

**Transnational Cooperation Programme 2007-2013
INTERREG IVB North West Europe**



INTERREG IVB

**Strategic Initiative – Cluster Development
CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

17 February – 10 March 2010 (12 noon)

Introduction

The present document provides specific information for approved projects wishing to apply under Strategic Initiatives Cluster Development. It provides information on:

- Background of Strategic Initiatives
- Definition of Strategic Initiative Clusters
- Attributes of Strategic Initiative Clusters
- Benefits of participating in a Strategic Initiative
- Development of a Strategic Initiative Cluster
- Application Procedure
- Selection procedure

Background of Strategic Initiatives

Within its priorities, the North West Europe Programme identified the following themes as particularly interesting for the area:

- transport and logistics chains;
- production and consumption of energy from renewable sources;
- developing capacity for innovation and knowledge based economy;
- challenges posed by demographic change and immigration;
- adaptation to the spatial impacts of climate change.

To stimulate the development of projects to tackle these issues, the Programme put in place the 'Strategic Initiatives' process. This approach, which is included in the Operational Programme, shall take into consideration the geographical and socio-economic distinctiveness of

the NWE area and promote a strategic response to significant thematic and territorial gaps in the Programme area.

The Strategic Initiatives have been designed to represent an effective answer to the challenges identified by the SWOT analysis on the NWE cooperation area.

What is a Strategic Initiative Cluster?

The initiative on Cluster Development is shared between the Programme and already approved projects. Clusters of projects can collectively have a 'strategic' relevance if they cooperate to maximize their impact and visibility. So far, the Programme has identified three potential clusters of approved projects. This allocation of projects is strictly thematic and addresses the following topics:

- ✓ Innovative approaches to urban, inter-urban and rural public passenger transport (Currently including ICMA, SINTROPHER, ROCK, TRAMSTORE, BAPTS).
- ✓ Innovative approaches to sustainable energy promotion and management (Currently including REGAIN, LIVINGGREEN, CAP'EM, BLISS).
- ✓ Adaptation to the expected spatial impacts of climate change (Currently including FORESTCLIM, IMCORE, FUTURE CITIES, WAVE, AMICE, ALFA, FLOODRESILIENCY, C-CHANGE).

Additionally, the Programme may invite any suitable projects approved in the Calls 4 and 5, or future approved projects, to join these potential strategic clusters if they materialise. The Programme may also develop strategic clusters on other Strategic Initiative fields.

Which are the attributes of a Strategic Initiative cluster?

Clusters applying to be part of a Strategic Initiative will be assessed and scored against the regular Programme selection criteria. Apart from that, they will need to demonstrate their strategic dimension by presenting high standards regarding the following attributes:

1. RELEVANCE TO THE IDENTIFIED STRATEGIC TOPIC

The cluster's focus, objectives, proposed activities and intended effects properly correspond to the strategic topic and objectives identified by the Programme and specified in this Terms of Reference for the targeted call (see list of topics above).

2. TRANSNATIONALITY

The cluster provides a joint strategy, programme or concept with relevance for the whole of NWE area or large contiguous parts of it.

3. STRATEGIC IMPACT

The cluster is very likely to produce important effects within and beyond lifetime of INTERREG funding. Such effects must include (but not be limited to):

- a) wielding a clearly demonstrable influence on local, regional, national and EU policies;
- b) attracting follow-up activities and/or investments.

4. INTEGRATION

The cluster displays a good vertical representation of players and stakeholders, including different political and administrative levels. Either in the cluster partnership and/or in the Communication Strategy.

5. ORIGINALITY AND INNOVATIVENESS

The cluster represents a very good chance for shaping political and scientific discussions in its field of intervention. This is demonstrated through the involvement of high level political or scientific representatives within the partnership and/or in the Communication Strategy. The cluster builds on the results of the approved projects while distinguishing itself in terms of added value of the implemented actions, broad scope of the partnership and strong impact sought.

What are the extra benefits of participating in a Strategic Initiative?

Projects and partners participating in a Strategic Initiative Cluster will be able to build a very strong track record and reputation in the field of European Territorial Cooperation, which may help in future EU territorial cooperation programmes and also other national and EU funding programmes. Being selected as part of a Strategic Initiative will prove beneficial for several reasons. It will in particular bring the following distinctive advantages:

1. Strategic Initiative clusters will receive an additional assistance of up to 1% of their total cluster budget from the Programme's Technical Assistance budget (no additional match funding required) in order to facilitate the cooperation with the other projects of the strategic cluster and promote stronger collective communication and dissemination across the NWE and wider EU.
2. Strategic Initiative Clusters will enjoy a high profile; they will benefit from wider exposure in the Programme's activities and events and they will be central to the Programme communication. The Programme will promote and possibly facilitate direct access of the Strategic Initiative's projects to the European Commission.
3. The Programme (through its Joint Technical Secretariat) will provide early and tailored support while developing a cluster proposal.

How to develop a Cluster?

The identified projects of a cluster define together a *Joint Action Plan (JAP)*, including a budget. The JAP should be discussed with the Joint Technical Secretariat before submission. A Cluster Leader has to be appointed who will submit the Application and be responsible for the overall coordination of the Cluster. The Partners of a Cluster will be all Project Partners that will incur costs for implementation. Other Project Partners will be considered as "Observers" of the Cluster.

In their Joint Action Plan, clusters could focus on the following main activities:

- Joint studies and investigations representing a common thread between the projects involved
- Testing activities and pilots based on integrated results
- Joint communication activities which are highly transnational, focus on EU "Hot Topics" and on the general public.

The start date of a Cluster will be the date of submission. It is the Cluster to decide on the duration time. However, the end date has to be the latest September 2015. Partners of projects finishing before the end date of the cluster may incur and claim costs after their project has finished.

All budget lines (Partner Staff, External Experts & Consultants, Travel & Accommodation, Meetings & Seminars, Publicity, Equipment, Investments, Audit costs and Administration costs) are eligible and can be claimed within the Cluster.

Preparation Costs are not eligible and cannot be claimed within the Cluster. Costs related to the Cluster preparation could be included under the budget of each participating project (cooperation with other projects).

Approved Clusters will submit a Progress Report and a Payment Claim twice a year, along with the regular reporting schedule of approved projects. Refunding of activities will be done accordingly twice a year.

Eligibility of costs will have to be confirmed by the approved First Level Controllers of the different Project Partners claiming expenditure, in accordance with the procedure stated in the Programme Control & Audit Guidelines. Following collection of these expenditures by the Cluster Leader, the First Level Controller of the Cluster Leader will ensure that all expenditures were duly controlled and certified by the Partner's First Level Controllers in order to finalise the Payment Claim. This model for the first level control procedure might be open to adaptation, in order to define the most simple and most cost efficient way to carry out the controls, based on the regulations and guidelines in place.

Application procedure

Clusters applying under the Call for Strategic Initiatives Cluster Development are requested to submit an Application Form, which can be downloaded from the NWE website at www.nweurope.eu.

The way a cluster displays the identified strategic attributes shall be reflected in the information provided in the relevant sections of the Application Form.

The necessary documents to complete are:

- Application Form (Part A and Part B)
- A list of all project partners participating in the cluster (Annex 1)
- A visualization of Cluster Management and Cooperation (Annex 2)
- Partnership Agreement signed by the Cluster Leader and the Project's Lead Partner (Annex 3; not compulsory, but recommended)

All Application Forms must be submitted in English completed, dated, stamped and signed by the Cluster Leader, together with all annexes. Please note that applications must **arrive by Wednesday 10 March 2010 at 12.00 (noon)** at the following address:

INTERREG IVB NWE Joint Technical Secretariat,
Les Arcuriales, 45, rue de Tournai, 6/D, 59000 Lille, France

Selection procedure

Clusters applying to be part of a Strategic Initiative will be assessed and scored against the regular Programme eligibility and selection criteria, provided that :

- They are relevant to the Strategic Initiative Cluster Topics as defined in the present Terms of Reference;
- They are relevant for (and have impact on) the whole of NWE area or large contiguous parts of it.

In the selection procedure particular attention will be paid to the selection criteria most relevant to the strategic attributes of SI projects listed earlier in this paper, namely:

- **SEL1.** The project involves a high level of transnational cooperation.
- **SEL4.** The project adopts an innovative approach to tackle the territorial challenges of NWE.
- **SEL6.** The bidding partnership is consistent, i.e. it brings together the relevant partners with the capacity to deliver and make use of project results.
- **SEL10.** The project provides good prospect for long-lasting activity and leverage for extra investment.
- **SEL11.** The project has an effective communication strategy. The results and experience acquired by the project will be transferable and clearly communicated.

The decisions on cluster selection will be made during the 6th Programme Steering Committee meeting taking place on 16-17 June 2010. Applicants will be informed immediately afterwards about the outcome.

If approved, a Subsidy Contract will be signed between the Managing Authority and the Cluster Leader.