tool. Analysing the stakeholders and understanding their interests are

essential for good collaboration. This can possibly be combined with a SWOT analysis.



We always do a stakeholder and SWOT analysis when we work with internationalisation. This is a good way to get an overview of the many players in the field, their agendas and partners – and we learn how we can collaborate with them.

*Claus Mortensen, INBIOM
Innovation Network for Biomass*



+ – PROS & CONS

Pros: It gives a structured overview, and offers an insight into the many interests.

Cons: Be careful not to simplify the problems.

SWOT analysis points out strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Through this simple structure, the method offers an overview of the cluster's strength and competitive position by looking at the four categories mentioned. To exemplify the use of the SWOT analysis, we have tasted our own medicine, and made a quick SWOT analysis to answer if a cluster has the need of an international strategy:

STRENGTHS

- IT GIVES A STRUCTURED AND SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS
- IT HELPS YOU TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL OFFERS MADE TO THE CLUSTERS
- IT ENSURES A UNITED APPROACH, BOTH WITHIN THE CLUSTER AND ON THE BOARD
- IT HELPS YOU TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF FUNDING

S
STRENGTH

W
WEAKNESS

WEAKNESSES

- IT CAN BE RATHER RIGID AND SOMEWHAT HEAVY TO HANDLE
- IF YOU FOLLOW THE STRATEGY WORD-FOR-WORD YOU MAY MISS OPTIONS THAT ARISE SPONTANEOUSLY
- INTERNATIONALISATION REQUIRES MANY RESOURCES (TIME AND MONEY)

O
OPPORTUNITY

T
THREAT

OPPORTUNITIES

- USE THE STRATEGY TO FIND YOUR OWN INTERNATIONAL POSITION
- USE THE STRATEGY TO DEVELOP NEW METHODS TO USE THE CLUSTER AS THE STARTING POINT FOR THE COMPANIES' INTERNATIONALISATION

THREATS

- MANY PLAYERS ARRANGE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR AND WITH COMPANIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS
- THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETS CAN BE INSCRUTABLE



FIGURE 1: DOES A CLUSTER REQUIRE AN INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY?

CHECKLIST AND POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR PHASE 2

- DOES THE SECRETARIAT HAVE THE RIGHT RESOURCES AND COMPETENCES?
- DOES FUNDING SEEM TO BE POSSIBLE?
- ARE THE RIGHT COOPERATION PARTNERS IN PLACE?

PHASE 3: DEVELOP AN INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

When the important initial exercises are done, the next phase is to initiate and run a strategy process. A strategy process based on the knowledge gathered about the members' needs for internationalisation and the analysis of cluster's the international value chains. The process should result in an actual international strategy, which can either be integrated into the overall strategy for the cluster, or form an independent strategy which is related to the overall strategy.

3.1 THE STRATEGY PROCESS

All clusters work with an overall strategy. It is important that the international strategy is in line with the mission and vision of the overall strategy. Therefore it is recommended that the task of developing the international strategy is imbedded in the overall strategy process, or at least closely coordinated with the general strategic priorities of the cluster. As with the overall strategy, the international strategy is dynamic and should be updated regularly through an ongoing dialogue with the members. For methods to involve members see previous chapters.

The strategy wheel from Welfare Tech on the next page visualises the relation between phase 1 and phase 2. This way, the annual member survey creates a basis from which the cluster secretariat can make a new strategy proposal for the board. The board then submits the new strategy to be approved at the annual general assembly. The new strategy defines special action areas and services that the cluster offers its members. Then the annual circle is repeated. By following an annual process of ongoing strategy development, the cluster also ensures that the knowledge obtained from the various activities is collected and incorporated into the next strategy.

PHASE

1

2

3

4

5

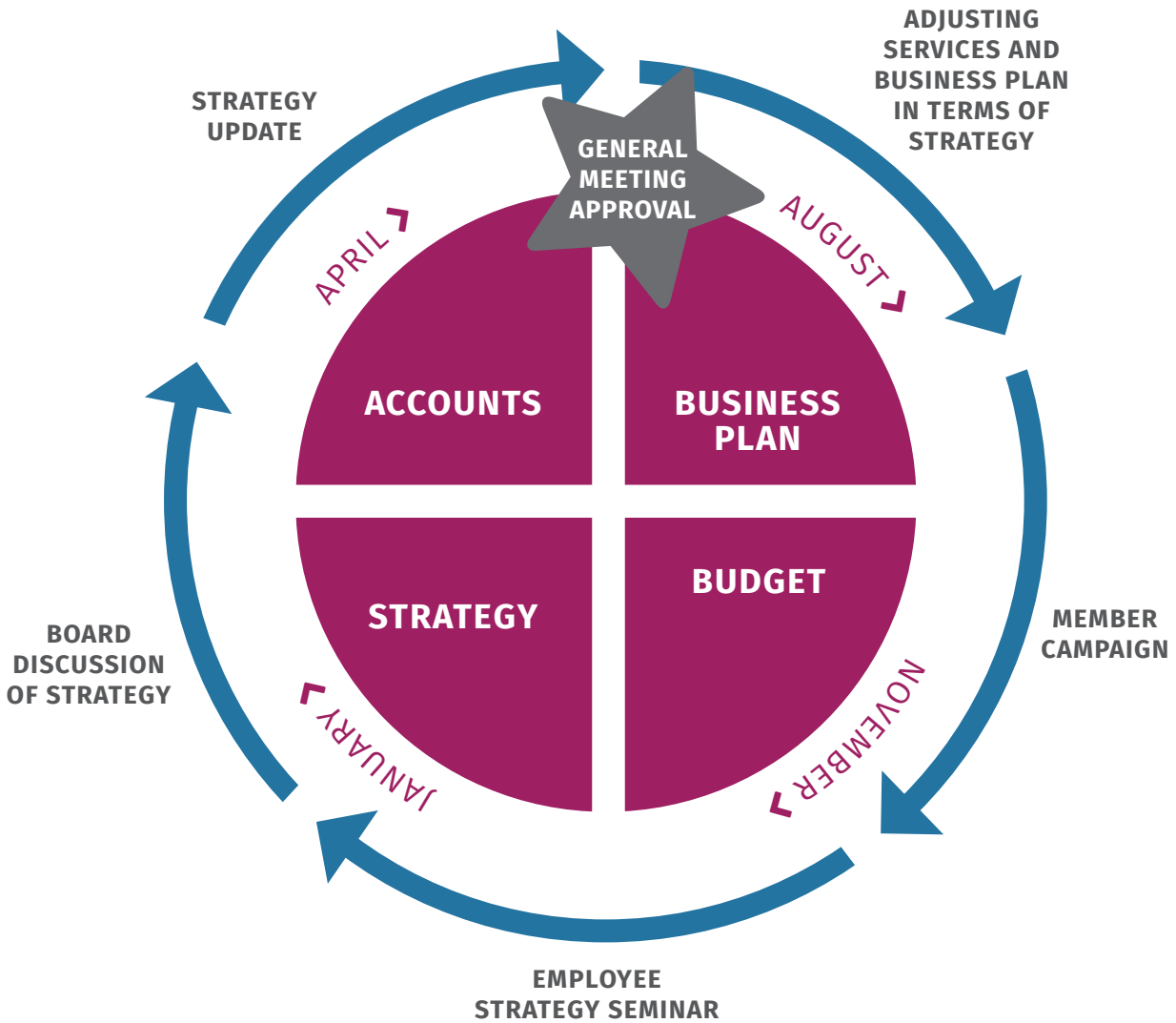


FIGURE 2: : THE STRATEGY WHEEL FOR WELFARE TECH

3.2 STRATEGY DAY

Strategy day, strategy seminar or strategy workshop – it goes by many names. What they have in common is that they create a frame where the cluster secretariat can meet the governing bodies of the cluster (e.g. of the advisory group, the board and the steering group). The purpose is to develop a new strategy or to adjust the existing one. In order to ensure a good connection between the overall strategy and the international strategy, it is recommended that these are developed simultaneously.

The cluster secretariat prepares the strategy day. They can present the processed inputs from the member surveys and various types of analysis, such as the stakeholder analysis, the market report, the SWOT analysis or more generic analysis of the cluster's international position. The strategy day can be facilitated by the secretariat itself, someone from the board or an external expert. It should be a process whereby the knowledge gathered about members, markets and trends is transformed into a vision, a mission and specific activities and services.

The result of the strategy day is then processed by the cluster secretariat, and then discussed during a board meeting. The target of the strategy day is, of course, to develop or adjust the new strategy. However it is equally important to use the day to ensure general support for the strategy and secure legitimacy from central stakeholders. Involving all central parties at an early stage makes the implementation of the strategy easier.

3.3 MEASURING POINTS IN THE STRATEGY

It is important that the strategy is specific enough to make it possible to measure the results and the implementation. There are many methods that can be used for performance management. Several clusters have successfully implemented the so-called Key Performance Indicators (KPI). KPIs can make the strategy make the strategic targets operational and making it possible to measure the progress of implementation.



CASE STUDY

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the international work in Lifestyle & Design Cluster

- a) Identify ten relevant top clusters, and initiate collaboration which can benefit the cluster (the cluster's players).
- b) Arrange meetings and plan relevant activities between the cluster secretariats (cf. above), followed by visits in Denmark or abroad with companies and knowledge institutions.
- c) Participate in three chosen international activities which will create value for the cluster.
- d) Participate in two chosen international activities which have been initiated by a shared initiative among business sector associations and/or groups of companies. The cluster takes care of more comprehensive coordination tasks, in cases where schools are involved (e.g. Milano & London), or in cases where there is a

broader cultural focus which can be solved by the cluster's public partnerships.



Our KPIs guide everything we do internationally. Once every quarter, we update them and assess whether they need adjusting. This way we always know if new resources are needed.

*Betina Simonsen,
Lifestyle & Design Cluster*



3.4 CONSIDER THE BOARD AND THE STEERING COMMITTEE A RESOURCE

All clusters have boards and steering committees which can contribute to the strategic work. This is especially the case if the members of the board and the steering committee are among some of the trend-setting players within the sector.

Use the board and the steering committee as a resource, and to get to a unique insight into the market demands. Involving the board and the steering committee also helps to ensure that the stakeholders of the cluster support the initiatives. Often the members of both the board and the steering committees are dedicated to and engaged in the affairs of the cluster. And if the chance arises, make sure to invite internationally experienced members onto the board/committee.



Our board and steering committee includes some of the sector's leading companies and competences. Therefore we consider them a resource when we are developing our international strategy. They continuously provide input regarding both priorities and targets.

*Per Spindler, Biopeople,
Denmark's Life Science Cluster*



3.5 WHAT AN INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY INCLUDES

The strategy is a long-term plan which the cluster uses as a guideline towards a shared future goal. This goal creates the framework for the work within the secretariat, the management and the steering committee.

An international strategy typically (but not exclusively) contains the following elements:

- **A written strategy.** This should preferably be short and precise, rather than too long and unclear. Eight to ten pages is usually sufficient.
- **Mission and vision for the international work:** What does the cluster want to promote or offer to the surrounding world?
- **Clarification of the target group:** Who needs to be internationalised? The companies (big ones or SMEs?) Research institutions? Should the effort be aimed at members who are already international, or at those who are not yet in the international market?
- **Boundaries** for instance regarding geography, markets, countries, sectors. But also in terms of prioritisations of activities, focus areas and collaborations.
- **Efforts / plans of action:** This is about the road from strategy to actual actions and activities.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** These decisive success criteria are applied to measure progress in respect of strategy. Remember that these should be realistic and measurable.

3.6 ACTION PLAN AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Once you have set realistic targets for the cluster's internationalisation, it is time to find out how to attain those targets. There are many ways to reach a target, but an efficient one can be to draw up an Action Plan.

An Action Plan for international activities typically contains the following elements:

- **Purpose:** A description of the overall purpose of the international activity. How will it benefit the participating parties, especially the companies, and others?
- **Targets** (for both long and short term): Specify the most important targets for the outcome of the activity in the short term (output), based on a long-term perspective (effect on jobs). Set up relevant quantitative targets: An output target can be, for instance, the number of companies that participate in international activities, collaboration projects, matchmaking, applications, etc. These targets can be the number of companies which introduce innovations to the market, develop new ideas or find new important competences and tools.
- **Activities:** Here you describe the sub-activities (and their internal relationships) that are expected to be carried out in order to reach the abovementioned results and effects. A sub-activity needs to be put in words concisely and specifically (quantitative), so that it is easy to determine whether or not it has been carried out.
- **Participants:** Here you list the research institutions and the most important

companies that are expected to participate more intensively in the activities.

- **Plan for dissemination:** Describe the planned marketing and knowledge-sharing activities, if these are relevant to the activity and have not already been mentioned above.
- **Budget:** This should include an estimate of the total cost of the activity.

CHECKLIST AND POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR PHASE 3

- HAS THE STRATEGY PROCESS BEEN SYSTEMATISED?
- HAVE THE STEERING COMMITTEE, THE BOARD AND THE SECRETARIAT BEEN INVOLVED AND ACTIVATED?
- IS THERE A STRATEGY DOCUMENT?
- HAS THE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY BEEN COORDINATED WITH THE OVERALL STRATEGY AND GOALS OF THE CLUSTER?
- HAS AN ACTION PLAN WITH CONCRETE MEASURABLE CRITERIA BEEN CREATED?
- ARE THE STRATEGY AND THE PLAN OF ACTION AMBITIOUS BUT REALISTIC?

PHASE 4: IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY

Once the strategy has been developed, it is time to move from strategy and planning to action. This phase is about implementing the focus areas. Implementing the strategy is about developing trust with both the international partners and the members of the cluster, and also about implementing the right international services. And do not forget to evaluate and measure the effects of the international services, and to communicate the success stories. These topics are the central points of phase 4.

4.1 DEVELOPING TRUST WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Before implementation, it is important to develop trust. This refers to trust in the relationship between the cluster and its international partners as well as trust among the internationally-minded members of the cluster. International collaboration requires working together across borders. So before you venture into big EU applications, it may prove useful to test the collaboration on a smaller scale.

TIPS & TRICKS

Developing mutual trust with collaboration partners

- Promote each other's events. This also gives an insight into the areas that interest your collaborators.
- Visit each other with the purpose of getting to know each other's clusters even better.
- Arrange some small events, where the members of the cluster get to meet the manager of foreign clusters.
- Engage in some smaller projects together,

such as Innovation Express, small analysis, etc., in order to test your common interests and strengths.

- Remember that the chemistry should be right!
- Don't forget that clusters have different forms in different countries. In some countries/regions they are typically driven by companies (e.g. in Catalonia), whereas elsewhere they are research-driven (for instance in France). Remember this in relation to continued collaboration.



Prior to our innovation and study trip to Southern Germany we initiated and tested our collaboration with The Danish Innovation Centre in Munich. For instance we jointly drew up a small market analysis (a so-called Innovation Project Report) about sound and health in the DACH region. This way we could get to know each other, and also get an insight into the market, the players and the collaboration potential within our area of interest.

*Eske Bo Rosenberg Knudsen,
Danish Sound Innovation Network*



4.1.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF CLUSTERS – USING LABELS

Clusters prefer to collaborate with other clusters when it comes to working in the international market. This is clear from the survey of Danish clusters and their internationalisation. However, the term cluster is not patented, and therefore the quality can vary greatly among clusters. Therefore, it is important to be assured of the quality of a cluster before you establish an extensive or long-lasting cooperation.

One way to ensure the quality of your collaborators can be to use the EU Commission's preferred quality assurance system for clusters: European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI). When it comes to certifying clusters there are three levels or labels within the ECEI system: Bronze, silver and gold labels. Using this system, it is possible to identify other clusters, primarily in Europe. To get an overview of certified clusters, see www.cluster-analysis.org.

The site also offers an overview of clusters in individual countries and the various areas of technology that each cluster is specializing in. However, it is always good to use your own analytical skills too. There are some excellent clusters that do not have a label. There are likewise some labelled clusters that still need to work on attaining a high standard.

The gold-certified clusters tend to get more international attention. They are often invited to participate in international projects, and they sometimes seem to have easier access to programmes and funding. It is therefore important to display your certification, for instance on websites, in publications, in e-mail signatures, etc.

4.1.2 CLUSTER-TO-CLUSTER MATCHMAKING – SPEED DATING TO EXPAND THE NETWORK

A good and well-structured way to meet foreign clusters, and to develop trust, is to participate in matchmaking events. Since 2013, participating countries of the BSR Stars Innovation Express have arranged an international cluster matchmaking conference, where these clusters have had more than 250 unique clusters from 30 countries participate, and more than 1200 cluster-to-cluster meetings. Before the annual cluster matchmaking conference takes place, it is possible to book meetings with the other participants. At these meetings it is possible to sense whether the chemistry seems right.



TIPS & TRICKS

How to participate successfully in cluster matchmaking

- Decide in advance which clusters you want to meet.
- Bring some specific development projects to the meeting.
- Meet up with clusters that can supplement your own cluster.
- Use the international strategy as a guideline before, during and after the meetings.
- Be open!
- Remember to arrange a structured follow-up after the meetings.
- You will meet many new potential international partners; make sure that your registration of these is systematised, for instance through your CRM-system.



4.2 BUILDING UP TRUST WITH MEMBERS WHO HAVE AN INTERNATIONAL MINDSET

Internationalisation requires many resources. This goes especially for SMEs, who are the primary target groups for Danish clusters. This means that it often requires much some preparation to get the companies to join international activities. When evaluating the BSR Innovation Express projects, a number of tips and tricks have been identified as being useful when trying to motivate companies to join international activities:



TIPS & TRICKS

- that can encourage participation in international activities

- Aim activities and services specifically to mobilize the SMEs, for instance by focusing on some short-term results.
- Involve some big/well-recognised companies. They can attract and motivate the SMEs to participate.
- Use key companies and/or key persons to lead special activities. They can be motivating and attract others.
- "What is in it for the company?": Remember to be open about how the companies can benefit from joining the international activities.
- Consider whether the companies have resources and commitment to make a proper follow up.

Read more in the "Summary of the first Innovation Express Experience Exchange (2015)"

4.3 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

The survey about internationalisation among Danish clusters shows that the most frequently used services are study and innovation trips for the cluster members, international partner search, and innovation projects. Choosing which international activities and services your cluster should offer must, is however based on your own assessment (based on experience gained in earlier phases).

4.3.1 CLUSTER INNOVATION AND STUDY TRIPS

We live in a global world which gives many options for seeking information about a specific market, and for meeting potential foreign partners. But is this sufficient? It is perhaps, but it does not beat a personal meeting with potential partners. This is what innovation tours, field trips, market visits, market campaigns and partnering missions are all about. These events are among the most popular services offered by Danish clusters.



TIPS & TRICKS

For a successful field trip

- The visit can include one or more of the following activities: Kick-off meeting in Denmark or other destinations; visit to fairs, conferences and matchmaking events; relevant visits to other clusters, companies, authorities, research institutions; and network events; etc.
- Prepare an agreement – either written or oral – with the chosen partner(s) about the visit. Include success criteria such as a minimum number of participants.

- Make a time plan and a plan of action for the entire event.
- Invite companies as well as researchers on the trip.



We always try to include researchers in our company missions. Their knowledge helps to give a seal of approval to the technologies the Danish companies present, and it also shows that we want a knowledge-based collaboration and not just pure export.

*Claus Mortensen,
Innovation Network for Biomass*



Read the complete checklist for a successful Innovation tour in appendix 4.

4.3.2 INTERNATIONAL INNOVATION PROJECTS

Another popular international service among clusters is international innovation projects.



CASE STUDY

Innovation vouchers for Internationalisation

The IN2LifeSciences initiative is a good example of how to use EU funds to offer international innovation to cluster members. The project was financed by INTERREG IVB NEW. Biopeople - Denmark's Life Science Cluster was one of eight partners along with two French, two German, one Belgian, and two Dutch partners. Each project partner had a €100 000 budget allocated to support international partnership projects in the form of innovation vouchers for SMEs working in life sciences. See more about the project at <http://www.in2lifesciences.eu>



CASE STUDY

International formation of consortia

Globalisation and market development greatly influence the requirements for sub-suppliers. This can make it difficult for the SMEs to live up to the required standards regarding quality, as well as specialisation and prices. Collaboration paves the road for both growth and Internationalisation. Consortia and commercial networks make it possible for smaller sub-suppliers to gain the power required in terms of both sector specialisation and finances, and it can help create access to more valuable orders and bigger tasks. Clusters can play a central role in forming consortia out of SMEs.



The clusters Offshoreenergy.dk, Copenhagen Finance IT Region (CFIR), and Censec have worked with Oxford Research to draw up a guide to consortia formation and sub-supplier networks. The guide is based on experiences from both national and international cases. Here are some of the guide's recommendations regarding a well-functioning consortium:

- Have a well-defined purpose and a specific task for the consortium.
- Adjust expectations among the parties of the consortium early on in the process.
- Create a framework for trust and openness.
- Carry out a thorough identification of competences.
- Financial commitment is necessary.
- Employ a project facilitator to run the process.
- The process must be anchored in the management.
- Consider the legal aspects – in due time.



Forming consortia is an effective way for smaller companies to work together to combine their competences, financial resources and contacts to gain a foothold in export markets.

From a seminar on the guide to consortia formation and sub-supplier networks.



4.3.3. INTERNATIONAL MATCHMAKING: WHAT TO DO BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

Matchmaking and bridge building between research institutions and companies is a core task for clusters, also in the international field. Thus international matchmaking is among the clusters' key international services. See appendix 5 for tips and tricks about how to make the international matchmaking successful.

See more matchmaking methods in the “Inspirational Catalogue – Matchmaking, knowledge sharing and idea creation” published by Netmatch and The Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation in 2012.

4.3.4 INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Sharing knowledge and developing competences among members are some of the key activities of clusters. This is also relevant to international matters. A popular method for achieving this is through workshops. You can find a selection of examples of international workshops below:

- EU workshops within a cluster's field of expertise: These give a good insight into funding options, and new interesting and sincere collaboration partners. This can be done in collaboration with Enterprise Europe Network and others.
- Export within the cluster's field of expertise: Gives an insight into the export opportunities available to the members of the cluster.
- Preparation for internationalisation: is about members gaining understanding of a given market, technology or business sector.

4.3.5 INTERNATIONALISATION FROM HOME

It is not necessary to travel abroad to become internationalised. Sometimes the international activities can come to you. Here are some examples of international activities that can be done from home:

- Visits from abroad: Show what makes your country or your region attractive – both as a market, and also in areas of new knowledge and technologies. Many foreign clusters, companies and research institutions are keen to learn how you innovate and develop. Clusters are popular partners.
- International conferences and fairs in your home country: Seize the opportunity to promote your cluster and your members internationally, without having to leave the country. Think creatively.
- Skype matchmaking: Can you do matchmaking via Skype? More than 110 companies, research institutions and Danish Welfare Tech have joined the first Digital Health B2B Skype matchmaking event. Here the meetings are held one-to-one via Skype, from the members' own offices, saving them time and money.

4.4 BSR INNOVATION EXPRESS – A SHORTCUT TO INTERNATIONALISATION

The survey shows that most clusters organise their services and activities on an ad hoc basis. BSR Innovation Express projects are very popular. Innovation Express represents a common approach for supporting the internationalisation of SMEs through cluster initiatives.

Innovation Express is a joint call for proposals implemented within the framework of the BSR Stars programme. The call is funded by national/regional funding agencies to initiate, develop or enhance transnational cooperation activities – leveraging cluster organisations (or similar) to develop proposals for their SME member.

More than 100 collaboration projects between clusters have been financed by BSR Innovation Express over the past three years. More than 3000 companies have gained access to new relevant knowledge, new collaborators or new markets by joining Innovation Express projects launched by the clusters.



CASE STUDY

Virtual Reality Sound

The BSR Innovation Express project "Digital & Creative Sound Solutions" began with a desire to explore the possibilities for cooperation between the Danish Sound Innovation Network and the Belgian cluster Screen.Brussels – two clusters that met during cluster matchmaking in Berlin in September 2014.

After six months of testing the opportunities, the theme "virtual reality sound" was selected in August 2015, and it formed the basis of future collaboration. The choice proved to be a success.



The Danish Sound Innovation Network became co-organisers of the first official European VR Hackathon, which took place in January 2016 in Brussels. More than 100 participants from 11 different nations, including 20 from Denmark, met for a highly intensive weekend with the purpose of developing demonstrations and projects within Virtual and Augmented Reality. Two teams with Danish developers ended up winning the titles of "Best 3D Audio Project" and "Best Gear VR Project". The success in Brussels has been followed up by a sold-out VR Hackathon BXL - Retrospective event in Denmark and a delegation trip to the VR World Congress in Bristol.



The flexibility of the BSR Innovation Express funds has been crucial for both the preparation and the implementation of the project. We had the possibility of being prepared to take risks, and we had an exploratory approach to developing collaboration with the Belgians.

We were trying to find the optimal interfaces and the areas of collaboration that had the greatest potential for creating value for both parties.

*Eske Bo Knudsen,
Danish Sound Innovation Network*



See a film clip from the innovation trip to Lofoten



CASE STUDY

Experimental innovation trip for experience economy

Invio - Danish Innovation Network for Experience Economy and the Norwegian cluster Innovative Experiences arranged an innovation trip to Lofoten in Norway. The purpose was to help establish cooperation and create innovation and growth within Danish and Norwegian SMEs involved in experience economy.

The idea was to develop new methods for international matchmaking. Here are some of the main components:

- Interviewing the participants before departure – clarifying expectations and ensuring the right competences.
- Developing a booklet of the participants, in order to ensure a better match.
- Innovation trip in connection with a well-recognised conference.
- Introductory pitch and matchmaking sessions.
- Workshops with brainstorming, concept development and selection, business models and value propositions. Remember to consider facilitation.
- A shared stand where the participants could meet and/or have meetings.
- Embedding of relevant experience-based activities was borne in mind.

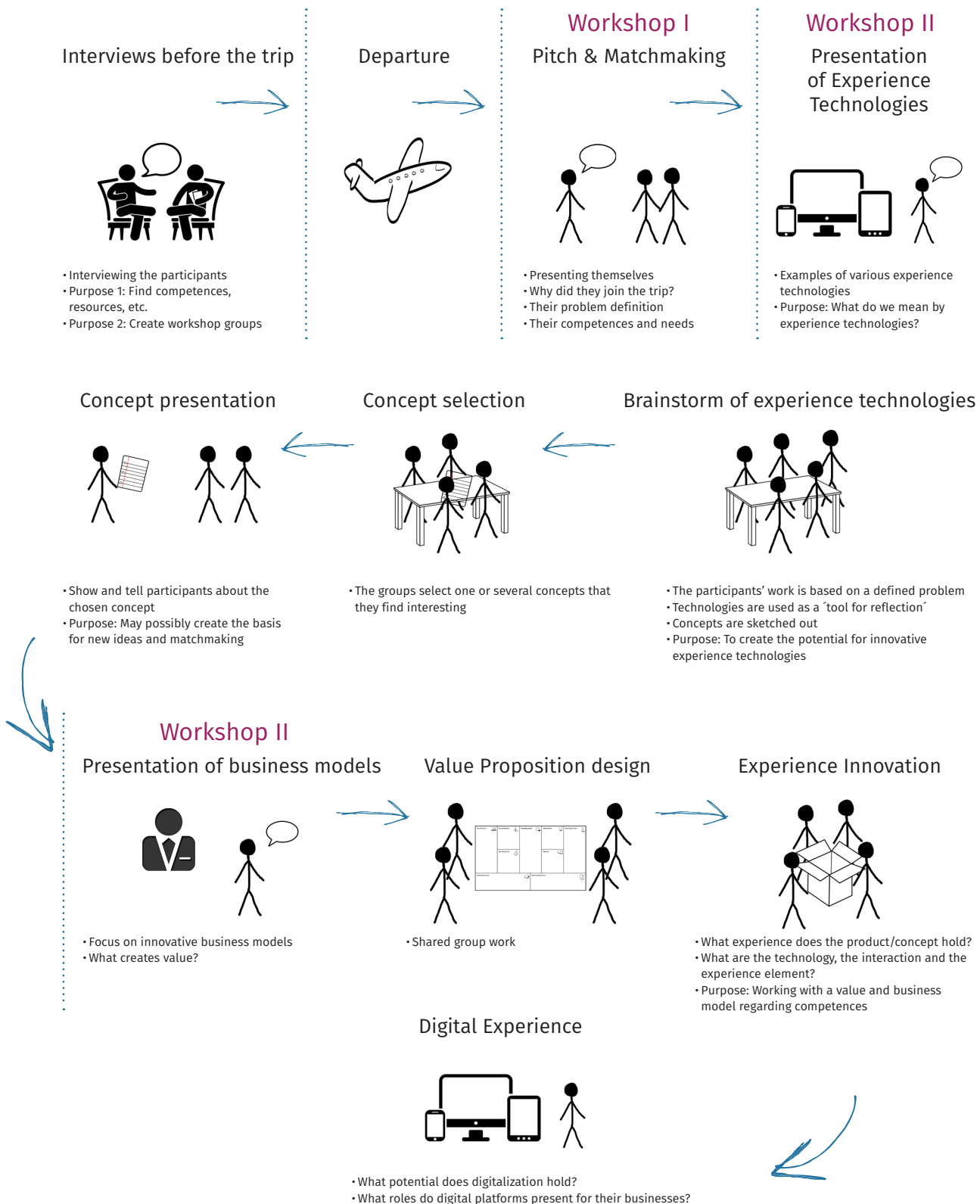


We use BSR Innovation Express to develop new experimental international services to our members, in this case a new and innovative method for international matchmaking.

Claus Østergaard, Invio - Danish Innovation Network for Experience Economy



MODEL 3: PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL MATCHMAKING, INVIO - DANISH INNOVATION NETWORK FOR EXPERIENCE ECONOMY



4.5 MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS

Once the international activity has been carried out, it is important to follow up. The follow-up is important for many different reasons, such as the following:

- 1) It provides an opportunity to gain learning within the cluster, and thereby improves the strategy and the activity.
- 2) Evaluation and measuring makes it possible to collect successes.



After a completed international activity we always ask ourselves: How did the cluster benefit from the collaboration/the project/the activity? Are there some concrete success stories? Was the project/collaboration evaluated by all the participants? What can we improve for next time?

*Betina Simonsen,
Lifestyle & Design Cluster*



In addition, it is important to ask the participants how they benefited from the activities. There are many ways to measure international activities. In the following section, we present some methods for inspiration.

4.5.1 BASELINE MEASUREMENTS

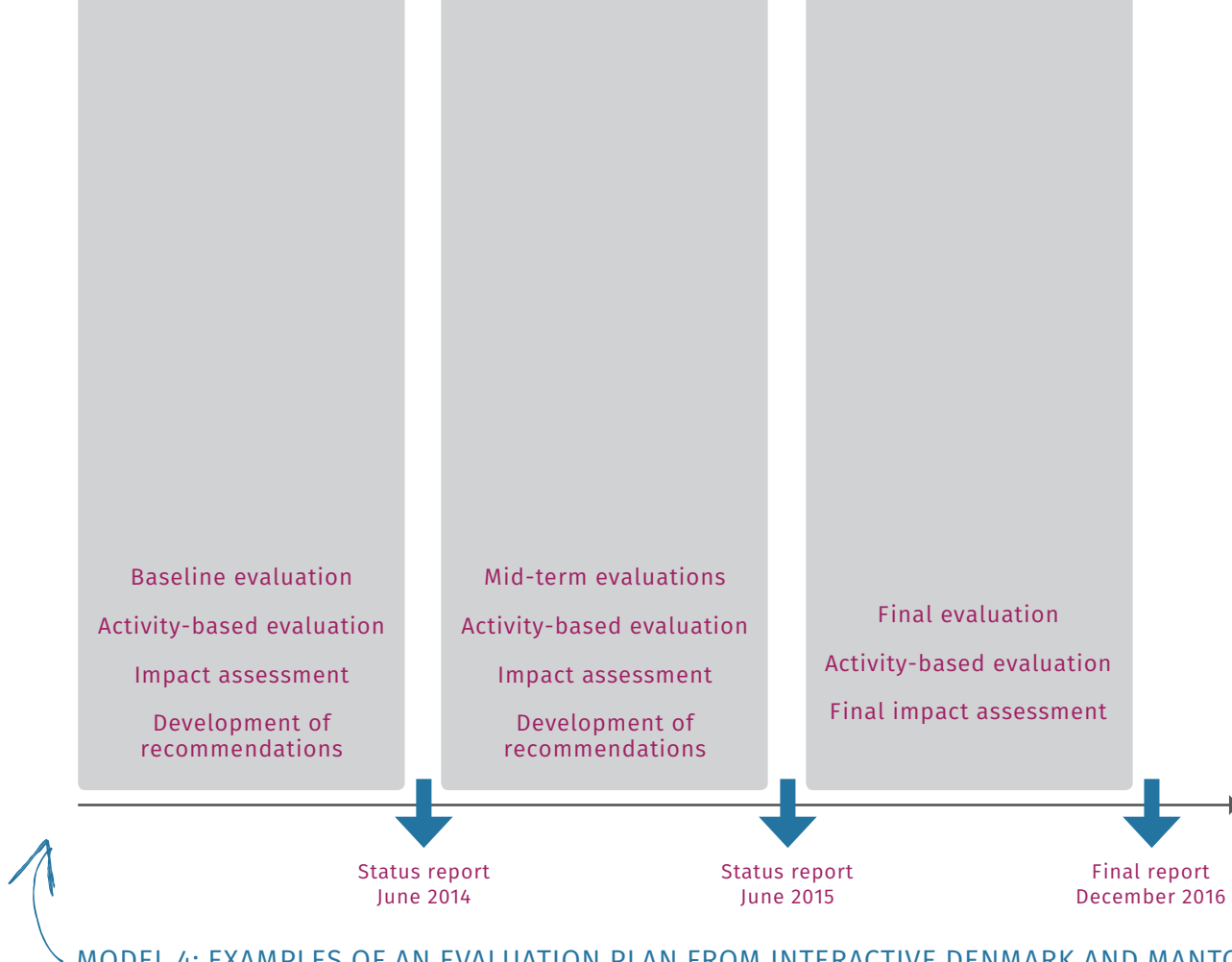
Several clusters operate with baseline measurements, also for international activities. A baseline measurement is typically made to show which impact the cluster has. Typically, baseline measurements are followed up by mid-term and final evaluations. Together, these evaluations aim to show whether the cluster has reached its targets. This is done by developing a set of indicators by which the sector's development can be assessed, making it possible to see the effect of the cluster.

The indicators are selected and developed in collaboration with the secretariat and external evaluators. The purpose is that each indicator should help to show a relevant and necessary development in the cluster and its frame conditions.

CASE STUDY

A baseline measurement of international gearing in the Interactive Denmark.

The evaluation of Interactive Denmark consists of three measurements: A baseline measurement at the start-up of the cluster in June 2014, a mid-term measurement in August 2015, and a final evaluation of the effect. All three measurements use the same set of indicators, so it is possible to follow the impact that the cluster has had on the sector.



MODEL 4: EXAMPLES OF AN EVALUATION PLAN FROM INTERACTIVE DENMARK AND MANTO A/S

The baseline measurement is made to establish a baseline value, to use for benchmarking the later measurements. The baseline analysis contains a measurement of the level of the companies in the sector in five areas:

- 1) Level of professionalisation
- 2) Level of innovation
- 3) Access to funds
- 4) International gearing
- 5) Strategic use of network and partnerships.

For each level, a set of indicators is developed. Only the indicators for 4), “international gearing”, will be elaborated here. International gearing is about assessing to what degree the companies are international. This is done by looking at their activities, and by looking at whether they have a strategic or systematic approach when it comes to selling or marketing products internationally:

- International presence at activities, events or conferences.
- Systematic sale or marketing to several countries/regions.
- Level of competence in relation to internationalisation.
- Entering into international collaboration agreements.⁹

+ – PROS & CONS

Pros: Gives a structured and systematic approach to measuring the impact and business effect of the cluster.

Cons: In-depth analysis work puts great demands on resources; must be planned from the very beginning.

⁹ Read more (Danish only) “Nulpunktsmåling og opstartsevaluering Interactive Denmark” (2014) and “Fra spilbranche til interaktiv klynge med vækstpotentiale Midtvejsevaluering af Interactive Denmark” (2015), issued by Manto.

4.5.2 EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES

As a minimum, all international activities should be evaluated after the activity has been carried out. This can be done by a questionnaire sent to participants after the activity. The evaluation helps to ensure that knowledge about the activity has been gathered, so that the cluster secretariat can learn from the experiences before launching a new international activity.

EXAMPLE

Questionnaire after an international activity: Evaluating Danish Material Network's inspiration trip to Lithuania.

1. What was your primary purpose in joining the trip?
2. How do you rate the mini-seminar "Introduction to the plastics industry in Lithuania"?
3. How do you rate the visit at DIAB-Group?
4. How do you rate the visit at Frilux UAB?
5. How do you rate the visit at UAB "Putokšnis"?
6. How do you view the networking options during the visit?
7. What did you learn from your individual visit on day 2?
8. What do you think about the trip as a whole?
9. Comments and other inputs

4.5.3 SIGNING OF NEW CONTRACTS AND ORDERS

After the international activity has taken place, the participating companies can be asked about any specific outcome of the activity. One question could be: "Have you made new contacts which have led to new orders or contracts?", "How substantial are the orders?", etc. This method is easy to implement, and it usually requires only a little time and an e-mail or a phone call. The specific answers make it simpler build upon the success later.

EXAMPLE

Get inspired by looking at how Innovation Express performs evaluations. Here the participants in international activities are asked questions such as:

- Did you get access to new markets?
- Did you find new partners?
- Did you get a new/improved understanding of new markets?
- Knowledge sharing and inspiration: identification of new options.
- Establishing research or innovation cooperation.
- Commercial agreements or contracts.

4.5.4 MEASURING LONG-TERM RESULTS

The results of the international activities can be in the pipeline for a long time and therefore sometimes difficult to measure. One method to handle this is to plan an extra follow-up, six to twelve months after the activity. This can be done by a survey, or by direct calls or visits.



We always contact our exhibitors twice in connection with the international Danish Maritime Fair, where we have a joint stand. First we contact them immediately after the fair, then we get in touch with them again after nine months, in order to find out how they benefited from the fair.

*Charlotte Kirkegaard Flugt,
Maritime Cluster Funen*



4.6 COMMUNICATING INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

A very important but sometimes ignored part of internationalisation lies in communicating the results of your efforts. This communication can take place at several levels.

4.6.1 COMMUNICATING INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS STORIES.

A good way to communicate the results of international initiatives and services is by sharing success stories. Here the participants tell their impressions of the initiatives, and how they benefited from them. In this way, the international services become very concrete to the members.



EXAMPLE

An international success story: Passat Energy heats up China

Passat Energy A/S, a company working with energy and heating, has received help from Innovation Network for Biomass and Enterprise Europe Network to make contact with a Chinese research institution for renewable building solutions. During the spring of 2015, the two parties entered into an official collaboration to apply Danish heating solutions to the construction of an environmentally friendly hotel in Beijing. The order was worth 1.2 million DKK.



EXAMPLE

An international success story: Breakthrough for Danish systems export to the USA

CLEAN facilitates a consortium consisting of nine suppliers which have made exclusive agreements with the American development company NuPower Thermal LLC. The purpose is to construct a district heating plant, a project with a budget of more than 150 million DKK.

“

The cooperation has been characterised by openness and trust between the partners, where everyone has been willing to take risks, and everyone has entered the project development with great enthusiasm and involvement as well as financial commitment.

This cooperation reinforces the thoughts behind systems export, and we have just started.

Carsten Møller, CLEAN

”

4.6.2 CLUSTERS AS CO-BRANDING

International cluster contacts can be used to mutual promotion. This can help to brand the cluster as such, but also to brand its members' products.

EXAMPLE

An example of how to use international cluster relations for this kind of co-branding is the cooperation between BrainsBusiness and the Norwegian IT cluster DIGIT. The heart of the cooperation is the use of digital and social media to internationalise the cluster and its members. In this way the Danish company is promoted via the Norwegian cluster channels and vice versa (for instance using LinkedIn groups, websites, newsletters, etc.).

“

”We use co-branding to offer our members some extra promotion via our international cluster contacts.”

Birgit Nøhr, Brains Business.

”

PHASE 5: MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP THE NETWORK AND SERVICES

As mentioned earlier, many clusters organise their activities as ad hoc projects. However, for a professional cluster organisation, which needs met to its members' needs, permanent services are necessary. This phase is very much about how to maintain the international momentum and network, and how to develop permanent international services.

5.1 MAINTAIN THE NETWORK

A strong international network is essential when working with internationalisation. Use the good experiences with collaborators from ad hoc projects to identify the next opportunities.

5.1.1 META-CLUSTERS – SYSTEMATISE THE CLUSTER NETWORK

Meta-clusters, or formalised collaborations between clusters, are very popular at the moment. The EU has encouraged (and to a small degree financed) The European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (ESCP).

The European Strategic Cluster Partnerships – Going International (ESCPs-4i) were labelled by the European Commission, DG Growth and the Executive Agency for SMEs of the European Commission following the COSME call COS-CLUSTER-2014-3-03 – Cluster Go International. Their activities started as ESCP-4i labelled partnerships at the beginning of 2016.

The ESCP-4i are transnational cluster partnerships that develop and implement a joint internationalisation strategy and support SME Internationalisation towards third countries beyond Europe. They

aim to develop common actions and an implementation roadmap as part of a long-term cooperation agenda

The European Commission has selected 24 "European Strategic Cluster Partnerships – Going International" as a result of the COSME calls "Cluster Go International" (COS-CLUSTER-2014-3-03) including:

- the 15 co-funded projects resulting from the call "Clusters Go International"; and
- 9 additional "voluntary" Partnerships that were on the reserve list of the call and agreed to keep working on a joint cooperation agenda without EC direct co-funding¹⁰

A few examples of meta-clusters with Danish participation are:

European Lighting Cluster Alliance (ELCA): The Danish Lighting Innovation Network has initiated a network of clusters working with lightning technologies and light design. The primary purpose of the network is to coordinate the activities and start joint projects, for instance via EU projects. Read more at: www.lightingcluster.eu

Natureef: Innovation Network for Biomass is part of a cross-European cluster collaboration which includes nine clusters and networks, all concerned with resource management. Again, the focus is aimed at keeping the network going, applying for joint EU funds, and offering Internationalisation activities for markets outside the EU. Read more at: www.natureef.eu/en

5.2 PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

The survey shows that most Danish clusters' international services are organised ad hoc. Use the ad hoc projects to develop more permanent services. There are already several good examples of permanent services offered by clusters.

5.2.1 ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL MATCHMAKING EVENTS FOR MEMBERS

Matchmaking between the members in the clusters is a key action for clusters. There are a number of ways to organise matchmaking between members.

Offshoreenergy.dk is one of the clusters that offers international matchmaking events as a permanent service to its members. Since 2009, Offshoreenergy.dk has arranged the annual matchmaking, OWIB. Here the international offshore wind industry meets once a year, with over 200 participants attending and 1100 meetings being held.



What makes OWIB unique is that SMEs have a chance to meet up, and quickly assess whether there is a basis for further contact.

*Morten Holmager,
Offshoreenergy.dk*



5.2.2 PROJECT EXCHANGE MARKET AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

One of the most important tasks for clusters is to be the centre of the development of the members' innovation projects and ideas. This is a place to systematise the development of international innovation projects and to offer help in maturing ideas and in finding international funding (e.g. H2020).



CASE STUDY

InnoBYG's international project help

InnoBYG - The innovation network for sustainable construction – has divided its project assistance into two parts: a basic part, which is free for members; and an extended part, where the price is fixed individually, depending on the amount of help needed.

The project assistance offers members advice such as:

- developing project ideas
- assessing the potential of the project idea
- financing opportunities



We offer our members international project assistance through our steering group, which consists of project managers from SBi, DTU, Danish Technological Institute, DBi, KADK and the InnoBYG secretariat.

Kasper Lyng Jensen, InnoBYG - The innovation network for sustainable construction



5.2.3 SEARCHES FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

International partner search (both companies and knowledge institutions) is a central international service for many clusters.

One method for searching for international partners is to use the abovementioned formalised meta-clusters.

Others use the Enterprise Europe Network database, (the official EU network for SMEs) which holds more than 14.000 international cooperation profiles. This can help systematise the search for partners.

5.2.4 HIGH PROFILE EVENTS IN YOUR SECTOR

Everybody knows the high profile events, and everyone wants to join it. These are thus the perfect place to profile your cluster. Within the gaming industry there is the Games Developer Conference in San Francisco, for mobile technologies it is the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, for the biotech sector it is the BIO International Convention; there is also Eurosatory for the defence industry, Milano Fashion Week, and so on.

Consider whether the high profile event could be the right place to showcase your cluster. Go there with your members. Use the event to make it into a networking event and offer matchmaking, a side event or something else. If it turns out to be a success, don't hesitate to repeat it.

5.3 BUILD UP A GLOBAL NETWORK

For some sectors and certain clusters, building up a global network may be the ambition. This is the case if the sector's challenges are global, if the cluster is ready for it or if the challenges that the cluster helps to solve are cross national borders.

CASE STUDY

International Cleantech Network (ICN)

The ambition is to make ICN the world's leading global network with the best cleantech clusters from all over the world. CLEAN has helped to initiate, drive and develop ICN, which currently consists of 11 clusters located in Holland, Austria, Canada, Italy, South Africa, Norway, Germany, USA, Japan and France.

The purpose of this cluster-driven global cooperation platform is to increase knowledge sharing between companies, research institutions and local authorities. In order to strengthen the cooperation between the cluster regions, and to achieve competitive advantages in the long term for new technologies, talent and market shares.

CLEAN members can use ICN for:

- an ICN-Passport, offering CLEAN members access to services offered by other clusters in the network;
- building up partnerships;
- insight into opportunities and markets;
- gaining relevant information about projects, financing, testing and demonstration facilities in each of the regions;
- cross-regional transparency.

Read more at internationalcleantechnetwork.com



A close cooperation across borders is the core idea of the cluster concept, and it is also the reason why CLEAN is engaged in the International Cleantech Network (ICN). The purpose of this global collaboration platform is to increase knowledge sharing between companies, research institutions, and local authorities, and to strengthen cooperation between the cluster regions to achieve competitive advantages in the race for new technologies, talent and market shares.

Henrik Bjørnager Jensen, CLEAN



CHECKLIST AND POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR PHASE 5

- IS THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK BEING NURTURED?
- DO WE HAVE INTERNATIONAL SERVICES THAT CAN BECOME PERMANENT?
- DO WE NEED TO BE PRESENT GLOBALLY?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: WHERE TO FIND HELP WITH INTERNATIONAL MATTERS

BSR Stars:

This is a so-called flagship project under the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. It strives to strengthen competitive power and economic growth in the region. Here you can find information about Innovation Express, amongst other things.

www.bsrstars.se

Enterprise Europe Network (EEN):

This is the EU innovation and advisory network for SMEs. EEN has more than 600 offices in more than 60 countries, which makes it one of the world's biggest networks of its kind. It can help to facilitate partner search, matchmaking events and market visits. Furthermore, EEN has internal resource persons dedicated to working with clusters.

<http://een.ec.europa.eu>

European Cluster Collaboration Platform:

This platform tries to map out all European clusters. Here you can also look for the latest cluster-related EU calls. Notice that some EU calls require that you be registered at the ECCP to be able to apply.

www.clustercollaboration.eu

European Cluster Observatory:

This site seeks to create an overview of analysis of clusters, cluster organisations and regional micro-economic framework conditions in Europe.

www.clusterobservatory.eu

TCI Network:

Global network for cluster practitioners and analysts.

www.tci-network.org

The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis:

This Organisation is behind the label European Cluster Excellence Initiative and they have a good overview of clusters with bronze, silver and gold labels.

www.cluster-analysis.org

U.S. Cluster Mapping:

Looking for clusters in the US? Then check our U.S. Cluster Mapping. Here Harvard Business School is trying to map out the regional clusters in the US.

www.clustermapping.us

APPENDIX 2: READING LIST – LIST FOR INSPIRATION

Aarhus Universitet (2015): "Eksportens DNA"

BSR Innovation Express (2013): "Evaluation 2013 – short summary of results"

BSR STARS (2015): "Summary of the first Innovation Express Experience Exchange"

CLEAN (2014): "Complex Cleantech Solutions Amplifying The Competitiveness Of Danish Business."

Cluster Excellence Denmark (2015): "Hvidbog om kommunikation for netværk og klynger."

Cluster Excellence Denmark (2015): "Performanceregnskab 2015 for klynger og netværk i Klyngekataloget."

Cluster Excellence Denmark (2016): "Towards New Cluster Internationalisation Models – lessons learned from the Danish clusters" from the book "Global Change and Internationalisation of Cluster Initiatives."

Enterprise Europe Network (2014): "Internationalisation of Clusters"

IRIS Group (2015): "Evaluering af GrowBiz- Program til Internationalisation af vidensservicevirksomheder"

Manto (2015): "Fra spilbranche til interaktiv klynge med vækstpotentiale. Midtvejsevaluering af Interactive Denmark"

Netmatch and The Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (2012): "Inspirational Catalogue – Matchmaking, knowledge sharing and idea creation".

Oxford Research (2014): "Praktisk guide til konsortiedannelse og underleverandørnetværk"

REG LAB (2008): "Policyguide til klyngeudvikling"

TACTICS (2012): "Handbook on Cluster Internationalisation"

The Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (2013): "Strategy for Denmark's cluster policy"

The Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (2014): "Performanceregnskab 2014."

The Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (2015): "Effekter af virksomheders deltagelse i klynger og innovationsnetværk"

APPENDIX 3: TIPS REGARDING HORIZON2020

HOW TO FIND THE CALLS?

All calls can be found at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/index.html>. On the left-hand side you can select H2020. Please note that the search engine looks only for words in the title and not in the actual call. For instance, if you would like to find an energy-related call, you can search for the most likely heading under Societal Challenges, such as:

- Health, demographic change and wellbeing.
- Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and the bio-economy.
- Secure, clean and efficient energy.
- Smart, green and integrated transport.
- Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials.
- Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative and reflective societies.
- Secure societies - protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens.

HOW DO YOU ESTIMATE WHETHER THE CALL IS INTERESTING (ASSES RATE)?

You can find statistics about the programme on www.ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/sites/horizon2020/files/horizon_2020_first_results.pdf

If you are interested in calls on a specific topic, then please contact your local National Contact Point for further information.

If you have a regional EU-office in Brussels, then a contact can be useful. They can usually supply updated information about the success rate for specific parts of a

programme, and assess whether a project idea is in line with a certain call.

HOW TO MANAGE THE PAPER WORK?

Many people think that H2020 is complicated to apply for and to administer. The EU Commission has simplified the application process to a large extent, and it is often easier than some of the other project applications. However, it is worthwhile to prepare some documents before commencing with an application, as it prove to be more time-consuming than expected:

- Get a PIC number, which is required for every application.
- Prepare a CV for the key employees, in Europass format.
- Prepare a short description of the key competences of your Organisation – this is useful for the application processes.
- Calculate the hourly salary for relevant project employees.

HOW DO YOU FIND MORE RIGHT PARTNERS FOR YOUR CONSORTIUM?

The best option is to have an existing international partner network ready, preferably partners with whom you have good working experiences. Consider using Enterprise Europe Network to help find partners.

CAN I JOIN AN EXISTING CONSORTIUM?

Yes, it often proves an advantage to begin by playing a smaller role in another consortium. This gives you an idea of the amount of work required. There are often clusters or organisations looking for new partners for their consortium. You can make a 'research profile query' via Enterprise Europe Network and have relevant search results sent directly to you.

FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HORIZON2020

<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/>

<http://een.ec.europa.eu/>

APPENDIX 4: CHECKLIST FOR A SUCCESSFUL INNOVATION MISSION OR COMPANY MISSION

Among the clusters' international key services are innovation, company missions and study tours. Common to these activities is that you invite your members and stakeholders to experience a relevant market. The checklist has been prepared in a Danish context, but with some adjustments, it can easily be applied to other countries.

POINTS TO CONSIDER BEFORE THE MISSION

- Analyse regional sectors and identify suitable sectors.
- Ensure that the selected market (technology, innovation) is in line with your strategy, before beginning to plan.
- Are the members interested in the chosen activity?
- How will the mission be financed?
- Which cooperation partners can be involved?

Once you have considered these issues you are ready to plan the practicalities.

IDENTIFY COOPERATION PARTNERS

- Discuss the visit with relevant partners, both in Denmark and in the given market. In Denmark this can be other stakeholders of the cluster.
- The mission can include one or more of the following activities: A kick-off meeting in Denmark or at the destination; a visit to a fair, a conference and a matchmaking event; relevant visits to clusters, companies, authorities, knowledge institution; network activities; etc.

- Enter into an agreement about the visit, written or verbal, with the chosen partners, and include success criteria (for instance a minimum of five participants).
- Prepare time and action plan for the whole process.
- It is important to have a close ongoing dialogue during the entire process.

CONTENTS AND PRACTICAL MATTERS

- Discuss practical matters with the local partners, including travel options, company visits, possible fair and conference visits.
- Prepare a budget for the mission and calculate a price per participant. The budget may contain the following: rental facilities, local transportation, board, catering, gifts for hosts, entrance fees for fair/conference, fee for collaborators.
- Look into the possibilities for co-funding for the participants, for instance support from Enterprise Europe Network, Innovation Express funds, etc.
- Make reservations and/or enter into agreements with the partners about the above-mentioned practicalities.
- Do not take on the role as a travel agent but do recommend various options. In some cases, however, it is useful to make a joint hotel reservation.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS IN DENMARK

- Prepare and distribute the invitation to the mission to the members through all possible communication platforms, including social media.
- Use the cluster's stakeholders/knowledge institutions to disseminate the invitation. Set a deadline for registration that allows you some time to recruit the last participants.
- Follow up, for instance by phone, possibly

using student assistants.

- Prepare a list of participants.
- If you are organising an informal matchmaking event, ask the participants to fill out a short cooperation profile after signing up. This will ensure that the foreign participants know what the Danish participants are looking for or have to offer. These short profiles are sent to the foreign partners, who can then forward them to the foreign participants for a match.
- For formal, online matchmaking events, ask the Danish participants to register and submit a cooperation profile online, to be used at the event. Here, everything is done online, including the matchmaking.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS ABROAD

- The foreign partners are usually responsible for recruiting local participation, including organising visits at companies and/or knowledge institutions and recruiting participants for different formal and informal matchmaking or networking events. At informal matchmaking events, the local partners also will ensure cooperation profiles from the local participants.
- It is important to remain in close contact with the local partners.

JUST AHEAD OF THE DEPARTURE

- Coordinate all the activities at the destination, including the visiting programme and practicalities such as hotels and restaurants.
- Send the final visiting programme to the participants.
- Check to see that the budget is adhered to.
- Should there be any material for the press/press coverage?

- Prepare questions for speakers at meetings, if relevant.
- Prepare presentations or speeches, if relevant.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Make sure that at least one cluster employee participates.
- Make sure that an employee from the local partners participates, so that they can also help with practicalities during the visit.
- Meet the participants at the airport or at the destination.
- Always try to be one step ahead of the schedule.
- Network with the members of your cluster and the foreign participants.

EVALUATION

- Immediately after the event: Prepare an evaluation questionnaire in order to learn how the participants assess the mission, including company visits, fair and conference visits, matchmaking, hotels and catering. In addition please ask if there are potential partnership agreements.
- After six months you can consider preparing a short survey to learn whether further partnership agreements have been signed.

APPENDIX 5: CHECKLIST FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL MATCHMAKING EVENT

This checklist was made with a Danish context in mind, but it can easily be adjusted for use in other countries.

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE THE TRIP

- Analyse regional sectors and identify suitable sectors
- Make sure that the chosen market/ technology/ innovation is in line with your strategy before planning begins.
- Are the members interested in the selected activity?
- How is the event to be financed?
- Which cooperation partners can be engaged?

Once you have considered these points, you are ready to plan the practicalities.

HOW TO ARRANGE A MATCHMAKING EVENT?

Matchmaking events often take place in connection with big international fairs, conferences, company missions abroad or at major Danish and international events. This is a good way of complementing participation in the main event, as it can create concrete results in an efficient and constructive manner. It adds value for all parties. All potential partners are gathered together in one place, thus the participants can save time and money as compared to having to travel around the world to meet potential partners.

In the long term, more international partnership agreements are signed. These benefit everyone, whether they are mainly commercial, technological or project-oriented.

DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT

- Enough internal resources available to manage the event professionally?
- Are there other competing events?
- Where should it be held: our own conference, fair, etc.?
- Is there a critical mass for it to be implemented?
- Who is in the target group?
- Identify and select Danish and foreign cooperation partners.
- Enter into agreements to implement the event and consider making a time-and-action plan for the event.

ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS WITH RELEVANT COOPERATION PARTNERS ABOUT:

- Facilities, tables, chairs, information desks, accommodation, assistance during the day and other practicalities.
- Promotion in Denmark and abroad.

PREPARING THE EVENT

- Selecting a matchmaking tool (there are a number of online tools especially made for matchmaking: b2match, Converne and Talkb2b, to mention a few).
- Prepare a marketing strategy and package.

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS FOR PROMOTIONAL USE

- Present your products, services or projects.
- Meet new cooperation partners face-to-face.
- Engage with international contacts, and begin an international cooperation.
- Find new commercial / technological / research partners.
- Obtain the latest knowledge about relevant topics.
- Present, discuss and develop new projects.

PROMOTION, AND RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

- Activate all relevant channels of communication.
- Identify and register a few top participants on the website.
- Launch the website about six months before the event.
- Promote the matchmaking event by sending out an invitation to all relevant target groups.
- Register, create and validate profiles. Participants are asked to register and to create a cooperation profile. The organisers validate profiles, if relevant.
- Participants are asked to book meetings three to four weeks before the event. Mails are sent to the participants automatically. Contact can be made by phone.
- Keep in constant contact with the cooperation partners to ensure participants.

NOT ENOUGH PARTICIPANTS

- Keep an ongoing status of the number of participants and meetings. Should there be fewer than expected, you may have to consider cancelling the event.

MATCHMAKING

- The deadline has expired. No more participants can register, and the system matches all the meeting requests.
- The individual meeting schedules is sent to all participants.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVENT

- Print all the individual meeting schedules, place cards, etc.
- Prepare an opening speech, if appropriate.
- Check up on facilities and practicalities.
- Brief all the assistants about the course

of the event, finalise the manning of the information desk, contact those who did not show up for their booked meetings, etc.

- Implementation of the matchmaking.
- No-show?

EVALUATION

After all the hustle and bustle, and usually also a requirement for the submission of various reports, it gives some satisfaction to be able to measure the outcome of the event. Apart from evaluating the event itself, you can also obtain knowledge to use for the next event, for instance by looking at concrete output such as: How many people participated? How many meetings were interesting? How much potential collaboration occurred? How many actual cooperation agreements were entered into? For this very specific purpose, the online system has a built-in function to send out evaluation forms:

- The first evaluation is sent out immediately after the event (maximum of one week after).
- Reminders are sent out to get more answers.
- The next evaluation is sent out about six months after the event.

Based on the above, you can write success stories, and send out press releases, articles and such to your cluster and to the printed and social media.

WHY DO CLUSTERS INTERNATIONALISE?...



The products are born to be international or global.

We cover the whole spectrum from innovation to export.

To create new energy and synergy, together with
and deriving from the huge resources and business
and innovation potentials that can be found abroad.

To reduce barriers that the companies may face
when entering international markets.

To attract international companies to the
cluster and the cluster's test facilities.

