Interreg

Danube Transnational Programme
DanuBioValNet

Cross-clustering partnership for boosting eco-innovation by developing a joint bio-based value-added network for the Danube Region

interreg-danube.eu/danubiovalnet

Programme Output Indicators: PO7

Output 6.3

Cluster managers trained in new cluster services

June 2018

Introduction

Activity 5.1 of "DanuBioValNet" aims to develop and implement new services for cluster organisations to facilitate transnational and cross-sectoral eco-innovation in the bio-based industry sector, including the organization of 3 cluster manager trainings.

Rationale behind is the fact that the establishment of cross-clustering partnerships in order to boost eco-innovation and to develop a joint bio-based value added network in the Danube Region requires the development of new cluster services as a key element in supporting cluster members in becoming more innovative and more competitive in the context of the new industrial value chains and in particular in the bio-based industry.

3 cluster manager trainings have been organized in Period 3 of DanuBioValNet:

- Sofia, on the 19th of March 2018, in the frame of the TCI European Conference, mainly organised by ABC.
- Cluj Napoca, on the 17th of May 2018, in the frame of the EU-Asia Gateway Conference, mainly organised by CLUSTERO
- Opatja, on the 5th of June 2018, in the frame of the Wood Technology Conference, mainly organised by CWC.

1st Cluster Managers Training Sofia

Over 30 cluster managers and cluster policy stakeholders from several countries covering a geographic area stretching from Georgia to the UK participated to the training dedicated to the development of new cluster services, organized by the DTP Project "DanuBioValNet" on the 19th of March in Sofia in the eve of the European TCI Conference 2018.

The event consisted of 2 parts:

- General presentations of the DanuBioValNet Project (Dominik Patzelt), the Cluster Tool Box (Daniel Cosnita) and of the new cluster excellence approach of ESCA (by Thomas Laemmer Gamp, director ESCA)
- A moderated discussion aiming at identifying new cluster best practice examples.

Best practice examples from Germany, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria covering a wide range of topics such as management, inter and intra cluster

networking, innovation, marketing and internationalization have been presented only to stir up a vivid discussion which led to the identification of several more:

- Green Synergy Clusters Bulgaria , Internationalisation – Strategic Cluster Partnership
- Trakia Economic Zone, Bulgaria: cooperation in attracting FDI and cooperation regarding HR development
- Furniture Cluster Georgia: cross-sectoral cooperation between furniture production and design

The discussion has been pursued against a wider assistance on the internationalization panel of the TCI Conference on the 22nd of March, moderated and conducted by the DanuBioValNet Team. As location, culture and size have been identified as main factors influencing internationalization, the Bulgarian Furniture Cluster (BFC) and the Romanian textile cluster ASTRICO Nord East have presented ways of turning the experience of traditional sectors into global opportunities via the identification of innovative niches (smart re-furnituring - BFC) and/or increasing the length of the value chain in the cluster (centralized acquisition and marketing system – ASTRICO NE).

2nd Cluster Managers Training Cluj

On the 17th and 18th of May, Cluj hosted the "EU-Asia Gateway" international conferenced aimed at bridging clusters from Europe and East and South East Asia. It was the 4th international cluster conference organized by the Northern Transylvanian Cluster Consortium, under the umbrella of the Romanian Cluster Association – CLUSTERO. Over 40 representatives of clusters, research organisations and policy makers from Europe and the Far East, discussed intensively on the DanuBioValNet approach on internationalization: efficient fair participation, preparation of a clever offer in order to

meet demand and useful digital tools to manage the complexity of the internationalization process are the best practices which have been worked out based on Austrian, German and respectively Romanian examples.

Again, the event had 2 parts:

- General presentations of DanuBioValNet (Dominik Patzelt), the Cluster Tool Box (Andrea Bruckner) and of the cluster management tool under development by the Northern Transylvanian Cluster Consortium (The Secured Communication Platform for Cluster Members)
- Moderated discussion

Participants have been divided in 3 groups:

- 1st group, moderated by Mrs Bianca Muntean from iTechTransylvania Cluster, Romania, discussed on the The Secured Communication Platform for Cluster Members.
- 2nd group moderated by Andrea Bruckner discussed on the Upper Austrian best practice of "Experience Exchange Rounds"
- 3rd group moderated by Dominik Patzelt discussed on the BW best practice "Meet and Match".

3ʳᵈ Cluster Managers Cluster Managers Training Opatija

The third cluster manager training of the DanuBioValNet project, held in June 2018 in Opatija, Croatia, delivered several interesting conclusions and recommendations. The main topic of the training was related to the development of new cluster services that could support the internationalisation of clusters.

After several interesting presentations, the Cluster Tool Box was presented and the participants had the opportunity to learn about best practices from different project partners and clusters in the Danube Region.

The training ended with the discussion about cluster internationalisation as the main challenge of the European clusters in the future period. The participants (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and the Czech Republic) came to the several common issues and challenges and delivered following conclusions and recommendations:

1. Companies' access to new markets and knowledge should be supported by clusters. In long-term, this requires new partnerships among different stakeholders related to the market knowledge but also to the development of new products and services. In order to provide this kind of support, clusters need more support from their own governments, especially in terms of financing those activities.
2. There is a big problem on the whole market which is related to the cluster definition. There are many organizations that call themselves "cluster" and they are actually only organizations or associations. The clear line should be drawn on the European level, and some firm criteria should be established so that governments could be able to support "real clusters" in a right way.
3. The further challenge, that is especially recognizable in the Southeast European Region, is the mix-up with the NACE codes. There are many companies that register under several different codes and operate in some totally different business. This causes problems for the clusters to identify possible members, and it lingers the collaboration possibilities in general.

4. Impact-oriented cluster activities should be supported, especially in terms of internationalisation. It is not enough to create the strategies, but the clusters should provide improved frameworks for pilot projects that are directly linked to the companies. In this way, companies accept better cluster activities and actually have a need to be part of it as an active member.

Therefore, projects like the DanuBioValNet are needed. The main focus of the project is how to develop some new value-chains that will support the competitiveness of the European companies, and clusters, as linkages between all relevant stakeholders, are one of the important regional innovation system stakeholders, especially when it comes to cross-sectoral collaboration.

Annex

Table 1: Participation of the target group Business Support Organisation (including Cluster Management), Higher Education & Research, Regional Public Authority and SME at the three trainings in Sofia, Cluj and Opatija

	Sofia	Cluj	Opatija
Business Support Organisation	23	23	7
Higher Education and Research	0	4	2
Regional Public Authoriy	1	1	2
SME	0	5	4