



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Cluster Management 101: Special session on strategies and skills

Summary



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

An initiative of the European Union





Cluster Management 101: Special session on strategies and skills

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, organised the EU Clusters Talk “Cluster Management 101: Special session on strategies and skills” on 19 June, 8:30 – 9:45 CET, to present key learnings from the Cluster Booster Academy, give an overview of the theoretical framework of cluster management, and discuss challenges with the cluster community.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderation: Chris Burns

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Cluster Management: Skills set and key learnings from the Cluster Booster Academy
Miguel Manuel Seuffert, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
3. Good practices from practitioners: Cluster management skills
Johan Wasberg, Senior Expert, Technology Centre Merinova
4. Good practices from practitioners: Communication
Nóra Szirmai, Communication Manager & Zsolt Keresztúri, Cluster Manager, Innoskart
5. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Participating in European projects and events like the Cluster Booster Academy provides valuable professional development and networking opportunities.
- Remote training at the Cluster Academy offers significant benefits, including flexibility and accessibility. The tools and frameworks provided by the Academy are handy for practical application.
- The Academy helps participants expand their understanding of industry trends and best practices and serves as a platform for learning from the experiences and insights of other clusters.
- Engage the right people from companies who see opportunities rather than just problems in cluster development.
- Employ high-level retiring CEOs as spokespeople due to their extensive contacts and ability to secure funding.
- Staying relevant requires ongoing learning from best practices and adapting to new communication trends and technologies.
- Even without an extensive communication strategy, setting realistic and measurable objectives is essential. The absence of competition should not impede development. Clusters must communicate their values effectively to innovate and grow.



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

After the introduction by moderator Zivile Kropaite, the following news items were presented:

1. Apply for the next [Cluster Booster Academy](#)
2. Save the date for further [Clusters meet Regions](#) events taking place in 2024.
3. Join the [C2Lab Workshop](#), Strasbourg, on 25-26 September 2024.
4. Register for [EU-Canada Matchmaking](#), Montreal, on 10-12 September 2024.
5. Register for [EU-Singapore Matchmaking](#), Singapore, on 22-24 October 2024.
6. Save the date for [EU-India Matchmaking](#), Bengaluru, 18-21 November 2024.
7. Access to [Trend Universe](#) is open to all users from the EU.
8. Join the upcoming [Focus Group Ukraine meeting](#).
9. Information about [regulation on the use of supercomputing in AI development](#).

2. Cluster Management: Skills set and key learnings from the Cluster Booster Academy

Manuel Seuffert, Team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Manuel Seuffert discussed his experience with the Cluster Academy, emphasizing the benefits of remote training and the usefulness of the tools and frameworks provided. He found the thematic workshops and exchange of experiences particularly valuable and highlighted the importance of networking opportunities. Manuel Seuffert noted that the Cluster Academy helped expand its understanding of trends and provided a platform for learning from other clusters. He also mentioned that including multiple staff members in remote training could enhance the learning experience, though this is subject to the Academy's constraints.

Manuel Seuffert also mentioned the importance of networking opportunities provided by the Academy, which helped build connections and foster collaboration among cluster managers. He pointed out the potential benefit of involving multiple staff members in remote training sessions to maximize the learning experience, although this depends on the Academy's policies and capacity.

3. Good practices from practitioners: Cluster management skills

Johan Wasberg, Senior Expert, Technology Centre Merinova

Johan Wasberg, sharing insights from his extensive experience of over 26 years with the energy cluster and energy technology companies in Vaasa, Finland, highlighted several good practices in cluster management. He stressed the importance of being customer-oriented, actively listening to cluster members, and addressing their needs and bottlenecks. Johan Wasberg emphasized involving the right people from companies, those who see opportunities rather than just problems, in cluster development.



He outlined a successful strategy they employed, which involved dividing the cluster strategy into priority areas such as research, technology development, market visibility, and sustainability. They formed thematic groups with key actors in each area, involving around 80 people, and used a fishbone diagram to present and prioritize their strategies and actions.

Johan Wasberg also recommended employing high-level retiring CEOs as spokespeople for clusters due to their extensive contacts and ability to secure funding. He mentioned organizing significant events, like the annual thematic energy week, to boost visibility and interest, rather than smaller, frequent events. Regular discussions with members to understand their perspectives and improve the triple helix model—cooperation between public authorities, companies, and universities—were also highlighted as essential practices.

For internationalization, Johan underscored the importance of reliable local partners in target markets and mentioned successful collaborations, such as energy days in North Africa. He also stressed the significance of proper documentation and communication for achieving cluster excellence labels like the gold label, which enhances visibility and recognition. Lastly, he advocated for a well-functioning CRM system and shared the benefits observed from achieving the gold label, including improved internal efficiency and member enthusiasm.

4. Good practices from practitioners: Communication

Nóra Szirmai, Communication Manager, Innoskart & Zsolt Keresztúri, Cluster Manager, Innoskart

Nóra Szirmai and Zsolt Keresztúri from Innoskart discussed good practices in communication for cluster management. They both explained that Innoskart operates both as a cluster management organization and a community of cluster members, which requires a nuanced approach to marketing and branding. The focus is on increasing visibility and prestige, managing the complexity of promoting a support and networking system rather than a simple product or service. Despite lacking an extensive communication strategy, Innoskart sets achievable and measurable goals, marketing the cluster as a high-profile community while promoting the expertise and business competence of its members.

Nóra, the Communication Manager, began by emphasizing the dual nature of cluster marketing, which involves promoting both the cluster management organization and the community of cluster members. She noted the necessity of a strong brand identity and the challenges of applying traditional communication strategies to a complex and interlinked system of support and networking.

Nóra Szirmai highlighted that while they do not have an extensive communication strategy, they set achievable and measurable goals. One of their major challenges is promoting the expertise and business competence of their member organizations to potential partners. She also pointed out that a lack of competition can hinder development as clusters may not feel the pressure to innovate. Therefore, they focus on communicating their values even without immediate competitors.

To address these challenges, Nóra Szirmai described their branding efforts, which included changing their name from ICT Cluster to Industrial Digital Cluster to clarify their focus and emphasize their expertise. They adopted an inbound marketing strategy that prioritizes content marketing to attract



and educate their audience. This strategy involves blogs, webinars, videos, and social media to build a community and enhance visibility.

She explained that while blogs were once a primary content marketing tool, they have shifted towards podcasts and videos to engage their time-poor audience. They produce professional marketing videos, knowledge transfer videos, and good practice videos involving technology developers and users. Additionally, they are developing a cross-border event series to support knowledge transfer and peer learning among European clusters.

Zsolt Keresztúri, the Cluster Manager, added that their communication efforts are not a one-person show but require a team effort. He shared that participating in European projects as a communication leader has enriched their approach and highlighted the importance of networking opportunities provided by events like the Cluster Booster Academy. Zsolt Keresztúri emphasized that continuous learning and adapting to new communication trends are vital for effective cluster management.

During the discussion, Nóra Szirmai confirmed the use of workshops and meetings to address communication challenges and engage members. She stressed the importance of continuous communication efforts and learning from American and European good practices. Nóra Szirmai highlighted the strategic shift from traditional blogs to podcasts and videos to meet the preferences of their target audience, reflecting the cluster's adaptability and commitment to effective communication. Zsolt Keresztúri added that managing communication is a collaborative effort and discussed their involvement in European projects, underscoring the benefits of professional development and networking opportunities.

In conclusion, Nóra Szirmai and Zsolt Keresztúri outlined that strong brand identity, content marketing, adapting to new communication formats, and teamwork are essential practices for effective cluster communication. They also underscored the importance of continuous adaptation and learning to stay relevant and engage their target audience effectively.

5. Funding opportunities

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

1. [I3 Instrument: Capacity Building Strand 2b](#): deadline 14 November 2024
2. [I3 Instrument: Strand 1 and 2a](#): deadline 5 December 2024
3. [BUILD UP Skills – Upskilling and reskilling interventions for building decarbonisation](#): deadline 19 September 2024
4. [Expanding Academia-Enterprise Collaborations](#); deadline 19 September 2024
5. Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters; published on [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)