

**ClusterPolisEE Project**  
**Smarter Cluster Policies for South East Europe**  
**Cod. SEE/C/0008/1.3/X**

**WP 1 – Transnational project and financial management**  
**act. 1.1 - SC, STC and WGs setting up and project management**

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**  
**FOR THE SETTING UP OF**  
**CLUSTERPOLISEE WORKING GROUPS**  
**CONCEPT PAPER**

**WORKING GROUP N. 3**

**PRIORITY AREA – “INTERNATIONAL CLUSTER COOPERATION AND NETWORKING”**

**WG LEADER: BULGARIAN SME AND PROMOTION AGENCY(BSMEPA)**

**1. BACKGROUND**

**1.1 Aims of WGs**

WGs' main objective is to contribute to a broader understanding of the tackled policy area, to anticipate future needs, and to foster greater cooperation among policy researchers and decision-makers from both government and business sectors. The employment of Working Groups (WGs) is intended as the preferred way of **engaging stakeholders in the co-design of new policy mechanisms**.

Each WG focuses on an established thematic priority area as defined in WP1, facilitating the breakdown of cluster development policies in specific discussion topics of interest to SEE countries and beyond, all WGs will touch upon the horizontal issue of multiple-level and cross-department cluster policies.

For this purpose, each WG, coordinated by the WG Leader, will bring together representatives of partnership (max. n. 3) and experts (max. n. 2) to share their insights and experiences and to

debate on issues of interest and concern. Ad hoc participants among relevant stakeholders are eligible to participate on a case-by-case basis in specific meetings and activities.

## **1.2 WG Leaders**

WG Leaders are assigned to lead and coordinate the thematic priority areas and are responsible for:

1. WGs setting up
  - Elaboration of WGs concept paper and Expression of Interest;
  - Collection and evaluation of Partnership EoIs (also providing partnership with necessary additional information and/or explanations);
  - Short-listing of experts to be involved in WGs.
2. Coordination of WGs activities through all project phases;
3. Structuring and documenting WGs' outputs and deliverables.

## **1.3 Overview of WGs' task**

The tasks of WGs in relation to the project activities are as follow:

- Act.3.1 - Provide feedback and share "*ClusterPolisEE Platform concept*" including specific recommendations on concerned topics;
- Act.3.2 - Support the definition of "ClusterPolisEE Platform operative plan and functional architecture";
- Act.3.3 - Constant feeding and coordination of the ClustePolisEE on-line repository on the respective WG thematic priority area and support the stakeholders consultation in the Platform on 6 central topics, as follows: development of the questionnaire for public consultation, coordination of public consultation, collection of questionnaires and elaboration of data;
- Act.5.1 - Organization and participation in WGs meetings (one physical and the others conducted through the policy learning platform);
- Act.5.1 - Provide a final report on the new policy learning mechanisms in n. 6 specific thematic priority areas, generation of six new policy learning mechanisms in support of Cluster

development and definition of reflective mutual policy approach on cross-department multiple policy level understanding and coordination;

Act.5.2 - Support the definition of the Guideline for Pilot Actions implementation (scheme), that will be based on the set of policy measures defined in WP5.1 and the Pilot Action implementation monitoring, through the close cooperation (also by platform) with the PPs that are assigned to lead and coordinate the Pilot Actions implementation,

Act.5.3 - Support the evaluation activity of the pilot actions;

Act.5.3 - Organization and participation in WGs final transnational Workshop in Brussels.

## **2. STRATEGY OF WORKING GROUP n. 3**

### **2.1 Description of the WG's topic**

This topic is at the core of the “raison d’etre” of Cluster Development in South East Europe. Small Countries in the poorest zones of Europe with low domestic demand require their SMEs to approach EU and outside EU markets very early in the growth cycle. The role of Clusters can make this difficult (and often dangerous) process a little more comfortable.

The strategy of WG3 is to look at the topic from a combination of “top-down” and “bottom-up” analysis. This is based on the principle that the international co-operation techniques of excellent cluster organizations, supported by excellent Cluster policies, can help business (especially SMEs) to improve their competitiveness and maximize their presence in global value chains.

The Internationalisation of Cluster organizations covers a range of activities that will both influence SEE Country policies and directly produce benefits for the region and country in which the Cluster is located:

- Access to Knowledge
- Access to New Markets
- Access to Key Infrastructures
- Access to New Products and forms of Collaboration

The latest European strategy documents – “Europe 2020” and “The Innovation Union and an Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era” set out the policy context.

Globalization has somewhat paradoxically strengthened the role of Clusters and strengthened their development. The more markets globalise, the more likely it is that the resources will flow to more attractive regions, reinforcing the role of Clusters and driving regional specialization. This has already occurred in IT, automotive and pharmaceuticals sub-sectors. Due to Clusters many European regions have developed competitive advantages in specialized functions, such as finance, flowers, petro-chemicals, and bio-technology. This specialization and competitive advantage now needs to be replicated in South-East Europe – using policies already tried and tested, and Knowledge sharing via the Cluster PolisEE learning platform.

Indicative Questions to be asked:

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target value</b>	<b>Period of deliver</b>
Concept papers for WGs setting up (including Eol format)	n.6	period 01
Expression of Interests for WGs setting up	n. 23	period 01
WGs setting up documents	n. 6	period 01
Platform concept - recommendations on specific topics	n. 1	period 01
Platform operative plan and functional architecture	n. 1	period 01
On line repository/database on the 6 central topics results and best practices	n. 1	period 06
Questionnaire for Stakeholder public consultation on 6 cluster central topics	n. 6	
Result of public consultation report and statistical data	n. 6	period 06
New policy learning mechanisms developed	n. 7	period 04
Reflective policy making mechanism pattern	n. 1	period 04
WGs meetings – reports	n. 5	period 05
Guideline for pilot actions implementation (scheme)	n. 1	period 04
Evaluation Report of Pilot action	n. 1	period 05
WGs Final Transnational Workshop	n. 1	period 05
<b>Results</b>	<b>Target value</b>	<b>Period of deliver</b>
Staff members with increased capacity on Learning mechanisms though platform management (knowledge/skills)	n. 78	period 02
policy makers with increate awareness through platform public consultation (knowledge/skills)	n. 52	period 06
stakeholders with increased awareness involved in platform public consultation (rate 1 to 20 for each PPs involved in mutual learning activities)	n. 260	period 06
Policy makers with enhanced capacities to identify and evaluate factors of competitiveness (critical mass) and concentrate resources on key priorities	n. 50	period 04
Established cooperation network, by platform, in support of cluster development	n. 6	period 05
Policy makers with enhanced ability and capacity due to a reflective policy making	n. 50	period 05
Regional based Cluster Policies improved by mutual learning	n. 13	period 05

These may include:

- The scope of actions/activities achievable for the WG during the project periods
- The mix of intra-SEEurope information and outside SEEurope information to be used
- The quality and verifiable information available in SEEurope, as opposed to the more substantial and longitudinal information volume from other parts of Europe/World
- The capacity of Partners to turn-round requests for information
- The ongoing 'popularity' or otherwise of the Learning Platform. What is being used and Why?

- The needs of Policy makers and what are they currently using and what might they use from the Learning Platform.

## **2.2 Consistency of the topic with EU policies**

Facilitating interregional co-operation has been a key part of Cohesion Policy since 2006. The initiative “Regions for Economic Change” was a further step in efforts to contribute to the modernization and jobs growth objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.

Cluster relevant themes detailed in this initiative include:

- Bringing innovation quickly to the market
- Improving capacity for research and innovation
- Improving knowledge and innovation for growth.

It built on the experience of the period 2000-2006 under Interreg IIC initiative supporting inter-regional co-operation. The ClusterPolisEE partners have many examples of their co-operation during this period. With the URBACT network for exchange of best practice between European Clusters, there are now numerous networks linking Regional and Local Agencies throughout Europe.

As a pilot of the Regions for Economic Change initiative the “Clusters Linked over Europe” (CLOE) was the first of a number of Cluster Development topics and Projects to spread Inter-Cluster co-operation and influence EU, Regional and National Policies.

The EU has been instrumental in fostering trans-national co-operation between Cluster policies, especially as a catalyst for activity based Networking.

Based on the ERA-Net approach, there have been 4 Cluster projects funded under the “ProInno Europe Initiative”. These are aimed at promoting mutual learning, identifying and removing barriers, and jointly developing and testing new policy instruments for SMEs. One of the Projects specifically dealt with Internationalisation.

These 4 INNO-Nets established together the European Cluster Alliance, an open platform for policy discussion and development of joint actions and practical tools in the area of Cluster policy. Member states have realized the importance of the trans-national dimension of Clusters and the Complementary role that the European Commission can play in this regard.

As the programme period has come to its final stage INNO-Nets has promoted the TACTICS project to produce, via 5 Working Groups, a series of practical handbooks on key topics. This has included the TACTICS Internationalisation Handbook of 6/2011. One of the key targets for this Handbook is the Policy Makers and funders of Cluster development and Cluster organisations. The purpose is to create favourable framework conditions for Internationalisation and to manage the deliverables from the Cluster initiatives that they fund. IT IS EXPECTED THAT WG3 WILL MAKE CONSIDERABLE USAGE AND REFERENCE TO THIS IMMENSELY USEFUL DOCUMENT.

And lastly ClusterPoliSEE is not the first South East Europe Project to support Cluster Development. In the last 3 years there have been 6, including:

- SEENECO (for Cluster Management)
- Adriatic Danube Clustering (ADC)
- Auto-Clusters
- Inno-Food

The first action of the Working Group will be to draw up a Summary of the most relevant Projects and their key actions/policy recommendations.

### **2.3 Working Methodology**

ClusterPoliSEE adopts a methodological approach based on engagement in reflective policy making, as a basis for better policy formulation and implementation. ClusterPoliSEE foresees the creation of mutual learning tools suitable for the learning process, mechanisms development and customising for a wide number and dimension of stakeholders consultation. The Project Work plan runs through a matrix approach where six cross cluster development areas: Innovation; Sustainability; International Cooperation; Cluster Financing; Clusters and Regional Specialization; and New Skills, cross-cut operational phases of the project to find out the information gap data and barriers. And then how to remove them for the learning process and to improve effective regional cluster policy making.

The Working Group needs to work with a combination of “top-down” and “bottom-up” analysis.

- A) Analysis of EU-wide Papers and Projects on the topic (as per section 2.2)

- Lessons learned
  - Policy recommendations
  - Structured information
  - Co-ordination issues
  - Pointers for “virtual” infrastructure for collaborative activities.
- B) Current policy on Inter-Clusters Co-operation. Especially with relation to specific Inter-Regional EU funds.
- Cross-Border
  - SEE Operational Programme
  - Inter-Reg IIIC
  - Black Sea OP
  - Central Europe OP
  - Danube Region Planning
  - CIP, centrally funded projects

This will tap into the experience of the Partners via Questionnaire and Structured Interviews.

- C) Current “relationship capital” amongst the ClusterPolisEE partners and their Clusters.  
A relationship mapping exercise, sponsored by WG3.
- D) Analysis of state support for Internationalisation/Export Development/Inter-Country activities. Again a “bottom-up” mapping of current activities/roles/responsibilities.
- E) A “stress-test” of Inter-Cluster Collaboration. What worked, what did not work and key lessons learned. Conducted at one of the Working Group meetings.
- F) Contribution to this topic as a X-Cutting Strategy for all Clusters. How to promote International activities into the future and affect policy and practice.  
Leading to the Final Report of the Working Group.

#### How to activate?

This will include working papers on the Learning Platform; questionnaires for Partners; WG meetings and “virtual” meetings; and using Partner Meetings and other meetings to advance the Agenda.

#### Results expected:

1. Analysis of EU Wide Papers and Projects  
Sent to the Learning Platform

Comments from Partners (Reflective Policy Making pattern)

2. Collection of current Inter-Cluster Cooperation Projects from all Partners  
Sent to the Learning Platform  
Used as a resource
3. “Relationship mapping” exercise : what are the key relationships existing currently.  
Sent to the Learning Platform
4. “Better Practice” Stress Test: what has worked and key lessons.  
Used for Final Report of WG3
5. Usefulness of TACTICS Handbook on Internationalisation  
Used as a X-Cutting Tool for Partners and their Clusters. Built into the Final Report of WG3, as an Annex.
6. Final Report of WG3
  - Including policy learning mechanisms and reflective policy making conclusions.
  - Recommendations
  - Annexes
7. Evaluation Report on WG3

## **2.4 WG composition**

WG3 will be composed of regional policy makers and experts to share their insights and experiences and to debate on issues of interest and concern. Thematic competence in the field of International Cluster cooperation and networking to be tackled by WG 3 is required. Additional experiences in relevant EU projects and participation in relevant EU networks/associations/initiatives to be exploited for creating synergies with ClusterPolisEE project is strongly recommended.

Since the Working Groups only meet physically once during the life-time of the Project there is a key opportunity to use the learning platform to garner expertise and experience from a wide number of practitioners.

The Lead Partner as a result of its location and existing activities, has an excellent opportunity to develop key partnerships and information contribution from adjacent Country Partners e.g. Greece, Romania and Serbia.

3 Representatives of the Partnership are required for each Working Group.

WG3 leader already has interest from Slovakia. It will use the Hungary and Austria Partners' Meetings to select an additional partner. WG3 Leader BSMEPA's External Expert is a key expert in Internationalisation and Inter-Cluster Co-operation. By the Austria meeting at end-February a 2<sup>nd</sup> Key Expert from a Partner will be selected/self-selected to join the group via a short-listing process. Ad hoc involvement of other expert personnel will be encouraged during the life-time of the WG3 and as a result of the interest gained by "best practice" examples and policy papers.