



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Global Perspectives on Cluster Policies: Insights from Non-EU Countries

Summary



EU Clusters Talks
26 June 2024, 8:30 – 9:45 CET

An initiative of the European Union





Global Perspectives on Cluster Policies: Insights from Non-EU countries

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, organised the EU Clusters Talk “**Global Perspectives on Cluster Policies: Insights from Non-EU Countries**” on 26 June, 8:30 – 9:45 CET, to give an overview of global tendencies, present examples of cluster policies from non-EU countries and discuss learning opportunities to enrich the European clusters policies. The European Cluster Collaboration Platform offers several reports on non-EU Cluster Policies, including the “[Summary report on cluster policies and programmes across Europe and priority third countries](#)” and the “[Country Factsheets](#)”. By leveraging international collaboration and learning from each other, stronger and more resilient economies can be built.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderation: Andrew Lansley

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Cluster policies in non-EU countries
Jan-Philipp Kramer, Head of EU-Services, Prognos, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
3. Video message on cluster development in Latin America and the Caribbean
Marco Llinás, Director, Division of Production, Productivity and Management, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
4. Panel debate
Ásta Kristín Sigurjónsdóttir, Secretary TCI Network, CEO of Iceland Tourism Cluster
Herberto Rodríguez, President at IESDE School of Management, UPAEP (Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla), Mexico
Tor-Arne Bellika, Senior Cluster Advisor, Innovation Performance, Norway
5. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Cluster policies are gaining significant interest globally, with many countries and regions implementing diverse strategies to support economic growth and innovation and different approaches across continents.
- Effective cluster policies often involve multi-stage approaches with competitive elements, allowing for the identification of high performing clusters and strategic capacity development.
- Clusters should extend beyond geographic confines for international impact, integrating access to finance, talent, and market linkages.



- Current challenges in EU and third-country collaborations are identifying the right partners and having the necessary resources

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

After the introduction by moderator Andrew Lansley, the following news items were presented:

1. Invitation to register for the [next C2Lab in Strasbourg](#), France, on 25-26 September 2024
2. Invitation to register for the [next Cluster Booster Academy](#), 3-4 March 2025 with previous online sessions
3. Save the date for the upcoming [Clusters meet Regions](#) in Chisinau, Moldova, on 10-11 October, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, on 24-25 October, Heilbronn, Germany, on 13-14 November and Charleroi, Belgium, on 27-28 November
4. Apply for [EU Singapore Matchmaking](#) on 22-24 October 2024
5. Apply for EU [India Matchmaking in Bengaluru](#) on 19-21 November 2024

2. Cluster policies in non-EU countries

Jan-Philipp Kramer, Head of EU-Services, Prognos, and ECCP team member

Jan-Philipp Kramer gave an overview of programmes and trends in cluster policies worldwide based on the 56 factsheets covering the EU, COSME countries, and several third countries that are regularly published by the ECCP. These factsheets include economic policy contexts, national and regional cluster programmes, and assessments of their focus, continuity, and impact. He highlighted the following examples to explain differences in cluster policy approaches:

United States has embraced clusters in recent decades, focusing on competitiveness, innovation, and addressing regional disparities. One example is the Regional Innovation Cluster Programme (since 2010) providing cluster funding, though on a smaller scale. Another example, the Regional Innovation and Technology Hubs Initiative (established under the Chips and Science Act, 2023) is a significant programme with \$10 billion in funding over five years, emphasizing advanced technologies and competitive processes.

Norway has been consistent in its cluster programs since the 1990s, with a stepwise approach to cluster development. Programmes like Arena Pro and Norwegian Centres of Expertise emphasize capacity building and skills development. The approach focuses on soft elements rather than heavy investments in infrastructure. Since 2017 there is a new emphasis on start-ups, scale-ups, accelerators and venture capital.

South Korea's cluster development focuses on industrial complexes and integrating science and technology parks. The New Industrial Clustering Act (2021) and New National High Tech Cluster Programme emphasize regional involvement and significant funding. The country is also investing in international research cooperation, such as the Boston-Korea biotech project.

In terms of a comparative assessment, all three examples differ in terms of governance and funding, but what they all do is they use different phases of development, which is of significant importance.



In terms on a sectoral focus, the U.S. and Korea focus on high-tech sectors, while Norway remains sector neutral. In relation with funding strategies: Sector-neutral programmes focus on soft elements, while sector-driven programmes (like the U.S. Chips Act) involve larger funding commitments.

In terms of key takeaways, Jan-Philipp Kramer emphasized the revival of sector-driven cluster policies and the importance of layered programme structures with competitive elements. He also highlighted a significant difference in funding for sectoral policies to achieve goals, suggesting that focusing on soft elements might be more strategic when funding is limited.

3. Video message on cluster development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Marco Llinás, Director, Division of Production, Productivity and Management, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Marco Llinás described the work of ECLAC in developing cluster initiatives and other territorial productive articulation initiatives. He emphasized the need for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to enhance their productive development policies (PDPs), which they consider essential for addressing stagnant or declining productivity in the region. These PDPs are collaborative processes involving stakeholders from the public and private sectors, academia, and civil society. He stressed the importance of implementing these policies at the territorial level, using a bottom-up approach to involve local actors. Cluster initiatives can be effective strategies for organizing efforts to overcome productivity bottlenecks and facilitate economic transformation in the region. Although Latin America and the Caribbean have numerous existing cluster initiatives, ECLAC sees significant potential for expansion and improvement.

With the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) as a reference, Marco Llinás also introduced the [Cluster Mapping Data](#) produced in **Sintonía** for the Mexican Economy. A platform which was launched last year to promote and strengthen cluster initiatives and territorial productive articulation in the region with nearly 300 initiatives registered from 13 countries, representing over 63,000 companies across various economic sectors. The focus is on connecting these regional clusters with others worldwide as there are significant opportunities to link Latin American and Caribbean clusters with European counterparts. Interest was shown in collaborating through ECCP and Sintonía as a key step in achieving this global integration.

4. Panel debate

Herberto Rodríguez presented an example of cluster development in Mexico. The development of cluster initiatives in the Mexican city of Puebla follows a **bottom-up, academic approach** influenced by Professor Michael Porter's Microeconomics of Competitiveness network. This initiative was embraced by the IESDE School of Management and UPAEP University in Mexico, leading to numerous studies and teachings on cluster policy. Puebla's government adopted a cluster-based approach to economic development, integrating it into local regulation and providing funding and support for initiatives. The policy aimed to foster inclusive prosperity without favouring specific sectors, allowing



for organic growth. The speaker highlighted the importance of **supporting both traditional industries and attracting foreign direct investment**, emphasizing that diverse cluster support enabled natural economic development. He cited the Dutch flower cluster as an example of leveraging competitive advantages in other countries, suggesting that similar collaboration between European and Latin American clusters could enhance local development.

Tor-Arne Bellika, from **Norway**, discussed their work with innovation performance and their role in organizing a network of independent cluster capacity-building and quality experts across the Nordics. He highlighted that each of Norway's 14 regions had its own cluster policy, which provided funding and support services to cluster management organizations. While 34 clusters are part of the national programme, Torn-Arne noted that there are an additional 70 to 80 clusters supported by the regions. These regional clusters typically have 3 to 15 employees managing up to 200 members.

He also addressed the internationalization efforts of Norwegian clusters, stating that only three of the top-level "Global Centres of Expertise" had achieved significant internationalization results. Many other export-oriented clusters had struggled to make an impact on the global stage. To address this, Norway was focusing on building "meta clusters" or "super clusters," inspired by Denmark's strategy of selecting key sectors with export potential and funding only one cluster per sector. This approach had led to larger, more effective cluster organizations in Denmark.

The speaker emphasized that there is more potential to use the European Cluster Collaboration Platform across the Nordics and suggested that a promotion campaign by national and regional governments could increase its utilization.

Jan-Phillipp Kramer discussed the **international cooperation aspect of clustering**, emphasizing that clusters should not be confined geographically and can extend beyond regions, citing South Korea's concentrated support approach as a unique example. He acknowledged that while clusters are often based on local synergies, they need to extend beyond borders for international impact. Clusters must have a broad perspective, encompassing access to finance, talent, and market linkages beyond academic foundations.

Regarding sectoral developments, he noted that clusters are **increasingly becoming multi-sectoral**, driven by synergies between technologies in different sectors, such as the relationship between electronics, AI, and life sciences. There is a focus on new sectors like clean tech and renewable energy. Large-scale strategic programmes emphasize sovereignty and security, driving policies for industries like hydrogen and semiconductors, paralleling EU discussions.

Regarding challenges in EU and third-country collaboration, the speaker acknowledged issues like transparency in **identifying partners** and the availability of resources to support meaningful collaborations. Overall, the emphasis is on the need for clusters to evolve beyond traditional boundaries and foster international connections through strategic collaborations and sectoral integration.

Ásta Kristín Sigurjónsdóttir from **Iceland** spoke about the country's first cluster policy, implemented in 2021, which aims to address future challenges and opportunities. The policy focuses on four major pillars: digitalization, health tech and healthcare, sustainability through the circular economy, and globalization. While Iceland's cluster policy provides a high-level framework similar to Norway's, it



lacks an action plan and funding structure comparable to EU countries. The speaker noted that Iceland needs to improve the implementation and funding of programmes and projects.

In response to a question about collaboration opportunities with the European Union, the speaker emphasized that perceived barriers between global regions are often mental rather than actual. She highlighted that, despite initial perceptions of differences, countries worldwide share common challenges, such as digitalization, sustainability, and the need for skilled talent. Therefore, she suggested that integrating cluster methodologies with other policies and fostering trust and understanding among regions could enhance collaboration and lead to more effective solutions.

5. Funding opportunities

Closing the EU Clusters Talk, Nina Hoppmann shared the following examples of funding opportunities:

1. [Overcoming barriers and delivering innovative solutions to enable the green transition](#); deadline 24 September 2024
2. [I3 Instrument: Capacity Building Strand 2b](#); deadline 14 November 2024
3. [I3 Instrument: Strand 1 and 2a](#); deadline 5 December 2024
4. [Mutual learning and support scheme for national and regional innovation programmes](#); deadline 19 September 2024
5. Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters; published on [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)