

Economic Clusters: Strategic Initiative project idea

Project name:

Clustering NW Europe's Clusters

Which of the S.I. Fields of Action best describe your project:

3. Developing Capacity for innovation and knowledge based economy. Section B: Facilitating technology and knowledge transfer and developing and/or strengthening economic clusters

General aims of the project:

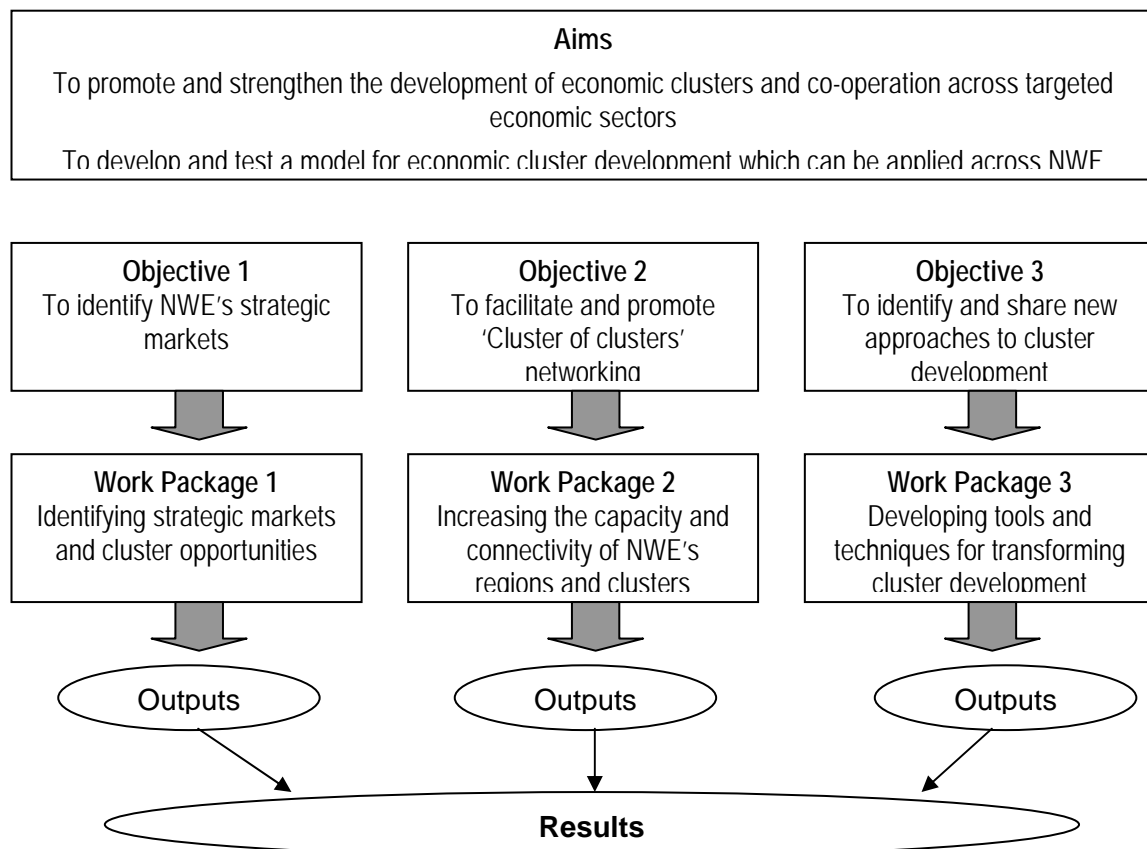
To promote and strengthen the development of economic clusters and co-operation across targeted economic sectors

To develop and test a model for economic cluster development which can be applied across the NWE area

Specific objectives:

- To identify strategic markets for NWE's clusters and regions
- To facilitate and promote 'Cluster of clusters' networking between SMEs and their clusters in NWE
- To identify and share new approaches to cluster development across NW Europe

Link between objectives and activities



Identifying target clusters

The project development process has questioned which clusters should be engaged; is this about all economic clusters, or is it about targeting specific clusters or sectors?

One possibility is to focus on **low-carbon clusters**; that is those enterprises and sectors which can contribute to a low-carbon future. This will bring together aspects of the manufacturing sector, the service sectors, energy companies, food companies etc, but linked by the common theme of low-carbon contributors.

Some target actions

Identifying strategic markets

- Baseline analysis of cluster development activity in participating regions
- Analysis of NWE-wide opportunities and markets, and comparison with regional priorities
- Creation of a searchable inter-region database
- Links to DG ENTERPRISE cluster observatory (sharing of information?)

Cluster of clusters' networking

- Increasing capacity in regions
 - Development of 'cluster development hubs' in each region; teams of people involved in cluster development. Exchange views between public bodies & SMEs (communication platform)
 - Mobility of SMEs and public authorities; staff exchanges, business exploratory visits. Ambassadors programme
 - Tools to help organisations (SMEs, research bodies) in one region connect to those in another region
- Increasing capacity in clusters
 - International strategies for clusters
 - Access to expertise in other regions to help SMEs undertake feasibility studies
 - International travel/innovation vouchers to encourage SME connections
 - Developing a tool to help clusters analyse their potential and priorities
- Transnational networking
 - Establishing a transnational team of cluster hubs

New approaches to cluster development

- Development of 'success stories' from regions
- Skills development for cluster development staff
- Development of a toolkit for regions to develop new forms of clusters
- Develop alliances with financing institutions
- Dissemination to other regions, and via EU networks

Expected results:

- Direct assistance to XX number of SMEs to internationalise their cluster contacts and collaborative links
- Creation of a searchable inter-regional database
- Developing and building the capacity of XX number of cluster development hubs in the participating regions, connected in a transnational network
- Producing and disseminating a cluster development toolkit for EU regions

Possible total budget and ERDF sought:

Still to be defined according to the number of partners and the concrete action plan

Partners involved at this stage:

Interest so far from partners in BE, DE, FR, IE, NL and UK. Currently 10-15 partners are interested.

Further partners sought:

Interest sought particularly from other countries in the NWE area (LUX, CH) and from other organisations which have experience of cluster development.

How are the partners going to jointly benefit from this transnational cooperation project?

By setting up a NWE-project, partners will benefit from financial and political support. They will further be able to exchange their know-how/experiences and jointly elaborate best-practice models (by implementing pilot actions) which may then influence their respective national policy. In addition, the partners are often confronted with the same (EU-) requirements and therefore are most likely to welcome a European approach to these challenges.

How is your project relevant to the identified S.I. Fields of Action?

This project specifically addresses item B of field 3 of the SIs. It will promote and strengthen the development of economic clusters (and/or co-operation across targeted economic sectors) across the NWE

How does your project display a high degree of transnationality?

The project will gather relevant partners across North West Europe who will jointly elaborate actions which have to be relevant for a large part if not the entire NWE area.

What is innovative and original about your project?

This project identifies the added value which can come from international cooperation, by linking researchers and regional development agencies across international boundaries. In doing this, it will identify the gaps in economic clustering activity which cannot be financed from other programmes (e.g. CIP, mainstream structural funds, FP7)

What strategic impact is your project likely to have?

It will promote and strengthen the development of economic clusters (and/or co-operation across targeted economic sectors) across the NWE, and in turn generate knowledge transfer, innovation, enterprise, wealth creation, and employment.

Is your project a follow-up to a previous project? If yes, how does it build on previous results?

Not directly. It should build on finished and ongoing projects which are funded under other EU programmes, but also taking into account projects funded under other Interreg programmes. The NWE IVB project FASILIS has some synergies.

If applicable, which other funding Programmes or EU Policies might be relevant for your project?

As mentioned above, there is clear EU, national and regional development agency interest in this field (including the EC Communication of 2008). There is also potential to build on any relevant INTERREG IIIC projects in this field, and the potential to disseminate results by mainstreaming/follow-on investments on the EU convergence and competitiveness programmes.

Project idea source

- NWE Strategic Initiatives step1 workshops report, August 2008
- Strategic Initiatives Working Group (SIWG) PI proposal March 2009
- SIWG report, 21st May 09
- Strategic Initiative Workshop, Brussels, 17 November 2009