

# Partnering Side Event of the Cluster Associations and Networks (CAN)

Output Paper

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The Side Event of the Cluster Associations and Networks (CAN) was organised on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2020 in the context of the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Cluster Conference 2020.

The side event gathered 37 participants, mainly representatives of cluster associations and networks from across Europe, as well as some European cluster representatives that participated as speakers. The event provided a platform to discuss in detail and transfer knowledge about cluster associations' and networks' activities, the challenges they face and possibilities to collaborate, and develop joint actions.

## 1.2. Purpose of the document

The purpose of this Output Paper is to summarise the outcomes of the Side Event – including discussions, lessons learnt and conclusions.

This document has been elaborated based on the notes taken during the various sessions of the Side Event, as well as on the Input Paper that was shared with the participants beforehand as a preparatory document.

The Output Paper will be published on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

## 1.3. Agenda

The Side Event was held online on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 from 09:00 to 12:30 CET.

In agreement with EASME and DG GROW, based on expert inputs and the feedback of the participants during the 1<sup>st</sup> webinar for the Forum of Cluster Associations and Networks, the topic “Measuring the effectiveness of cluster associations and networks” was selected as the main theme for the plenary session.

Applying the same approach, the following topics for the breakout sessions were selected: “Funding challenges for cluster associations and networks”, “Women in Clusters”, and “New Green Deal”.

Table 1 presents the event agenda.

Time	Description
<b>08:30 - 09:00</b>	<b>Log-in and registration</b>
<b>09:00 - 09:05</b>	<b>Opening by ECCP team</b> Main moderator: Lucia Seel (ECCP)
<b>09:05 – 09:20</b>	<b>Welcome speech from DG GROW, European Commission</b> Marek Przeor (Team Leader Cluster Policy DG GROW, EC)
<b>09:20 – 09:25</b>	<b>Introduction to the Forum of the European Cluster Associations and Networks</b> Douglas Thompson (ECCP)
<b>09:25 – 10:35</b>	<b>Panel discussion and Q&amp;A</b> <u>Topic: Measuring the effectiveness of cluster associations and networks</u> Main Moderator: Lucia Seel (ECCP) EC Moderator: Christophe Guichard (Cluster Team, DG GROW, EC)  Speaker 1. Antonio Novo (European Cluster Alliance) Speaker 2. Pauline Capus (AFPC)
<b>10:35 – 10:45</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>10:45 – 11:45</b>	<b>Break-out sessions</b> <u>1. Funding challenges for cluster associations and networks</u> Break-out session moderator: Douglas Thompson (ECCP) EC Moderator: Marek Przeor (Team Leader Cluster Policy DG GROW, EC)  Speaker 1. Santiago Cuesta Lopez (ICAMCyL Foundation) Speaker 2. Lukas Nögel (Go-cluster from The Cluster platform Deutschland)  <u>2. Women in Clusters</u> Break-out session moderator: Lucia Seel (ECCP) EC Moderator: Eva Maria Revilla Penaranda (Cluster Team, DG GROW, EC)  Speaker 1. Joëlle Durieux (France Clusters) Speaker 2. Isabelle Tovina Pécault (ALPHA-RIh) Speaker 3. Teodora Jilkova (Veritas Cluster)  <u>3. New Green Deal</u> Break-out session moderator: Francisco Rocha (ECCP) EC Moderator: Oceane Peiffer-Smadja (Cluster Team, DG GROW, EC)  Speaker 1. Kim Picard-Chaïbi (TECHTERA) Speaker 2. Merete Daniel Nielsen (Denmark Excellence)
<b>11:45 - 12:00</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>12:00 - 12:30</b>	<b>Conclusion and main take-outs</b> Main moderator: Lucia Seel

Table 1: Event Agenda

## 2. Overview of the side event

In line with the purpose of the Output Paper, the following sections summarise the main points and conclusions from the plenary and break-out sessions of the Side Event.

### 2.1. Plenary Session: Opening speeches and Panel discussion on Measuring the effectiveness of cluster associations and networks

Following a short opening by Lucia Seel from ECCP, **Marek Przeor from the EC** shared key quotes from and a short film on the European Cluster Conference 2020.

The selected quotes highlight how clusters and their collaboration are vital for the European economy, resilience, recovery, green and digital transitions, innovation and industrial modernisation. He also noted how clusters and the networking between them can help take full advantage of the European Single Market. The need for clusters and policy makers to partner with each was also highlighted, to set the policy agenda in a way to ensure the most optimal use of new resources for competitiveness.

Specific EU policies were identified that act to boost the European digital and green transitions, resilience and competitiveness. The recently published Council Conclusions on [“A recovery advancing the transition towards a more dynamic, resilient and competitive European industry”](#) stress the role of clusters since industrial ecosystems are officially recognised as facilitators of cooperation across Member states and regions. Industrial ecosystems also ensure effective, efficient and inclusive coordination to generate the required cross-sectoral synergies and encourage joint collaborative actions with and for industry, which are key for a competitive and resilient European industry. Marek Przeor emphasized that cluster associations and networks have a crucial role in supporting clusters in this path.

**Douglas Thompson from ECCP** presented the scope of the online Forum of Cluster Associations and Networks run by ECCP. The online Forum will be available in the new ECCP website, and will aim to generate discussion and knowledge exchange between the Forum members.

The panel discussion within the plenary session was focused on the effectiveness of cluster associations and networks, and the relevance to measure and monitor this effectiveness to be able to optimise their work. **Antonio Novo, President of the European Cluster Alliance (ECA) and Clusters.es**, the Spanish Federation of Clusters, discussed this in more detail. As a starting point, he presented the goals and activities of Clusters.es and ECA, a European association gathering national cluster associations from different European countries. The services that these provide include networking, defence of collective interest, representation, cluster promotion, knowledge and news sharing, promotion of joint activities, training initiatives and building collaborations and agreements. The measurement of the effectiveness of both organisations is done through the monitoring of impact of their services/activities and their achievements.

In the case of Clusters.es, the main 2020 achievements focused on the various service types. Within the services of defence of collective interest and cluster promotion, achievements include the negotiation of a new regulation for the National Registry of AElS (Agrupaciones Empresariales Innovadoras - Innovative Business Groups), promotion of the increase of clusters' budget at a national level (proposed to the Spanish Parliament), and the negotiation of the participation of clusters in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. A range of joint activities was also promoted to overcome the difficulties posed by COVID-19, such as enabling facial mask and respirator production. This had a substantial impact in the response to the crisis.

In the case of ECA, main achievements concerned face to face meetings held in the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the EC, and the publication of position papers, among others.

**Pauline Capus, the Executive Director of the Association Française des Pôles de Compétitivité (AFPC)** introduced her perspectives on effectiveness and its measurement. She initiated her inputs by giving a background on the French "pôles de compétitivité" policy (a structured cluster policy with evolving criteria), including the criteria to award the "pôle de compétitivité" excellence certification label and the selection of clusters that were awarded. Specific government support is also channelled to those that hold this label. New requirements have recently been set up for pôles de compétitivité, including new eligibility criteria and performance requirements (e.g. achievement of objectives set out in the performance contract, being high performers in R&D collaborative projects in strategic sectors, and having a strong European or international dimension).

AFPC and its role was then explained. AFPC represents all the French pôles de compétitivité, defends their interests, boosts cluster activities at a European level and fosters communication between clusters. AFPC has an important impact as an interlocutor of the French state, has substantial capacity to mobilise its members, and plays a crucial role in the recognition of the pôles de compétitivité label. It has achieved high visibility at a European level and has been able to act as a common voice to promote the role of pôles de compétitivité in French innovation. Tools were also presented that are used to measure the effectiveness of AFPC. These include AFPC indicators related to the number of their members and levels of involvement in AFPC activities, attendance rates, as well as indicators that derive from state agreements, such as annual action plans that incorporate indicators that also serve as reference points for measuring effectiveness. Feedback through surveys is another means for relevant monitoring.

In regard to effectiveness, the recent initiative EUCLES – European Cluster Labelling Excellence Structure was also presented. EUCLES is a result of the review of the current European cluster labelling system (European Cluster Excellence Initiative - ECEI labels) for increased transparency and efficiency. EUCLES is being constituted by cluster networks as an international non-profit association to implement, manage and further develop the European cluster excellence management labelling scheme for a strengthened and more transparent cluster excellence across Europe.

### Conclusions and key take-aways

- The current European policy context (Council Conclusions) offers clusters a political mandate to act
- Recent developments (including the COVID-19 crisis) proved how the clusters and the cluster associations and networks were able to quickly mobilize their members to address challenges, in an effective and collaborative way
- The European cluster labelling system is being reviewed (EUCLES) for increased transparency and efficiency
- Public support is needed for clusters and cluster associations and networks to become more effective. Recognising cluster associations and networks as discussion partners by policy makers, and funding through specific calls directed to these groups, are essential. This would allow them to develop more ambitious projects and increase their effectiveness. It is noted that currently the cluster associations and networks are mainly financed by their members

## 2.2. Breakout session 1: Funding challenges for cluster associations and networks

Following a short introduction by Douglas Thompson, **Marek Przeor** provided an overview of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-27 and the Next Generation EU (NGEU), and how clusters should turn the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity through the NGEU. He also described how clusters can lead green transition, accelerate digitalisation and build resilience, using EU funding - and that scale and scope are needed to effectively contribute to the flagship areas for investments and reforms.

**Lukas Nögel, consultant at VDI/VDE Innovation + Technology GmbH**, works on the German cluster excellence programme “go-cluster”. He started his presentation “Challenges in funding cluster initiatives in Germany” with an overview of cluster funding in Germany, highlighting two funding programmes at the Federal level – Go-cluster and Clusters4Future. Go-cluster was described in more detail, as a stimulus to improve cluster management under a cluster network of 85 most competitive cluster management organisations in Germany and benefiting from monetary and non-monetary funding. This includes funding up to 50%, with the maximum amount of 50,000 Euros over periods of up to one year, with new funding planned for the beginning of 2021.

Lukas Nögel noted that the challenges for those in the Go-cluster networks included that the private share of 50% can be an issue for smaller organisations, and the process of defining sufficiently targeted topics whilst ensuring that these are not too narrow for the heterogeneous needs of the network members.

He also gave a regional example of Saxony focusing on cooperation networks including the initiation of new networks and development of existing ones, that could benefit from 75% funding up to 200,000 Euros over three years. The challenges for these cooperation networks include the co-financing rate of 25%; a focus on business-driven initiatives being possibly less attractive to R&D networks; and issues related to focusing on immature clusters and “awakening potential”.

Lukas Nögel ended by concluding on the need to align different levels of funding in the European Multi Level Governance System – EC, National Level and Regional Level – as well as the importance of non-monetary funding.

**Santiago Cuesta López, Director General of ISMC Cluster & ICAMCYL Foundation**, followed with his inputs on “International networks of regional innovation ecosystems as source of opportunities for SMEs/Clusters”. Santiago Cuesta López provided an introduction to the Castilla y León Region, regarded as a success case in cluster funding and promotion policy.

He described the link to the Regional Strategy for Research and Innovation for Smart Specialization (RIS3), and the four axes of funding (Technical feasibility studies, Innovative projects, SME competitiveness, and cooperation).

He noted the need of networks to connect with the regional systems and look abroad for good lessons learnt, as well as identifying and connecting opportunities at similar innovation ecosystems. He also highlighted the challenges in developing an inter-regional approach and cross-sectoral collaborations.

Santiago Cuesta López pointed out the Business Investment Platform that has been developed in co-design by industrial players and public and private financial institutions. This aims to bridge the gap between financial institutions and businesses, and reduce the time from idea to investment with funding strategies including venture capital, EU funds, local sources and the European Investment Bank.

#### Conclusions and key take-aways

- Ways in which networks could be included in the German example (Go-cluster) and the nature (and completeness) of government funding for the platform, given the co-financing requirements
- Initial exchanges on good practices that could be relevant for the setting up of new cluster associations (with the example of a possible automotive focused cluster network). Some information was provided, and a suggestion that further exchanges are developed through the upcoming online Forum for Cluster Associations and Networks (FCAN) being launched on the new ECCP platform
- A further question was raised about how national cluster networks can strengthen their positions, and gain further financing, through use of data analysis. It was also introduced how this subject could be used as an initial group for the FCAN

## 2.3. Breakout session 2: Women in clusters

The session was opened by Lucia Seel. The first presentation was given by **Joëlle Durieux (Director) and Elise Durey (Project manager) from France Clusters Board** on “Foster the feminization of industrial sectors with French clusters”. They introduced a book published by France Clusters on women captains of industry, elaborated based on a survey of female managers/presidents of French clusters. Their main finding was that the French industry is still too masculine – with 10-35% of the employees in industrial SMEs are women, mostly in support functions.



Even in large companies where more attention is paid to gender issues, little evolution in women's career was noted to have been observed. There is also a lack of attractiveness of technical and industrial training for young women. Joëlle Durieux noted that investment funds are becoming more and more focused on gender equality when supporting companies.

Recommended actions included the promotion of the participation of young women in scientific and technical training sessions, enhancement of the image of the industry to the public in general and to women in particular, and the development of women's entrepreneurship.

**Isabelle Tovena Pécault, the Head of International and European projects at ALPHA-RLH** continued the session with a presentation on "Cluster Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)". She first gave examples of inspirational women in STEM and pointed out the low women representation among Nobel Prize laureates. There remains a low proportion of women among scientists and engineers in EU's labour force (2013), low proportion of women researchers in EU and OECD countries (2013), and according to the Glass Ceiling Index (GCI) women are less represented in higher academic grades in the EU (2013).

In French clusters (55 surveyed) women represent 55% of the workforce but below 30% of them work in senior positions.

Examples of European initiatives for gender equality in R&I were also given: "For women in science programme" promoted by L'OREAL and UNESCO; gender equality promoted as part of Horizon 2020; the Gender Equality in Academia and Research Toll (the GEAR Tool) (EIGE); and the "Cluster pioneering program for the promotion of women in STEM and entrepreneurship". Another initiative for women entrepreneurship highlighted was WEgate (<https://wegate.eu>).

**Teodora Jilkova, International Relations and Event Manager at Veritas Cluster**, gave a brief overview of Bulgarian clusters. These are in early development stages and the female representation in management/decision-making positions is limited to one cluster manager and some others in other management positions. Among the Bulgarian initiatives that foster women participation is the Bulgarian Association of Women Entrepreneurs (Selena). This performs research on the topic and supports women entrepreneurs. The Business Lady Club further stimulates women entrepreneurship and supports the exchanges of knowledge between women in starting businesses and those taking higher positions in companies.

Action points noted include the evaluation of existing cluster organisational structures in Bulgaria to understand the exact role of women, collection of best-practices and knowledge from abroad, initiation of round table discussions with local actors to present international activities and the initiation interactions between international actors, local associations and cluster representatives to share knowledge and outline what is needed for the local market.

### Conclusions and key take-aways

- Mentoring programmes for women in clusters are important
- Evaluation of current existing structures supporting women in clusters, with the aim to better understand the role of women in the cluster landscape. This can be done at two levels: at cluster management level and at cluster initiative level (industry level)
- Collection and sharing of best practices are key
- Enlargement of the existing working groups with interested participants willing to engage in (e.g. ClusterWene group <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4326979/>)
- Giving visibility to the topic through all available channels and showcasing how to valorize the impact of women's work
- Re-thinking/shaping the structure of a cluster organisation to use the talent brought by women (including social solidarity approach demonstrated by women's contribution during the COVID-19 crises)
- Broadening the dialogue in the cluster community and also taking forward the topic in the FCAN Forum are important

## 2.4. Breakout session 3: New Green Deal

Francisco Rocha from ECCP opened the session and provided some background information on Green Deal. The new EU Green Deal is a trending topic and has a direct and indirect impact in all types of businesses. In this breakout session, the focus was on the Green Deal and its implications on the cluster associations and networks. Special emphasis was given to the mechanism by which these organisations intend to communicate best practices to their cluster.

**Kim Picard-Chaïbi, Innovation Project Manager at TECHTERA**, presented TECHTERA'S Green Deal Approach. TECHTERA is a cluster in the textile area, whose objective is to increase the competitiveness of companies by encouraging and developing collaborative innovation in processes and products, through a set of dedicated services. The cluster supervises and supports collaborative R&D projects with partners (industrialists and researchers). During his presentation, Kim Picard-Chaïbi noted that TECHTERA has developed several Green Deal supporting actions, including: Information gathering, Brainstorm, Webinars, Network research, Recycling club (Club RECIT), and Working Groups. Furthermore, the sustainable development priority areas of TECHTERA were also presented during the workshop – Recycling, Bio-based materials, Eco-efficient processes, and Proximity economy.

**Merete Daniel Nielsen, CEO of Cluster Excellence Denmark and President for the global TCI Network**, presented the activities of Cluster Excellence Denmark and the TCI Network towards the EU Green Deal. In particular, Merete Daniel Nielsen presented the main preliminary takeouts from the TCI recovery playbook, which included a set of activities to rethink and recover to a new greener normal. The presentation included conclusions on the impact of circular economy and its transition to clusters and cluster associations, and provided recommendations on actions to take to promote the green deal and in particular circular economy. Merete Daniel Nielsen showed that cluster associations and networks have a role in promoting the green transition through showcasing Cluster Excellence Denmark's activities (including a survey to their members on this aspect, awareness raising about opportunities, and networking).

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### Conclusions and key take-aways

- There is high interest among the clusters and their members of all sectors in topics related to the Green Deal, including circular economy aspects
- Opportunities within the EU Green Deal may arise not only for green clusters, but also for clusters from other sectors, focusing on specific parts of the Green Deal – there is a large range of policy areas of interest and activities within these areas
- Some clusters face a capacity problem, specifically in terms of human resources. Green Deal has, therefore, not become a priority in these cases
- There are a lot of challenges for new/small clusters. Cluster managers have to push and be active because green transition is important – not only from the policy side but also in regards to products/services. It is important to check opportunities at all levels – regional, national and European and offer training and education programmes to companies
- Cluster associations and networks can do a range of activities to support the clusters in their greening process:
  - Connection between different clusters is key – work and cooperate with other clusters.
  - Cluster associations and networks also have a role in the green deal. Activities can include: Monitoring and surveying the clusters of different sectors and their interests and raising awareness about green aspects; Awareness raising and promotion of funding opportunities in green aspects for clusters; The promotion of inter-cluster collaboration of different sectors on sustainability aspects
- Development of best practices for promoting green transition, creating working groups for green initiatives / projects (e.g. TECHTERA cluster created the Recycling Club), and creating sessions that involve experts and companies to present their projects to have a better understanding of what is happening at the national and EU level

# ANNEX. Overview of the Forum of Cluster Associations and Networks

## A1. Background

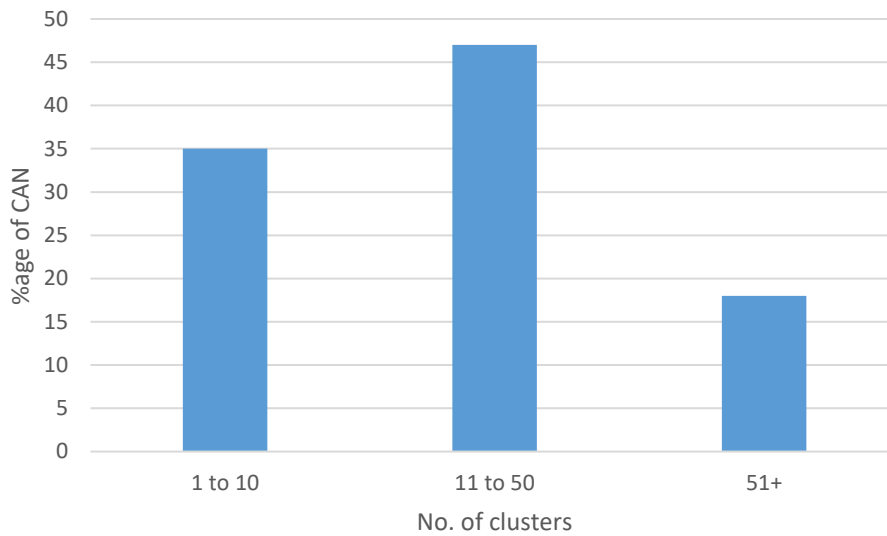
The forum facilitates discussion between Cluster Associations and Networks on cluster development and cooperation, the exchange of practices and mutual learning among them. It is built upon the mapping of cluster associations in order to foster communication on the issues and subjects that matter most to clusters. Hence, the overall objective is to support the building and development of communities of practice among cluster associations that will facilitate the exchange of activities and mutual learning among them, thus contributing to a better-connected and more collaborative cluster community.

The following section highlight some of the key characteristics of the forum members including their composition, geographical coverage, and main sectors of focus. It should be noted that all quantitative information in this section comes from the ECCP unless otherwise stated.

## A.2 Characteristics

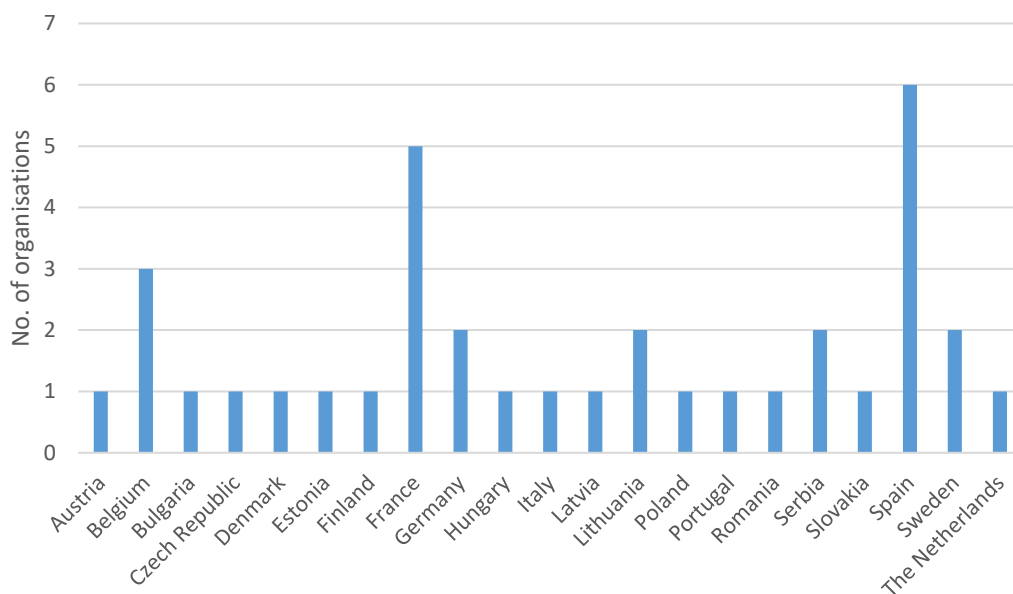
Currently, the forum is made up of 53 organisations. However, the analysis provided in this section takes into account 51 organisations for which detailed information is presented under the “Networks” menu on the ECCP platform. The forum comprises of cluster associations and networks with the networks slightly more than 50% of the composition. As per a survey conducted with the forum members in April 2020, 87% of them represent mature, experienced cluster associations / networks /meta-clusters which have been established for more than five years, followed by comparatively younger ones (10%) that have been established for 1-5 years, and then those newly established (3%).

As far as each individual organisation (cluster association and network) is concerned, 65% of the organisations have more than 10 members (Figure 1) and almost 20% are relatively large associations and networks with members over 50.



**Figure 1: Composition of the forum members**

These organisations have specified geographical focus and alignment (Regional/National/International) with an overall view to contribute to the European cluster ecosystem. 26% of the forum prioritises international cooperation and related activities whereas 47% and 27% of the associations and networks have a national and regional focus respectively. As presented in Figure 2, among the countries with the most representation in the combined Regional and National focus categories are Spain (6 organisations), France (5 organisations) and Belgium (3 organisations).



**Figure 2: Distribution of Regional and National focus clusters**

The cluster associations and networks cater a diverse range of sectors. Among the ones with the most popularity include Aerospace, Automotive, Clean-tech, and Micro & Nano-electronics, all with an 11% proportion (Figure 3).

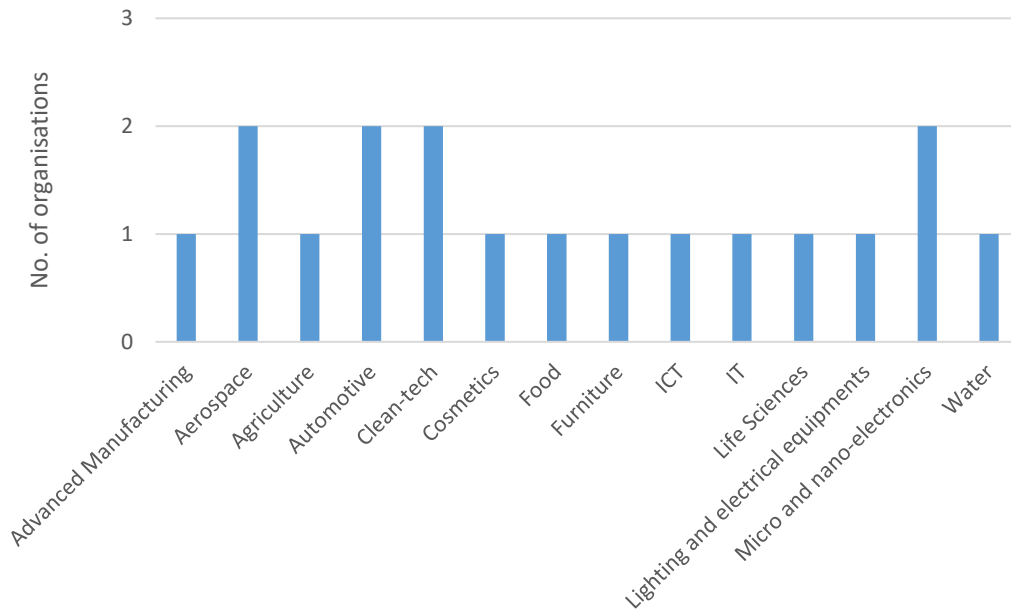


Figure 3: Sectors of focus