

“The perspectives of the decision-making process of the 2014-2020 UE policies to boost the innovation and competitiveness in the industrial clusters”

April 9, Brussels

- Clusters are recognised as powerful instruments to foster industrial competitiveness, increase SME internationalisation and innovation capability, and contribute to regional development and growth;
- They act in general as attractive poles of talents, high-growth companies and private investments; this is the reason why so many EU regions today are so active in supporting clusters and use clusters as the building blocks of their regional smart specialisation strategies;
- Europe doesn't not lack of clusters. The **European Cluster Observatory**, co-funded under CIP, gives us today an excellent overview of cluster specialisation across all EU regions. More than 2000 clusters in 45 sectors are located in Europe today;
- There is however a great difference in terms of performance between these clusters. This is related to quality of their governance and more precisely to the managerial capacity of cluster organisations which animate a cluster on a day-to-day basis;
- Following the 2008 Communication on world-class clusters, CIP was instrumental in promoting over the last years the new concept of cluster excellence. Thanks to the actions implemented since then, the EU is today, in terms of thinking and concrete results, far ahead at international level.
- To be more precise, more than 350 cluster organisations have already used the benchmarking methodology developed at EU level and got the bronze label of cluster excellence. 8 of them has succeeded to get the gold label and more and more organisations are willing today to use this methodology to increase their visibility;
- Moreover, the **European Foundation of Clusters and Competitiveness** provides today trainings to improve the individual skills of cluster managers. This will contribute to raise the quality of cluster organisations and therefore improve the quality of the services offered to SMEs through clusters;
- To ensure that as many as possible cluster organisations will benefit from these actions, they should be pursued and further developed under COSME so that the European advantage in this area is retained which requires hard and continuous efforts and investments at EU level;
- Another area that should be supported under COSME is the area of international cluster cooperation. A lot has been achieved over the last two years at EU level, and at the same time there is an increasing interest from the cluster community in Europe to support SME internationalisation through clusters;
- The **European Cluster Collaboration Platform**, co-funded under CIP, is becoming a one-stop-shop for facilitating cluster cooperation at EU level. The Platform has already signed MoUs with Japan, India, Korea, Brazil, Tunis, and Morocco to develop concrete activities such as match making events between cluster organisations and promote SME internationalisation;
- This cluster cooperation for addressing international markets is the heart of the new concept of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships that could be supported under COSME helping European clusters to combine competences in emerging fields and international experiences and developing joint international strategies for the benefit of their SMEs.