

EU4Sport Cluster Alliance Project shares experiences at the European Cluster Conference 2016



Left to right: Co-executive Director (Alberto Bichi) holding this presentation at the European Cluster Conference.

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EU4Sport Cluster Alliance participated in the 5th edition of the European Cluster Conference 2016, which took place from the 30th of November till the 2nd of December in Brussels. The focus of the 3-day event was on the theme **“Clusters 4.0 - Shaping Smart Industries”** in which the European Commission encourages the development of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships and joined efforts under the thematic **Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation**. Herein it strives to support entrepreneurship and growth acceleration of SMEs in order to convert more start-ups to scale-ups across Europe and benefit from the “fourth industry revolution” – referred to as 'Industry 4.0' trends towards mass customization and servitization.

The objective of the Conference organised by the European Commission - DG Growth aimed at sharing **experiences on how cluster initiatives and organisations can foster the internalisation of firms by supporting industrial modernisation and shaping smart industries**. It also provided the required know how on finding partners in international markets beyond Europe and presented lessons learned from **“European Strategic Cluster Partnerships – Going International”**.

Overall, this gave participants the opportunity to learn about the most recent trends and priorities for cluster policies and cluster organisations, supporting industrial modernisation.

Being actively involved in the EU4Clusters Project since November 2015, EPSI has been formally acknowledged by the Commission as a technological platform and attended the European Cluster Matchmaking event, where it exchanged its expertise with other clusters and paved the way for future collaborations. In his capacity as *EPSI's Executive Director*, Alberto Bichi also presented his specific experience with the ESCP-4i project and stressed that *“as sport is embedded in other sectors such as ICT, Tourism, Health and Transport is it crucial to raise awareness among the regions, on including the sport sector as a priority theme within their Smart Specialisation Strategy”*.

During his presentation he further addressed the fact that the sporting goods industry is following the current trend of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies. Mr. Bichi continued with underlining the importance of export and internationalization for European SMEs. Specifically for this purpose, EPSI has

joined in October Commissioner Bienkowska's trade mission to Iran and is now heading to China with other Partners of the EU4Sport Cluster Project on the 13th – 16th of February.

Within the EU 4 Cluster's framework of internalisation, the objective is to explore the Chinese market by becoming acquainted with local companies and by gaining insight into the economic, industrial and investment opportunities in China.

Mr. Bichi comments *"In the past three years, only 25 % of EU based SMEs have been involved in export of which only 13 % managed to target markets outside the EU. Seeing that international activities foster corporate sustainability and positively impact employment growth, it is imperative to promote internalisation by endorsing standard EU actions abroad and sharing the acquired knowledge on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform."*