

European Alliance Against Coronavirus

Thursday 30th July 2020 at 8:30

The role of clusters in the European Recovery Plans (1)

Working format is based on "*Gilles Rules*":

1. conceptual framework
2. needs and disruptions
3. solutions

Speakers:

- Annie Renders, Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- Helena Moura, IAPMEI (TBC)

[Link to session's recording](#)

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Clusters in the Covid-19 recovery plans in Flanders

Annie Renders from Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship opened this session focusing on the role of cluster in Covid-19 recovery plans in Flanders, where they installed two expert group to advise the government in the creation of the plans:

- Economic advisory expert group
- Societal advisory expert group

The innovation clusters will be part of the economic advisory expert group. As foreseen in the recovery plan, clusters will need to continue working in the smart specialisation strategies. Furthermore, they will increase their activities in:

- Connecting more in regional transformation priorities
- Play a greater role in international R&D&I on sustainability (whereby sustainability is understood in a broad sense)
- Deeper connections between 6 spearhead clusters in Flanders
- Be more active on internationalisation

Annie analysed the role of the clusters during and after the pandemic. As she said, during the crisis, clusters brought companies together, connected to government the knowledge centres and played a fundamental role in reacting quickly to the crisis. After the crisis, they will have to experiment in new ways to connect and reinvent themselves. Indeed, clusters has started to be connect to international R&D&I initiatives on sustainability and have become more active on internationalisation with the final goal to increase the results in economic growth, jobs and industry transformation, but they will need to adjust their activities to the virtual world.

Clusters in the Portuguese recovery

Helena Moura presented IAPMEI, the Portuguese Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation. It is part of the European Expert Group on Clusters and works to promote the interest of Portuguese clusters in contributing for the EU cluster policy as well as for the dissemination of relevant information to clusters including EU and national calls and other initiatives.

This cluster recognized that the success of public policies depends on the capacity of the civil society to define a common strategy and mission, in particular on the ecosystem structures associated with the dynamics of clustering. It was important to establish close relationships of cooperation and collaboration that favours the development of concerted initiatives in several areas of intervention to achieve common objectives. Therefore, they signed sixteen Sectorial Pacts for Competitiveness and Internationalisation with the Ministry for Economic and Digital Transition.

The main outputs include:

- a closer dialog between the Cluster Managing Entity and the members of the Monitoring Committee and other organisations whenever necessary
- better understanding of the cluster needs
- more intra- and inter-cluster activities and networking
- clusters studies aiming at identifying solutions
- working groups between cluster, representatives of the government and representative of private and public entities.

2. DISRUPTIVE TENDENCIES

Re-invention of clusters

Evidence: The role of clusters during Covid-19 crisis has been fundamental, especially in order to bring companies together, connect them to government and to knowledge centres, and to enable fast and agile problem solving. Now, it is time to strength this role in recovery plans. The main actions are:

- Continue cluster support
- Connect clusters to regional transformation priorities (industry 4.0, digitalisation, climate initiatives, ...)
- Connect clusters to international R&D&I initiatives on sustainability
- Get clusters more active on internationalisation
- Need to reinvent themselves in the heart of their actions
- Find new tools, new habits, new ways to connect

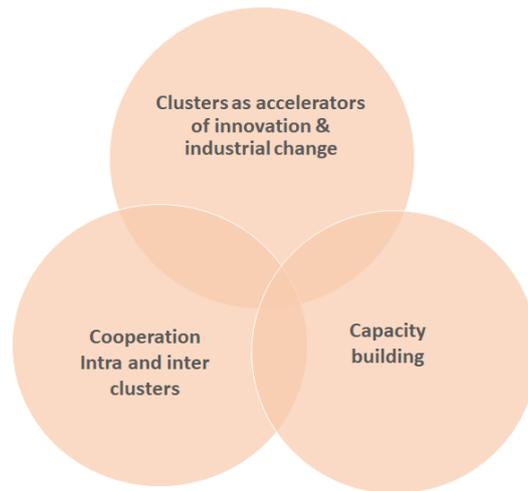
The main results coming from these actions could be, among the others, economic growth, jobs, and the transformation of industry.

Geographical impact: EU

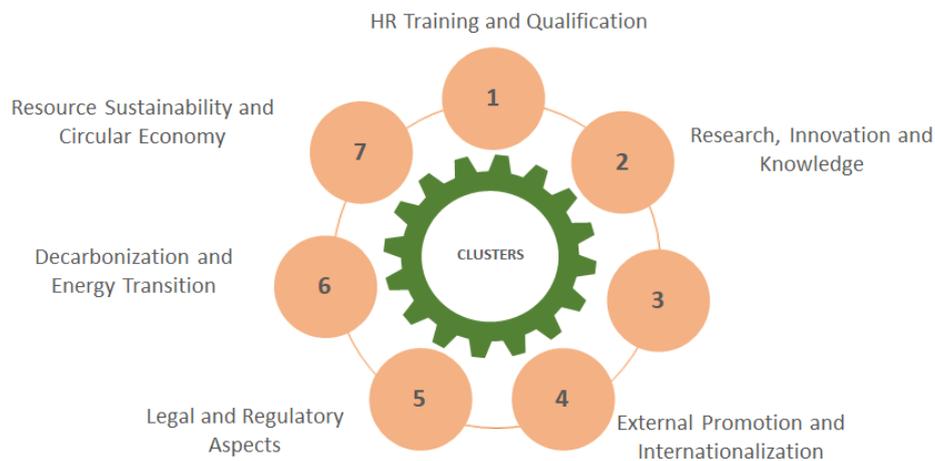
Stage of value chain: Ecosystem configuration

Character of the disruption: role and importance of clusters

Time frame: mid and long term



Areas of intervention



3. NEEDS

- Article 27 of the General Model Grant Agreement (General MGA - regulating EU funding actions) treats the themes of protection of results and visibility of EU funding. Currently, restrictions are in place on this article, which are limiting clusters innovation initiatives, imposing a limit on grants by 50% for public financing and a five-year limit for the time horizon in which funds will be delivered. Given the special period of recover that EU is going through, and the role of clusters as instruments for government actions, more flexibility in funding restriction are needed in order to effectively support industries during the whole process of recovery through time.