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DEVELOPING INDUSTRIAL STRATEGIES THROUGH  
INNOVATIVE CLUSTERS AND TECHNOLOGIES

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editorial

# Building better international clusters

Karen Ison  
West Midlands Secretariat

co-operation and strategic partnerships with overseas companies, and finally to foreign investment.

Birmingham Jewellery Cluster (WM) developed linkages to companies in China and India. This provided some low value outsourcing adding value to the jewellery range offered in Birmingham, which was subsequently exported to America.

To integrate clusters across Europe look for clusters similar to your own comments Razeh Zadeh - for example seafood and flowers are similar products and can use the same cluster model.

An Advisory Board has been set up on Clusters to deliver the Lisbon Strategy, increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to compete with America and make Europe more competitive. There is huge interest across Europe in clusters to improve GDP - a USA to EU comparison shows GDP is 8% higher in clusters.

The Pro-Inno Europe Initiative promotes and provides tools for coherent and compatible cluster policies. They request that the EC improves policy making by facilitating linkages through Regions of Knowledge and Interreg programmes. Pro-Inno argue the learning has now been achieved - now Europe needs to get on with the doing.

\*CLINIC - Clusters Linking Interactive Networks and Innovative Clusters

'Variety is the spice of life' and this certainly applies to Clusters. The West Midlands, Saxony and Tuscany regions describe clusters as a conglomeration of firms, networking between firms, a community of people and an institutional framework. If three regions find this many definitions, imagine how many there are across the whole of Europe.

But the European Commission prefers to look at this as an opportunity rather than an issue. Razeh Zadeh, Yorkshire Forward, at a recent CLINIC\* Event, commented on how the EU is not necessarily looking for a common cluster model across Europe, but for regions and policies to devise linkages.

CLINIC research agrees that key conditions for cluster to cluster networking include policy agents co-ordinating the support, along with sector specific business opportunities and schemes for international co-operation.

Razeh Zadeh pointed out that a recent report reflected upon innovation weaknesses throughout Europe - clusters are known to be drivers of innovative activity, with higher employment in regions with clusters and sectors. Research and development clusters are required at EU level according to DG Enterprise, introducing innovation into clusters. Europe needs to develop international linkages in clusters.

Doug Mahoney, UK Trade and Investment, offered the following advice on enabling international exchanges to work: requirement for a facilitator/ point of contact (usually public sector) and identify sectoral specialisations to enable synergies. Work with groups to identify similar overseas organisations e.g learning institutions. Visit the market: taking clusters overseas raises their profile. Agreements have to be win-win to succeed.

CLINIC research identified how clusters export, comparing regional models. The clusters tended to start by sub-contracting work, moving on to

### Further Information:

European Cluster Observatory - data on clusters across Europe. Analysis. Comparative selection across 30 countries - lists cluster organisations/ maps/policy. Stockholm developed on Michel Porter American cluster model Website:

[www.clusterobservatory.eu](http://www.clusterobservatory.eu).

European Cluster Alliance - cluster initiatives/member of Pro-Inno project.

European Cluster Memorandum: document to get recognition at ministerial level. Endorsed by EU and regions.

## DISTRICT Study Tour West Midlands – Innovation, Incubation and Internationalisation 20-22 November 2006

The West Midlands three days Study Tour in November focused upon innovation, incubation and internationalisation, and was heralded a great success by all partner regions.

The aim of the Study Tour was to offer delegates a forum to understand the unique challenges facing partners from different regions on interconnecting topics. As such this Study Tour was ideally placed to capitalise on facilitating and encouraging sub project partners to network and share ideas.

Phil Exance, Innovation Director, WM RDA provided a History and Forecast of Innovation in the West Midland regions. Doug Mahoney outlined the new agenda for Research and Development within International Trade in the UK, and DISTRICT partner regions outlined best practice in innovation. Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and Networks presentations gave an insight into university/

business research and financial opportunities.

An Interactive Creativity workshop encouraged delegates to think in a creative and innovative way by generating new ideas for providing business solutions.

Matteo Bonifacio, DG Education, chaired a discussion panel of University representatives on the Commission's proposition of European Institute of Technology (EIT). An integrated, two-level structure of the EIT that combines both a bottom-up and top-down approach – a Governing Board and Knowledge Innovation Communities. Delegates debated what were the benefits of a European dimension in integrating research, education and innovation and whether Universities felt this two level structure was workable and advantageous to the research communities in improving innovation.

Delegates attended the UK Business Incubation (UKBI) International Gala Dinner with guest speaker Sahar Hashemi,

Co-founder of Coffee Republic, and collaborated with UKBI on their tour of regional incubators including Aston Science Park, Coventry Technology Park and University of Warwick.

Presentations by each of the sub projects offered all regions a summary of activity and progress to date prior to networking.

The next Study Tour is due to take place in April 2007, identifying innovation in sectors and clusters and visiting case study Development Agency regeneration projects in the West Midlands and services.

## DISTRICT Study Tour - Technology Transfer in Saxony Leipzig-Dresden 14th – 16th March 2007

The highlight of the study tour, which focused on technology transfer in Saxony, was the grand opening of the "Conference on the Future of Mechanical Engineering", where the Federal Minister of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs, Wolfgang Tiefensee, underlined the importance of the "Promotion of Industrial Growth Cores in the New Federal States". Mechanical engineering is one of the largest fields of German industry, the second one in Saxony and, at the same time, it is the biggest employer for engineers. Participants had the opportunity to join in discussions panel with VIP-Speakers representing global companies of the machine and car-manufacturing sector (Volkswagen AG, Mori Seiki/ Japan, Samutensili/ Italy, marGUNE/ Spain, Festo AG, TRUMPF AG). Furthermore, there was an open forum organized in cooperation with excellent research centres' and branch alliances' representatives such as Fraunhofer Society, Institute of the German Economy, Alliance of Italian Manufacturers UCIMU, discussing topics like "Innovation and Research" or "Markets of the Future – the Future of Markets". A comprehensive summary of the conference results was given by Markus Löttsch, the Managing Director of the Saxony Economic Development Corporation. Hosts and participants agreed that the "Leipzig Dialog" addressed to industry, science and politics ought to be continued. One important step in realizing this aim is to establish a continued working group dealing with the future challenges and developing common proposals and measures. The conference was organized as an overall frame event of the mechanical engineering sector supporting three specialized branch exhibitions at the Neue Messe Leipzig:

INTEC (exhibition of innovation, technology & engineering), Z-2007 (subcontracting fair) and Rohima (fibre-reinforced composites). At the central joint stand "Saxony – Land of Research" the DISTRICT presentation was given by its delegation at the first official opening of "TechnologyMall" – one of the DISTRICT sub-projects coordinated by the Mechanical Engineering Alliance of Saxony VEMAS.

About 15,000 branch visitors could take profit from the synergies of the event in Leipzig. On Friday, the participants of the Study Tour went to the Centre of Research Rossendorf (near Dresden), where Mr Kolitsch gave a speech on "Ion Beams – an extraordinary tool for extraordinary surfaces".

The Centre of Research carries out special research programmes with the focus on nanostructures, oncology and safety. Nanotechnology is the most important technology in the 21st century. Today's definition of nanotechnology includes anything smaller than 100 nanometres with novel properties. Nanocluster and nanowires are made by ion beams. The study tour continued with the visit of the Fraunhofer Competence Centre of Nano Technology. Dr Leson talked about "R&D, Technology Transfer and Business Clusters: Challenge of future markets".

This institution is one of over 20 leading centres of applied research in Saxony, involved in a number of "Innovation Clusters" including important research centre's partners such as the Dresden Technical University, the Leibniz Society or the Max - Planck - Society.

The DISTRICT delegation gained insight into technological processing by a guided tour visiting the Fraunhofer Nanotechnology Center of "Ultrathin functional films", of the nano-surface finishing section and the laser technology operations hall. In the afternoon the delegation visited the Gläserne Manufaktur Volkswagen AG (Transparent Factory), where the Phaeton is manufactured.

An interesting guided tour through

the production halls would demonstrate how a production plant car with all logistic infrastructures has been built as an attractive city highlight. Finally the delegates had the opportunity to discover the cultural heart of the Dresden City by a guided Tour visiting historical places like the Zwinger and Semper Opera House.

# “How Can University – Regional Cooperation Stimulate Sustainable Entrepreneurship”: DISTRICT at the 2007 CIP Forum

On the 20th - 23rd of May, the international elite of the knowledge economy has gathered in Göteborg, Sweden.

More than 170 speakers and over 100 specially invited guests from the world's leading enterprises, universities and policy actors met at the fourth CIP FORUM on the topic of wealth and welfare in the knowledge economy.

CIP FORUM is organized bi-annually by CIP, the development center for knowledge-based business, at Göteborg University and Chalmers University of Technology which have received the Sweden's foremost Architectural Award, the Kasper Sahlin Prize.

Its main purpose is to tie international leaders and experts together, and connect them with European enterprise, universities and public actors to build a world-leading knowledge-based business community.

The meeting ranges over six main themes, including innovative bioscience, finance and valuation, information and communication technology, university entrepreneurship, brand and design, and intellectual property management. In a series of workshops, plenary sessions, and executive roundtable discussions before a limited audience, the unique gathering of competences and experiences takes on the challenges and opportunities of the emerging economy.

The Chalmers Conference Centers was the venue for the plenary and parallel sessions on Monday and Tuesday. Workshops during Sunday and Wednesday were held at the School of Business, Economics and Law, Göteborg University not far from “Avenyn” the major shopping street in Göteborg.

Among the participants were representatives from Microsoft, Roche, Google, and Ericsson together with among others advisors to the governments of several different countries, and also a delegation of the DISTRICT project.

In collaboration with CIP Forum and DISTRICT Project SEARCH, Region Västra Götaland organized a Study Tour and a workshop titled “How Can University – Regional Cooperation Stimulate Sustainable Entrepreneurship”, which was held at the School of Business, Economics and Law Göteborg University, the 23 of May.

The Study Visit programme provided for a special itinerary for DISTRICT delegates at the CIP Forum 2007.

During the workshop, Mats Lundqvist from Chalmers University of Technology and Brian More presented an overview on developing the regional innovation system for technology in Region Västra Götaland and West Midlands.

It was the chance for Mats Lundqvist to remark the importance of taking strong responsibility by one region in developing cases and processes as basis for learning.

In his opinion, the role of Region Västra Götaland, like any other European region, has to develop and consolidate incubation, seed capital, clusters and science parks. But, another important point, for him, is also to keep on developing entrepreneurial competence and attitudes.

After a general introduction of the Coventry University Enterprise (CUE), Brian More stressed the attention on West Midlands economic strategy and action plan summarized in four pillars which are: to improve enterprise and manufacturing and develop the knowledge economy; to provide highly skilled, innovative workforce supporting the growth of high value jobs; to develop facilities for incubation, science and technology parks; finally to counter unemployment and social and economic exclusion in urban and rural communities.

“The West Midlands is recognised as a World Class region in which to invest, work, learn, visit and live and the most successful in creating wealth to benefit all of its people” added Brian More.

Business leaders who came from the world's leading firms, universities, consultancies and public organizations shared their experience at the forum, making this year's event one of the most high-impact knowledge-based business conferences ever held in Europe.

The goal is to advance the understanding of and need for modern business models, skills, and tools required to create value from intellectual assets, property, and capital for the combined benefit of industry, academia, and society.

CIP is a non-profit development center which draws up industry and academia helping knowledge-based business. Founded in a joint effort between Chalmers University of Technology and School of Business, Economics and Law at Göteborg University, its mission is to drive a shift to an intellectualized economy for the benefit of industry, academia and society as a whole.

CIP's vision is to be a world leading actor in the development of people, tools, infrastructure, and capital for the creation of wealth and welfare in the global knowledge economy. This is possible through the delivery of world-class education, advanced interdisciplinary research and development, international expert networks, and modern business development and management services.



## **EUNIP International Conference 2007**

12-14 September 2007, Prato, IT

This 10th edition of the international Conference of the European Network for Industrial Policy (EUNIP) was held in the wake of a resurgent interest on industrial policies within European Union central institutions and key countries.

Participants at the 2007 Conference presented and debated a wide range of contributions at the heart of EUNIP tradition, including perspectives and applications within the EU and comparison with non-EU regions and countries.

In particular three main themes are focussed. They are: industries, localities, and regions, in a global perspective of social, market, and technological tendencies and strategies; the combination of public action on industrial organisation, with innovation policies, competition policies, territorial policies, social policies; and then the definition of institutional features, design principles, implementation processes, and evaluation methods of policies.

The Opening plenary session introduced some key questions and perspectives related to these themes. Parallel Sessions was organised along nine tracks articulating the themes in a connected variety of topics and advances.

The Final plenary session pulled together the main ideas that have emerged during the Conference proceedings.

A roundtable and a plenary session was dedicated to DISTRICT project and its subprojects. While the roundtable focussed on good practices, the plenary session included an organized presentation of the main policy indications emerging from the DISTRICT subprojects, the advances discussed within the roundtable, and the views and comments of some regional development officers on such results.

## **OPEN DAYS, European Week of Regions and Cities**

Brussels 8-11 October 2007

Organised by the Committee of the Regions, the European Commission's Regional Policy Directorate General and expected 100 regions, cities and other institutions and private partners from all over Europe, the 5th OPEN DAYS-European Week of Regions and Cities was held between 8 and 11 October 2007 in Brussels for about 5,000 expected regional policy experts and practitioners.

This year's headline is: "Making it happen: regions deliver growth and jobs".

About 150 workshops and sessions focused on the new generation of cohesion policy programmes, which was implemented in the course of 2007 in all European regions.

## **Artimino meeting 2007: Economy and Technology Innovation in local systems**

12-13 October 2007, Artimino - Prato - IT

University teachers, actors of public local and regional administrations gathered in the impressive Artimino's Medici Villa which lies near the little village of Carmignano to discuss of innovation in local development.

Claudio Martini, the president of the Tuscany Region and Marco Romagnoli, mayor of Prato also participated.

The 2007 edition focused on technology innovation pathways carried out by different local systems.

It was a two days dedicated to a comparison of Italian and international experiences such as the case of Torino Wireless, ARTI (the regional agency for innovation and technology of the Puglia Region), "Poles de compétitivité" of Paris, "InnoRegio" programme and more others.

## **DISTRICT gets off to Lisbon Forum and OPEN DAYS**

The DISTRICT project aroused great interest among participants both at

the Lisbon Forum 2007, which held on 20th and 21st September, and OPENS DAYS which took place on 8-11th October in Brussels.

In the two occasions, the District project manager and its team have presented the project through a wide description of activities and successful results emerging from all DISTRICT subprojects. In particular, they focused on the relationship and network established among partners.

DISTRICT, actually, succeeded in getting 50 local actors (19 university departments, 19 research centres, 10 business service providers and 2 local public administrations) from 11 approved subprojects work together for more than one and a half year - quite a few discovered unexpected skills and competences available in partner regions know-how, methodologies, experiences, practices - all could freely circulate among partners

It was also the time to describe a future outlook: the DISTRICT+, a way to capitalize targeted good practices in regional economic development.