



INTERREG IVC Project POOLING4CLUSTERS “Clusters for a competitive advantage”

Malta is participating in an EU funded research called Pooling4Clusters part-financed by the European Commission through the INTERREG IVC programme. The scope of the project is for the partners to share and try out best services for competitive cluster implementation. Apart from Malta, though the government agency MITA, there are six other partners from France, Greece and Slovenia, Germany and Estonia as well as the lead partner which is the Economic Office of the Province of Namur in Belgium.

In 2004, through a project part-financed by the European Commission, ‘Clusters Linked over Europe (CLOE)’ defined clusters as “vertically and horizontally related economic partners of a certain industrial sector in a defined region with international competitiveness”.

In Europe such efforts are called "Cluster Initiatives" (CIs) where such regional sectoral networks work together towards boosting performance levels and international competitiveness that in turn fosters national economic growth. Viktor Sigl – Executive Secretary to the Upper Austrian Economics cluster explains that cluster initiatives help facilitate and accelerate innovation which brings them to market maturity, thus ensuring the long-term, economic success of the companies involved.

The Pooling4Cluster project aims to develop a platform of ‘best practices’ focusing on the links between Development Agencies and CIs. The overall objective is to upgrade the innovation capacity of existing enterprises in the partner regions / countries, through the improvement of the effectiveness of cluster support policies.

Particularly through the identification and analysis of good practices in the partner region / country, this project will produce assisting guidelines and recommendations to authorities in reaching a pre-eminent method to improve their support framework for the existing clusters and / or potential ones.

During the first phases of services identification, a total of 96 practices were recorded. An evaluation process then took place by all partners based on attributes having direct impact on the financial and optimisation measures that these services bring to clusters, the impact on the attractiveness of the region / country and the internationalisation support system coherence. Other attributes included the strengthening of enterprises competitiveness and the development of synergies and innovative partnerships.



Interreg IVC Programme – Cohesion Policy 2007 – 2013
Innovation & Environment Regions of Europe Sharing Solutions

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Co-financing rate: 85% EU Funds; 15% National Funds



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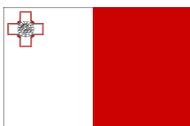


The evaluation process brought about 15 good practices, out of which each partner including Malta will be selecting two practices to test in their region. As a sneak-peek to these best practices include the setting up of a website – a best practice brought to the project by the Foundation Sophia Antipolis, France which serves as one of the tools developed and used to support entrepreneurs in their innovative projects. Another identified practice is the setting up of Help Desks which originated from Belgium. This consists of qualified personnel answering questions related to the markets, partnerships, current and potential projects, general information, political tendency etc.

Another short-listed best practice is related to innovation and technology brought to the project by Germany. The business intelligence practice is a mechanism which provides consultancy to member companies to identify new business partners and new business opportunities in the country or elsewhere in the world.

Malta's current cluster support is packaged as the Business and Development Network Scheme under the Malta Enterprise Act which incentivises large enterprises as well as SMEs to carry out cluster activities together. The Pooling4Cluster project aims to improve support policies to clusters on a national and regional level from lessons learnt by other regions. Cluster Initiatives particularly need to increase the collective investment in research and innovation that in turns boosts national competitiveness. This is very much in line with the EU Lisbon Strategy.

Through the Pooling4Cluster project, various tools and experiences are being tabled between all partners, an asset which will help Malta avoid potential pitfalls and ensure a better cluster success.



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