



Cluster Matchmaking Event on Eco-efficient Management of Resources in the Agro-food Sector

Mission Proceedings Report

Milan, Italy | 5th and 6th of October, 2015

Organised in the context of the Milan Expo 2015 EU-US Days



Executive Summary

On the 5th and 6th of October 2015, the *Cluster Matchmaking Event on Eco-efficient Management of Resources in the Agro-food Sector* took place in Milan (Italy), as part of a thematic matchmaking event organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs together with the Enterprise Europe Network in support of a policy that aims to promote international cluster cooperation for the benefit of SMEs. The Matchmaking Event took place in the context of the Milan Expo 2015 (1st of May 2015 - 31st of October 2015), which has as its central theme "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life".

Under this framework, Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação (SPI) organised and supported a delegation of European cluster representatives that attended the aforementioned Event. The clusters were selected primarily due to their willingness and understanding of the need to collaborate with other clusters and network organisations in order to better support their SMEs in a competitive global market.

The Cluster Delegation consisted of 19 cluster representatives from 9 European countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain). These cluster organisations represented a range of fields such as agri-food, agricultural machinery and manufacturing, green-tech, clean-tech, ICT and electronics, renewable energies, biomass, and transport and logistics.

The Cluster Delegation participated in cluster-to-cluster (C2C) and cluster-to-business (C2B) meetings, where they had the opportunity to discuss potential collaborations and partnerships. On average, each cluster participant conducted around 8 meetings with other clusters and companies. There was a lack of US clusters at the Event which prevented the establishment of cooperation between European and US clusters. However, the Event was useful to set the ground for potential partnerships and agreements between European clusters, aiming to support European SMEs in their internationalisation and innovation efforts. In this regard, 60% of Cluster Delegates plan to keep further contacts or establish further cooperation agreements with one or more of the clusters they met at the event.

Furthermore, the European Cluster Delegation participated in a *Cluster Introduction Session*, where each cluster representative had the opportunity to briefly present their cluster and cooperation interests in order to foster more C2C meetings and informal networking. At the closing of the first day, a *Cluster Debriefing Session* was conducted to obtain the feedback of the delegation in regards to the Event. During this *Cluster Debriefing Session*, delegates indicated they were satisfied with the Event and highlighted its impact to further develop cluster cooperation. In this regard, the majority of delegates scored as good or very good on all aspects related to the overall quality of the event.

The sessions were complemented by more informal networking events such as a cocktail hosted by the Lombardy region and a guided visit of the Milan EXPO 2015 on the 6th of October. The Cluster Delegation had positive comments regarding the Event and found the Event beneficial to establishing new contacts and identifying new collaborative opportunities that will support their SMEs.

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1. Introduction

As part of a new policy aimed at promoting international cluster cooperation for the benefit of SMEs, the DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs of the European Commission launched in 2012 an initiative, which was renewed in late 2013, that contributes to the organisation of specific cluster matchmaking events to support cluster organisations and their Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) members in their efforts to develop partnerships and business cooperation in global markets. Thus, the matchmaking event organised in Milan was in line with recent European cluster matchmaking events organised in Belgium, China, Germany, Italy, and Spain during 2014 and 2015.

These events seek to prepare the ground for practical cluster cooperation across borders and to make a more strategic use of transnational cluster cooperation in order to create access to overseas markets and to establish technology or business partnerships involving cluster organisations and their SME members; thus, increasing the SMEs' innovation capacity and their ability to compete on a global scale.

A Cluster Matchmaking Event took place on the 5th and 6th of October 2015 in Milan (Italy), as a part of a thematic matchmaking event organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs together with the Enterprise Europe Network. The Matchmaking Event was organised in the context of the Milan Expo 2015 (1st May 2015 – 31st October 2015), with the central theme of "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life".

A European delegation of cluster and networking organisations was created to take part in the Event. The organisation and support of the delegation was facilitated by a consortium led by Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação (Portugal) in partnership with Inno TSD (France) and Steinbeis-europa-Zentrum (Germany).

2. Objective of the Cluster Matchmaking Event

The Cluster Matchmaking Event in Milan aimed to promote cluster and network cooperation between cluster organisations to explore common visions and seek partnerships at the cluster and network organisations level. The Event was expected to initiate discussion that would ultimately result in Letters of Interest, Memoranda of Understanding, and other types of partnership agreements. These agreements will assist in the cluster and network organisations' SMEs and companies' ability to reach new markets and engage in collaborative projects.

3. Cluster Delegation

A call for expression of interest was launched and published on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP - www.clustercollaboration.eu) in August 2015. The call aimed to identify and establish a European delegation composed of up to 30 representatives from cluster organisations and business networks that are willing and committed to participate in a matchmaking event in Milan (Italy) with the central theme: eco-efficient management of resources in the agro-food sector. Namely, focused in the following areas:

- Management and wastewater reuse;
- Reduction of water consumption;
- Monitoring and decision support technologies in agriculture;
- Enhancement of wastes from agro-food production;
- Renewable energies;
- Space application to agriculture;
- Other topics relevant to the thematic focus of the event.

The Event was open to cluster and network organisations from countries participating in the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programmes (CIP)¹ and that present the highest potential for cooperation in the focus areas.

The following sections elaborate on the selection process and present the Cluster Delegation that attended the Cluster Matchmaking Event.

3.1. Selection process

Each cluster or network organisation had to submit an expression of interest that included: (i) a questionnaire, (ii) an evidence of the legal entity, (iii) an evidence of the cluster profile registered on the ECCP; and (iv) a short presentation of the cluster in English.

The selection process of participants included the verification of eligibility criteria and an assessment of qualitative criteria. The eligibility criteria were mainly related to legal aspects and required the cluster or network organisation to:

- Register or plan to be registered on the ECCP with a complete profile;
- Comply with the definition given in the section 1.3 (s) on “innovation clusters” in Annex I of the new “EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation”²;
- Have core activities corresponding to the targeted focus areas of the event mentioned above; and
- Be involved in offering or channelling cluster or network support services to businesses.

¹ CIP participating countries include: (1) EU Member States, (2) non-EU-member countries participating in the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP) of the CIP programme including Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

² For more information see at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2006:323:0001:0026:en:PDF>

After meeting the above requirements, applications were selected according to the following qualitative criteria:

- On the potential to maximize matchmaking opportunities based on a clear description of the type of partnership the cluster organisation is looking for through the participation to this event, and on the potential for establishing cooperation agreements as an outcome of the event;
- On the willingness to engage in closer cooperation with other cluster and network organisations from CIP participating countries and the United States to better support SMEs in global competition through joint efforts. In this context, the participation in a pilot European Strategic Cluster Partnership was considered as an asset.

The selection process resulted in 19 cluster representatives from 9 European countries being selected to be part of the Cluster Delegation.

3.2. Overview of the Cluster Delegation

The Cluster Delegation consisted of 19 cluster representatives from 9 European countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain). These cluster organisations represented a range of fields such as agri-food, agricultural machinery and manufacturing, green-tech, clean-tech, ICT and electronics, renewable energies, biomass, and transport and logistics. Table 1 provides a brief profile of the Cluster Delegation that participated in the Event. For the detailed list of the Cluster Delegation, please refer to *Annex 1: Cluster Delegation*.

Table 1 – Brief profile of the European Cluster Delegation

#	CLUSTER/ NETWORK	SECTOR	COUNTRY
1	ACAL - Asociación para la Mejora Competitiva del Cluster Agroindustrial	Agro-food	Spain
2	AEC - Agricultural Equipment Cluster (Klaster Poljomehanizacije)	Agricultural Manufacturing	Croatia
3	Agrotransilvania Cluster	Agro-food	Romania
4	ANEA - Normand Association of Agro-Food Industries	Agro-food	France
5	ARIA BN	Automotive and agro-food industries	France
6	CASTRA	Aerospace technologies, research and applications	Bulgaria
7	CAT.AL– Cluster for high technologies in agro-food	Agro-food & sustainability, food-tech, food security & safety.	Italy
8	cd2e - centre for the development of eco-enterprises	Greentech, cleantech , agro-food applications	France
9	CLEAN	Cleantech	Denmark
10	CLUSAGA - Galicia Food&Drink Cluster	Agro-food	Spain

#	CLUSTER/ NETWORK	SECTOR	COUNTRY
11	Eastern Cluster ICT	ICT, including energy and renewable sources in the area of Smart Grids; ICT security; etc.	Poland
12	Fondazione Distretto Green & High Tech Monza Brianza	ICT, Energy, Smart Agriculture and Monitoring, Decision support technologies in agriculture areas	Italy
13	FOOD+i	Agro-food	Spain
14	GAIA - Cluster of Electronics and ICT Companies in the Basque Country	Electronics, information technology and telecommunications, green ICT solutions	Spain
15	Green Energy Innovative Biomass Cluster	Lignocellulosic biomass, biomass from agriculture, biomass based heating systems	Romania
16	Innoskart ICT Cluster	ICT in agriculture, wireless sensor technologies in forest and vineyards, among others	Hungary
17	Mazovia Cluster ICT	ICT including e-agriculture and environment; aerospace & GIS & Telecommunication; etc.	Poland
18	PRO WOOD Regional Wood Cluster	Wood, biomass, energy	Romania
19	PROMOTRANS	Transport (food transport), logistics, security, travel, maintenance operation, training	France

4. Cluster Matchmaking Event

The Cluster Matchmaking Event was comprised of the main activities listed below.

- A conference focused on business opportunities and challenges between the EU and USA, and supporting policy tools that enable greater cooperation towards the transatlantic markets. Moreover, the conference included business success stories in the field of eco-efficient management of resources;
- A Cluster introduction session, where clusters had the chance to present themselves to the entire cluster delegation;
- Cluster-to-cluster (C2C) and cluster-to-business (C2B) matchmaking meetings;
- A cluster debriefing session, where feedback of the clusters was collected;
- A networking social event hosted by the Lombardy Region; and
- A guided visit to the Milan EXPO 2015.

The main activities of the event were conducted on the 5th of October with a site visit on the 6th of October. The Cluster Delegation took full advantage of the networking social event and the guided visit to gain further international contacts. These activities are described in more detail in the following sections.

4.1. C2C and C2B matchmaking meetings

During the afternoon of the 5th of October, the European Cluster Delegation participated in C2C and C2B meetings, where they had the opportunity to meet other organisations and discuss potential collaboration opportunities, including cooperation agreements and collaborative project ideas. On average, each cluster participant conducted around 8 meetings with other clusters and companies. Figure 1 shows some photos of the matchmaking meetings.

C2C and C2B meetings had a duration of 20 minutes approximately, then the bell rang and the next meeting started. Meetings took place in the congress centre “**Auditorium di Assolombarda**” and were organised in advance through the b2bmatch tool dedicated to the event. However, additional meetings were arranged on site through the assistance of SPI consultants. These meetings allowed the Delegation to identify cooperation opportunities, including potential cooperation agreements and collaborative project ideas.

There was a lack of US clusters at the Event which prevented the establishment of cooperation between European and US clusters. However, the Event was useful to set the ground for potential partnerships and agreements between European clusters, aiming to support European SMEs in their internationalisation and innovation efforts.



Figure 1 – Photos of the C2C and C2B meetings in the Auditorium di Assolombarda

4.2. Cluster introduction and debriefing session

The European Cluster Delegation participated in a *Cluster Introduction Session*, where each cluster representative had the opportunity to briefly present their cluster and cooperation interests in order to foster more C2C meetings and informal networking.

At the closing of the first day, subsequently to the C2C and C2B matchmaking meetings, a *Cluster Debriefing Session* was conducted to obtain the feedback of the Cluster Delegation in regards to the Event. During the session SPI facilitated the discussion among Cluster Delegates in order to gain their feedback on the Event. The discussion focused on different aspects related to the overall quality of the Event and the results and

impacts to each participant as well as recommendations and suggestions for future events. Cluster Delegates were encouraged to provide their thoughts on the following topics:

- Quality of the overall organisation;
- Quality of the agenda;
- Ups & Downs of the C2C and B2C meetings;
- Suggestions for improvement;
- Opportunities identified during the C2C and B2C meetings.

Feedback provided by the Cluster Delegates is detailed in Chapter 5.

5. Debriefing results and conclusions

A debriefing questionnaire (*Annex 3: Debriefing Questionnaire*) was provided to the Cluster Delegation, both by email and during the Cluster Debriefing Session, aiming to obtain their feedback in a more structured and quantifiable manner. The questionnaire focused on aspects such as:

- Overall quality of the event;
- Relevance of the event towards individual objectives;
- Impact of the event in terms of cooperation agreements and collaborative projects.

Furthermore, clusters were asked to indicate other clusters they planned to pursue further cooperation, as well as suggestions to improve future cluster matchmaking events.

A total of 15 debriefing questionnaires were received and analysed, which represents 78,9% of the Cluster Delegation. The overall assessment concludes that the main objective of the event was achieved, i.e. promote the establishment of contacts among the Cluster Delegation and other clusters/ organisations.

In this regard, Figure 2 shows the **number of contacts and/ or cooperation agreements** that each Cluster Delegate plans to keep or pursue, with an average of 5,6. The minimum number of further contacts was zero (one Cluster Delegate response) and the maximum number was 20 (one Cluster Delegate response); followed by another Cluster Delegate who responded 18, indicating that there were many opportunities with all clusters. Most Cluster Delegates (60%) plan to keep further contacts or establish further cooperation agreements with one to three clusters.

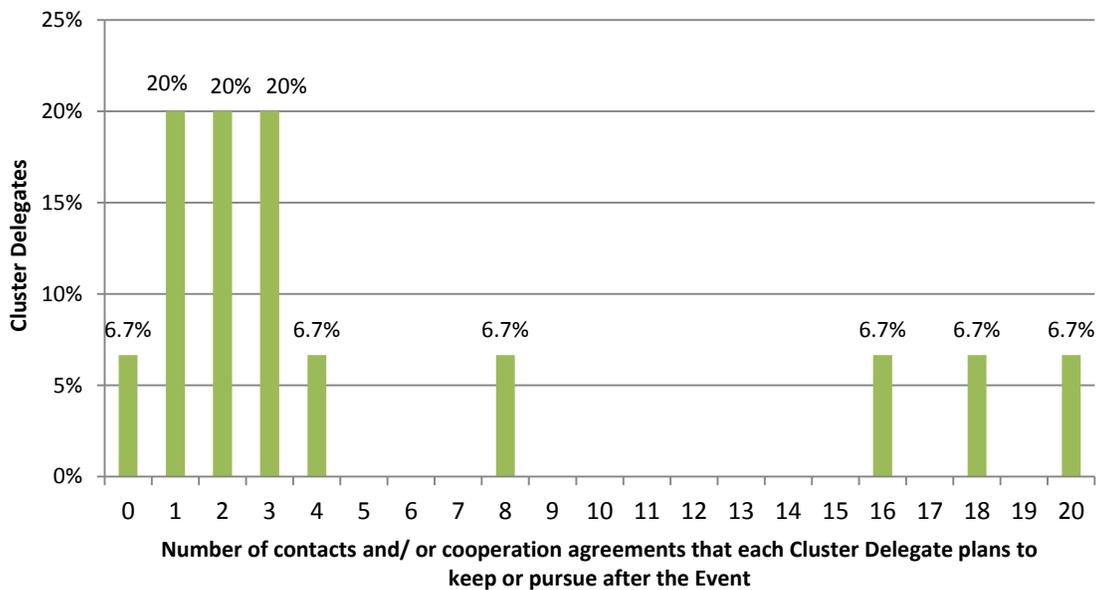


Figure 2 - Results obtained regarding the establishment of further contacts and/ or cooperation agreements

Figure 3 shows the high results obtained regarding the first question of the debriefing questionnaire. Thus, the majority of Cluster Delegates score as good (light blue bars) or very good (orange bars) all the aspects related to the **overall quality of the event**.

Namely, 60% of the participants considered as very good the information provided to the participants. As well, 53,3% of them considered the quality of the agenda and the quality of the overall organisation as very good. However, the participation of foreign clusters and SMEs in the event was not well scored (13,3% of the Cluster Delegates considered as poor or very poor). This is a natural result due to the lack of participation of US organisations.

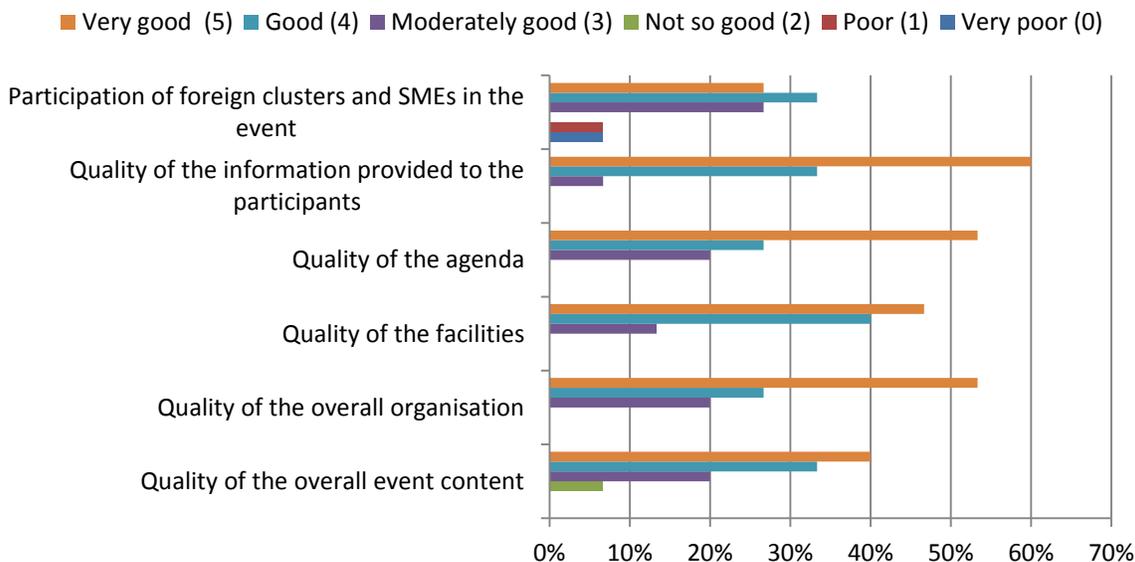


Figure 3 - Results obtained regarding the Cluster Delegates' opinions on the overall quality of the event

The results regarding the **relevance of the event towards individual objectives** are more diverse depending on the indicator, but in general terms Cluster Delegates ranked most of the indicators with a positive score (Figure 4).

Concerning the access to new R&D competences and development of concrete projects, 60% of Cluster Delegates considered the Event as good or very good; as well as the “increasing international visibility and market penetration” indicator, which was scored as good or very good by 66,7% of Clusters Delegates. Furthermore, 53,3% of them considered the Event especially useful for the “development of new business activities” and 46,7% for the “knowledge of geographical market entry barriers”. Regarding the “signature of cooperation agreements”, viewpoints among Cluster Delegates was divided, because even when the majority (73,3%) scored it between moderately good and very good, 26,6% scored it as not so good or very poor. Finally, about 40% of Cluster Delegates judged the Event as a good opportunity to increase their “vision and knowledge of new markets and technology trends”.

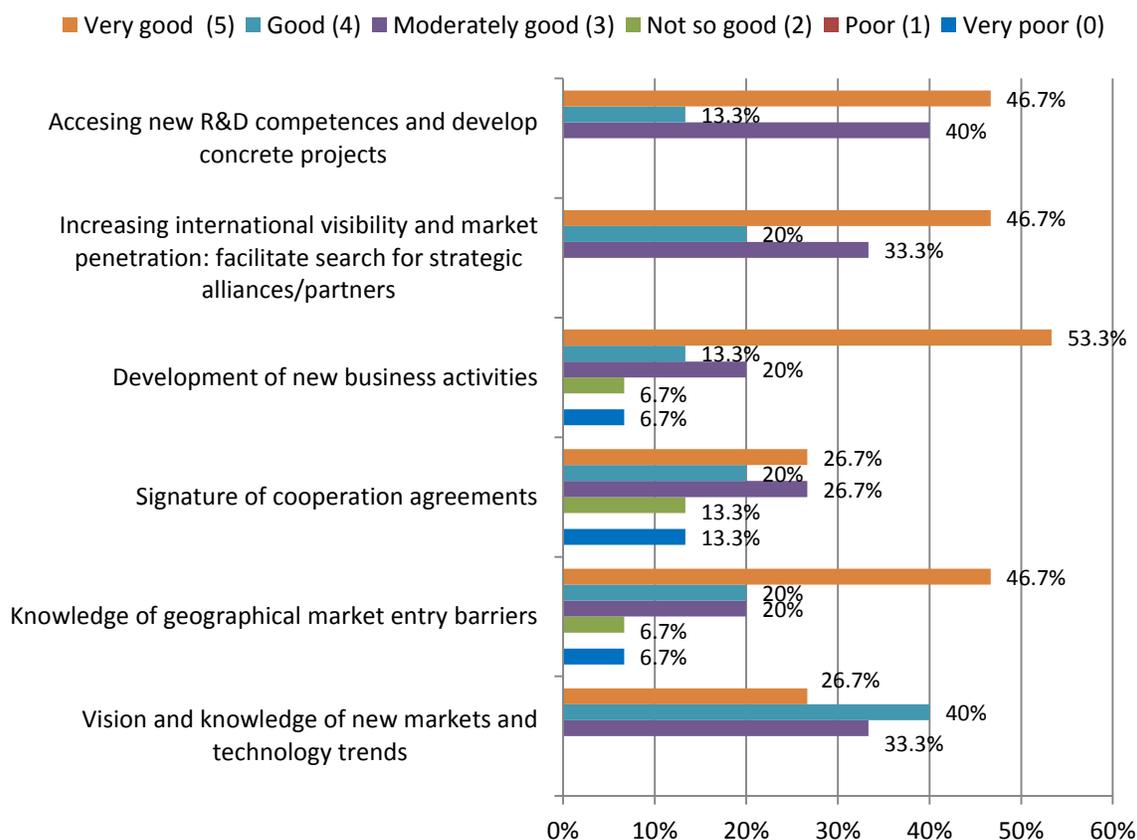


Figure 4 - Results obtained regarding the Cluster Delegates’ opinions concerning the relevance of the mission towards individual objectives

C2C and C2B meetings resulted in a high **number of cooperation agreements and collaborative ideas**, Figure 5. However, they were concentrated among European organisations, due to the lack of US cluster participants.

Furthermore, the number of cooperation agreements with non-US clusters (between 12 and 24) and the number of project ideas (between 21 and 42) have to be interpreted in a conservative range to account for possible duplications by EU Delegation participants through the debriefing questionnaire.

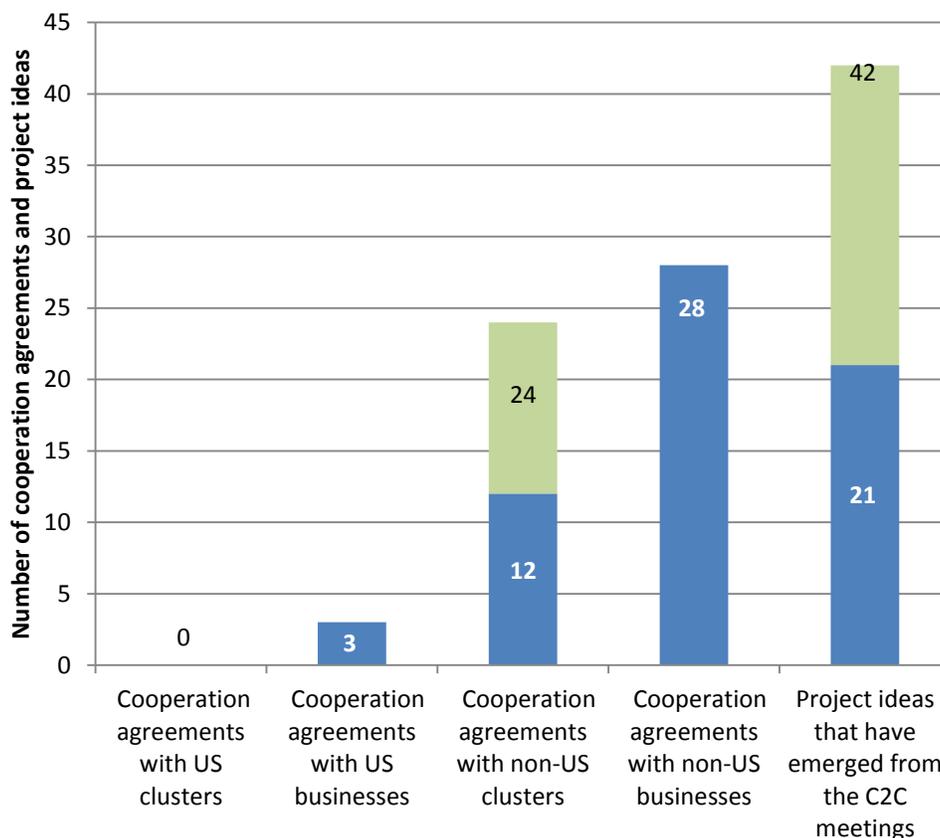


Figure 5 – Number of cooperation agreements that Cluster Delegates have initiated or plan to establish with different types of partners and number of generated project ideas from C2C meetings

The Cluster Delegates also took advantage of the debriefing questionnaire and the debriefing session to provide qualitative feedback and suggestions to improve future cluster matchmaking events. An overwhelming majority of the Cluster Delegates found the Cluster Matchmaking Event beneficial to establishing new contacts and identifying new collaborative opportunities that will support their SMEs.

Suggestions received through the debriefing session and debriefing questionnaire were the following:

- Confirm cluster delegates participation with more time before the Event;
- Provide the final version of the meeting’s agenda in an electronic form;
- Provide recommendations of close hotels with special rate for Cluster Delegates;
- Organise the Cluster Introduction Session with more time before the beginning of the matchmaking meetings;
- Organise one session for C2C meetings and another different session for C2B meetings; and

- Organise matchmaking events in the US in order to attract more relevant US participants, and include relevant site visits within the sector.

Annex 1: Cluster Delegation

#	CLUSTER/ NETWORK	REPRESENTATIVE	EMAIL	SECTOR	COUNTRY
1	ACAL - Asociación para la Mejora Competitiva del Cluster Agroindustrial	Diego Teruel Ginémez	dteruel@fundaciontecnova.com	Agro-food	Spain
2	AEC - Agricultural Equipment Cluster (Klaster poljomehanizacije)	Zeljko Erkapic	zerkagic@klaster-poljomehanizacije.hr	Agricultural Manufacturing	Croatia
3	Agrotransilvania Cluster	Daliana Simon	daliana.simon@agrocluster.ro	Agro-food	Romania
4	ANEA - Normand Association of Agro-Food Industries	Laure Civita	laure.cvt@live.fr	Agro-food	France
5	ARIA BN	Vincent Civita	vincent.civita@ariabn-automobile.fr	Automotive and agro-food industries	France
6	CASTRA	Vesselin Vassilev	vesselin.vassilev@castra.org	Aerospace technologies, research and applications	Bulgaria
7	CAT.AL– Cluster for high technologies in agro-food	Roberto Bocchio	segreteriatecnica@clustercatal.eu	Agro-food & sustainability, food-tech, food security & safety.	Italy
8	cd2e - centre for the development of eco-enterprises	Carlos Pereira	c.pereira@cd2e.com	Greentech, cleantech , agro-food applications	France
9	CLEAN	Morten Sorensen	mks@cleancluster.dk	Cleantech	Denmark
10	CLUSAGA - Galicia Food&Drink Cluster	Sergio Camiña	proxectos@clusaga.org	Agro-food	Spain
11	Eastern Cluster ICT	Robert Szlęzak	robert@szlezak.pl	ICT, including energy and renewable sources in the area of Smart Grids; ICT security; etc.	Poland
12	Fondazione Distretto Green & High Tech Monza Brianza	Paolo Piccinelli	p.piccinelli@distrettohtmb.it	ICT, Energy, Smart Agriculture and Monitoring, Decision support technologies in agriculture areas	Italy
13	FOOD+i	Macarena Baylos	mbaylos@clusterfoodmasi.es	Agro-food	Spain

#	CLUSTER/ NETWORK	REPRESENTATIVE	EMAIL	SECTOR	COUNTRY
14	GAIA - Cluster of Electronics and ICT Companies in the Basque Country	Itziar Vidorreta	vidorreta@gaia.es	Electronics, information technology and telecommunications, green ICT solutions	Spain
15	Green Energy Innovative Biomass Cluster	Bartha Sandor	sbarthacv@yahoo.ro	Lignocellulosic biomass, biomass from agriculture, biomass based heating systems	Romania
16	Innoskart ICT Cluster	Orsolya Szaplóczay	szaplóczay.orsolya@innoskart.hu	ICT in agriculture, wireless sensor technologies in forest and vineyards, among others	Hungary
17	Mazovia Cluster ICT	Mariusz Stachnik	mstachnik@klasterict.pl	ICT including e-agriculture and environment; aerospace & GIS & Telecommunication; etc.	Poland
18	PRO WOOD Regional Wood Cluster	Zsolt Attila Czine	czinezs@yahoo.com	Wood, biomass, energy	Romania
19	PROMOTRANS	Sandrine Herve	sandrine.herve.cvt@gmail.com	Transport (food transport), logistics, security, travel, maintenance operation, training	France

Annex 2: Agenda of the Cluster Matchmaking Event

Monday, 5th of October 2015	
09:00	Registration and welcome coffee
09:30 – 12:30	Conferences
12:30 – 13:30	Networking lunch buffet
13:30 – 14:00	Cluster introduction session - room Meregalli
14:00 – 18:30	C2C and C2B meetings
18:30 – 19:00	Cluster debriefing session - room Meregalli
Tuesday, 6th October 2015	
9:00 – 13:00	Visit at Expo 2015, including the US, EU and Italian Pavilions - reserved to a limited number of participants
10:00 – 18:00	Visit to Parma Alimentare - reserved to a limited number of participants

Annex 3: Debriefing Questionnaire

1. Cluster profile

All fields are mandatory!

Cluster Organisation:	
Contact Person:	
Position/Title:	
E-mail Contact Person:	
Mobile Phone:	

2. Overall quality of the event

Please score from 0 to 5 (being 0 the lowest value and 5 the highest value) the following aspects related to the overall quality of the event:

Indicator	Score (0 -5)
Quality of the overall event content	
Quality of the overall organisation	
Quality of the facilities	
Quality of the agenda	
Quality of the information provided to the participants	
Participation of foreign clusters and SMEs in the event	

Please indicate below your suggestions to improve future cluster matchmaking events:

3. Relevance of the event towards individual objectives

Please score from 0 to 5 (being 0 the lowest value and 5 the highest value) the following aspects related to the relevance of the event towards your individual objectives:

Indicator	Score (0 -5)
Vision and knowledge of new markets and technology trends	
Knowledge of geographical market entry barriers for cluster organisations / members	
Signature of cooperation agreements between companies and/or laboratories within participating clusters/regions/countries	
Development of new business activities	
Increased international visibility and market penetration: facilitate search for strategic alliances/partners	
Accessing new research and innovation competences and developing concrete projects	

4. Impact of the event

Please quantify the following aspects related to the impact of the event:

Indicator	Number
Number of cooperation agreements your cluster has initiated or plans to establish with <u>US clusters</u>	
Number of cooperation agreements your cluster has initiated or plans to establish with <u>US businesses</u>	
Number of cooperation agreements your cluster has initiated or plans to establish with <u>non-US clusters</u>	
Number of cooperation agreements your cluster has initiated or plans to establish with <u>non-US businesses</u>	
Number of collaborative project ideas that have emerged from the C2C meetings	
Total number of clusters you plan to keep further contact to establish cooperation	

If you answered the previous question, please indicate the names of the clusters you plan to keep further contact to establish cooperation: