Annual Conference and General Assembly 2010:
Outcomes of the session on project clustering

August 2010

Presentation on project clustering moderated by Matt Nichols

The moderator presented the cluster concept, particularly with regards the aim, background, approach, implementation and financial details. For more information on this please refer to the Clustering Background Paper.

Questions and comments

After the presentation, the floor was opened for questions and comments from the audience. Answers were given by Christian Byrith and Carsten Westerholt from the Programme Secretariat.

Q. Are there any disadvantages of clustering?
A. Project clustering should not detract from core project work. In other words, the new clustering activity should not reduce the focus on the main (original) project activity.

A. One potential disadvantage (challenge) could be not having someone to assist in the clustering process. Therefore the cluster facilitator proposal is a really good idea to facilitate the technical questions etc.

A. Another potential disadvantage would be the administrative side. Projects should be careful that money is not taken up by control costs.

Comment on co-operation area
There should also be room for co-operation between programme areas in connection to project clustering.

Comment on grant rate
The moderator explained that the Programme Monitoring Committee has agreed for funds for the concept to be available although they have not yet discussed a grant rate.

Q. How will the project find the right cluster partners in the most practical manner?
A. Themes and mega themes – the secretariat really want to discuss it and find out if the participants have other ideas. How to find cluster partners is also an important issue. There will be some sort of event to facilitate this. Target groups – we should give this question back to the audience. What would they like to achieve through cluster projects? Raising visibility and pooling?

Q. If we are involving the private sector, how would that work financially?
A. Private sector involvement would be like in any other project, i.e. the project results need to be publically available, etc.

Q. It is important that we focus on the 'people' clustering is aiming at. When we have found that out we should ask them what needs they have. Can we formulate questions for cluster people to use?
A. It was noted that there should be discussion around the target groups. The project itself has to see a benefit in becoming engaged in project clustering and it has to be useful for its day to day work. As it can be hard for projects to get an overview about what is going on in the other themes, the secretariat and cluster facilitator will assist as much as possible in this process. The Cluster Facilitator and Contact Points have an important role in helping to bypass any competitiveness between projects. The Cluster Facilitator would work very much on the ground. It is projects that will drive the initiative. We have been saying for long time it's really important to tell stories and some projects have been very successful. Clustering allows for joining up and having a large voice to tell people what is happening.

Q. How many in a cluster. Can the entire partnership be in a cluster?
A. Possibly yes, but it has to be manageable.

Q. If project communication if not good enough why don't we just focus on this instead of initiating project clustering.
A. With clustering we will be able to get further by working together. Interreg IIIB evaluation from the European Commission shows that considerable co-operation took place in IIIB but that it was not so hard hitting – in terms of results. There has been an improved quality in IVB programme, however, there still seems to be a problem with communicating results to EC, politicians etc. The clustering approach is good to gather critical masses and get the message through to the relevant levels.

Collection of ideas and feedback on clustering concept at work stations
Projects were asked to gather around five work stations that had been set up around the room according to the following mega and sub themes:
- Innovation
- Sustainable communities
- Climate
- Transport
- Managing maritime resources

These themes have been identified as the crosscutting issues along which clustering is most likely to happen. It must be noted, however, that these themes are only suggestions and that other clustering ideas may also be approved. Under each mega theme, a number of potentially interesting sub themes for clustering have been identified.
Projects were asked to write their name and suggestions/ideas/wishes for clustering, including potential cluster project ideas.

The issues discussed at the work stations partly overlap with the questions and comments discussed in the plenary. The suggestions made can be summarised under the following headings:

Cluster concept
The cluster **concept** needs to be defined. Several projects stated that they "cluster" already and asked about the differences between spontaneous and "forced" clustering. For examples, there is an example in area of intervention 2.3 with 6 projects trying to define a cluster within water and climate change. The clusters should have a clear focus. The target groups and their needs should be carefully defined.

As for the **purpose** of clustering, some projects consider the cluster approach a mere communication effort whereas others mention the opportunity to share information and harmonise results among projects. For one project clustering could be a step towards strategic initiatives (such as carbon zero transport and logistics).

As for the **aims** of clustering, improving visibility (especially on EU level) and influencing EU policy seem to be considered most important. The clusters should therefore connect to EU policies and DG initiatives.

Critical voices mentioned that some target groups could not realistically be reached with a "small" cluster project. It was also highlighted that the clustering concept cannot expect to modify or add substantially to the projects´ activities.

Practicalities of clustering

Several projects stated that a **grant rate** of 50% would not be enough and suggested to raise the rate to 75% or even 100%. Co-funding might be hard to organise at short notice and with governments economising. Also, the budget of 250.000 Euros might be tight to set up a "real" cluster project.

The **funding period** should be extended to 24 months with annual reporting to reduce reporting and FLC costs.

Several suggestions referred to the importance of **cross-programme** clustering. Also the potential benefit of a cluster **between the mega themes** was mentioned. It was asked if **transnationality** had to be considered an important aspect of clustering.

Once more it was highlighted that the **competition** between the individual projects needs to be overcome to create successful clusters.

Some questions referred to **organisational issues**: Who would initiate clusters? Who would take the lead? Who would be the cluster partners? And how would the work within the cluster be organised? A remark was that already now projects struggle with their time plans.

Conclusions and next steps

Those project representatives present were asked if they were interested to support the cluster concept. The vast majority present voted in favour for the development of the concept.

The Secretariat announced that they would consequently work on the concept, furthering the details, over the summer period. An event focusing on project clustering would be likely later in the year. There might be a call for cluster projects at the end of 2010, beginning of 2011. The Programme's Monitoring Committee will conclude about the progress so far and decide about the next steps during their next meeting in September this year.

It was explained that there would be criteria developed to guide the clustering process. In addition, it was stated that the 6th call was postponed until 2011 and that the 6th call will not automatically be combined with a call for clustering projects.

Further details would be posted on the Programme website.

APPENDIX

Collected ideas and feedback of clustering at work stations

Transport Mega theme

Interested projects:

- iTransfer
- LOPINOD
- Dryport
- StratMoS
- WFG (Waterways for Growth)
- CNSS (Clean North Sea Shipping)
- SAS
- Food Port
- CA! (Coast Alive!): Sustainable access to natural / cultural heritage

Questions / comments

- 75% grant rate (100% for UK?)
- Influence
    - EU transport policy / future of transport
    - National policy
- Use of results of clustering:
    - Relationship with Europe 2020?
    - Relationship with future structural funding?
- Imbalance in infrastructure:
    - Ports
    - Road / rail
    - Private
    - More public
- Clearly identify focus
    - Share info among projects? (already happening)
    - Increase visibility among EU, politicians, private sector (more important)
- Cross programme
- Focus policy on private development – Business productivity
- Joint visibility
- Step towards "strategic initiatives" such as carbon zero transport and logistics
- Competitiveness between individual projects needs to be taken
- Freight flows
- Climate change mitigation

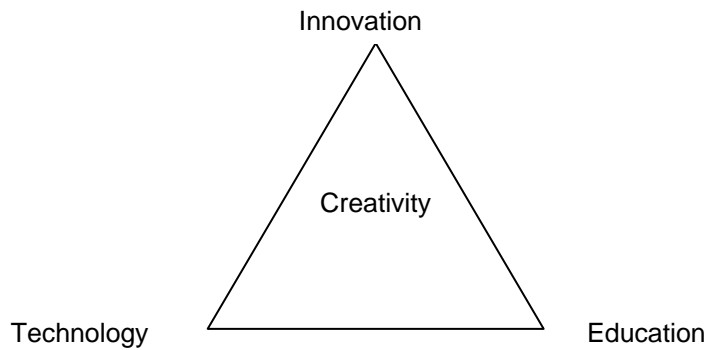- Recession resilience

Innovation Mega theme

Themes:
- Competitive products
- Competitive sectors
- Private sector
- Public sector framework
- Public sector facilitation
- Cluster development
- Excellence
- Competitive frameworks
- Competitive training
- Education:
    o Living lab
    o Lifelong learning
    o E-learning approach
- Creative industries
- Public, private cooperation (PPC)
- Developing market-mentality in R&D

Interested projects:
- E-CLIC
- CCC
- Smart Cities
- NMU (Northern Maritime University)
- IFP?
- Interreg should be connected to the Lead Market Initiatives from DG Enterprise and the European Technology Platforms related to DG Research

Questions / Comments
- Who will initiate clusters?
- Who will lead cluster group?
- We would like to call the cluster "Innovation – Technology – Education":

Innovation

Creativity

Technology   Education

And we have a cluster already: E-Clic, CCC, Smart Cities all the three are based on technology, development, new services for citizens, SMEs

- Definition of cluster?
- Do we have transnational clusters?

Sustainable Communities Mega theme

Themes:
- Regional development
- Transition
- Demographic change (shrinkage)
- Communities of the future
- Metropolis region (urban/rural links)
- Urban / rural
- Governance
- Quality of live
- Involvement
- Interactive participation
- Role of social economy in managing / developing natural / cultural resources

Interested projects:
- DC Noise: quality of life / governance
- SUSCOD
- Vital: transition (from brawn to brain)
- WFG (Waterways for Growth): Multi-functional use of water

Questions / comments
- Would clustering across programme borders be possible / encouraged?
- How to organise co-operation between three / four / five approved projects
- Who are your cluster partners?
    o Entire project partnership?
- Forced co-operation versus spontaneous clustering?
    o Content (themes) and partnerships

- 250 K 100% Grant
- We have communication work packages and our interests. If needed and wished, can this initiative also answer some of the project's needs?
- We "cluster" already

Climate Mega theme

Themes:

- Carbon reduction (animals, plants, soils, others)
- Eco-efficiency
- Biodiversity
- Energy efficiency:
    - bioenergy plants
- Water management:
    - High water
    - Irrigation
    - WFD
- Water management:
    - wind / off-shore wind
    - biomass
    - others
- Sustainable land management:
    - pasture
    - arable land
    - landscaping
- Clustering budget: keep it simple: make a strong exchange programme as a (future) cluster
    - That has to be founded with this money, nothing more, nothing less
    - Co-funding is impossible in this short notice and governments economizing
- 250 000 t to little to forma a real "cluster" project
- Make it possible to go beyond to set time for the end of your own project
- Most activity will be management / promotion
    - Cannot fund this at 50:5+ rate
- Benefits are significant for end-user groups (SMEs) cannot reach them "realistically" with a "small" cluster project

Interested projects

- Clima Fruit
- BLAST
- CLIWAT
- DiPol
- Build with Care

- SAWA
- enerCoast / BioCHAR
- Aquarius
- Skint
- SUSCOD
- CPA (Climate Proof Areas)
- C2CI (Cradle to Cradle Islands)
- POWER cluster
- IFP Energy – offshore wind
- Water management cluster

Questions / comments
- We would like to influence future EU energy policy (Energy Action Plan 2011-2020), but the we have to be quick (Build with Care)
- Suggest 24 mo funding (not 18 mo) – with annual reporting (to reduce reporting / FLC costs)
- Important to identify target groups and their needs precisely (CLIWAT)
- Combine clusters climate and innovation, adaptive measures
- There is an initiative in the 2.3 theme with 6 projects trying to define a cluster within water and climate change (CLIWAT)
- Skint, SAWA and MARE already try to cooperate
- A climate-cluster could facilitate the urgently needed integration of Adaptation and Mitigation!
- Use cluster to harmonise results and conclusions between Interreg projects with similar themes (e.g. MARE / SAWA / Skint)
- We have to become more wide in a cluster for example climate, not just the projects than the region and the actors involved in the area
- About how much money are we talking altogether
- Why don't you ask for more communication in the projects if the communication plan is not enough?

Managing Maritime Resources Mega theme
Themes:
- Coastal Zone Management
- Making best use of maritime resources

Interested projects:
- BLAST
- TIDE (interested but still somewhat sceptical)
- CPA (Climate Proof Areas)
- NMU (Northern Maritime University)

Questions / comments

- I don't like clustering
- Good idea, but perhaps more as an additional communication aspect:
    o Additional communication aspect to collect and synthesize the best project ideas and then packaging those to get EU level attention.
    o Since the projects are already halfway done with their work, the clustering concept cannot expect to modify or add substantially to the project's activities.
    o Partners involved have already too little time and too many tasks to deliver project content.
    o Not disguising this as more than it is: a glorified communication effort.
- Is Maritime Resources more "oil & gas" or rather "education" and/or "technology"?
- Why not clustering between the Mega themes? Some projects might get better results interacting in the Mega themes.