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# Towards more world-class clusters in the European Union



by



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Clusters are not a new concept. In different forms, they have been used since long as an integral part of innovation and industrial policies in many Member States and regions across the European Union. But it is only now that a European approach to strengthen clusters in Europe has been defined as an important element of the broad-based innovation strategy as adopted in 2006.

There is strong economic evidence that clusters have a positive impact on competitiveness and innovation and thus on growth and jobs. Clusters make best use of regional strengths, by promoting intense competition along with co-operation - the so-called "co-opetition". More than 2.000 clusters have been statistically identified in Europe by the European Cluster Observatory, out of which however less than 10% can be said to have strong focus, expertise and critical mass to really impact the development of regional economies and innovation. The challenge is to create more world-class clusters in Europe in order to fully valorise the potential of clusters for competitiveness and growth. Clusters are predominantly a market-driven phenomenon and the most successful clusters were created spontaneously. Yet, there are also a number of cases where forward-looking and dedicated public cluster policy, business initiatives or top-class universities and research institutions have been instrumental for the emergence of strong clusters. Striving for excellence at all levels is the key to reach a world-class level and thus to succeed globally.

Many regional and national governments are today active in designing cluster support programmes such as the French pôles de compétitivité or the German Spitzencluster, to name just two. The Commission aims at facilitating and leveraging these efforts by mobilising and streamlining its cluster-relevant instruments developed under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development, and the EU Cohesion Policy. Currently, there are still too many cluster initiatives in Europe that are not sufficiently linked to each other so that their impact is less than optimal.

The Communication "Towards world-class clusters in the European Union: implementing the broad-based innovation strategy" outlines, for the first time, a policy framework for

accelerating the development of more competitive clusters in the EU. It calls for more excellence and cooperation at policy and business level so that Europe's strengths can be better leveraged into market success at global level. Successful cluster policies call for public-private partnerships, as well as for strong commitment to put visions into reality.

There is no lack of visions in Europe. What is sometimes missing is mobilising the necessary resources making them happen. Too many cluster initiatives are tried to be implemented within too narrowly defined border lines, building only upon limited regional strength rather than seeking for synergies and cooperation with others. This must change in order to be globally competitive. Not all cluster initiatives may wish to play in this league. But we need more of them in Europe.

In order to promote more world-class clusters in Europe, more and better trans-national cooperation is important. The proposed actions at European level range from improving existing instruments such as the European Cluster Observatory (cluster mapping) and the European Cluster Alliance (cluster policy dialogue) to new actions aiming to raise the excellence of cluster organisations, fostering trans-national cooperation between clusters and improving the framework conditions for cluster development in the EU market. There is no European cluster policy as such but a wide range of actions that, if used in an intelligent and more strategic manner, can have a profound impact in support of regional and national efforts to build stronger clusters in Europe.

The Commission Staff Working Document that accompanies this Communication provides a more detailed overview of the different EU initiatives in support of clusters and a description of the challenges addressed by the Communication. It further presents the available evidence for the economic impact that clusters have. To support more and better evidence-based policies, we need to have neutral, reliable and sophisticated information about clusters, cluster policies and cluster initiatives and apply improved methodologies for more and better evaluation of the impact of cluster policies. The European Commission will continue to support his work.

# Point-One engaged in European partnerships



by



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The Netherlands is home to a unique European high-tech hotspot in the field of nanoelectronics, embedded systems and mechatronics, encompassing international excellences in business and technology.

This industry and academia ecosystem is underpinning a €51B economic value chain including major suppliers and system integrators in the applications healthcare, energy, power, ICT, lifestyle, leisure, transport, logistics and security. Many of the key players have leadership positions in worldwide markets and competences. The technologies provided by this ecosystem are essential enablers for resolving public issues such as ageing society and global warming. High-tech also means high R&D intensity. For comparison, about 30% of all private R&D investments in the Netherlands are spent in this domain.

The high-tech industry in Point-One is positioned on a global playing field, requiring R&D cooperation with partners in other countries and global regions for realizing necessary technology breakthroughs. The Point-One technology roadmap is based on long years of successful partnerships in the EUREKA clusters MEDEA and ITEA and their successors CATRENE and ITEA2, as well as the global industry roadmap ITRS; execution and future updating of the Point-One roadmap is strongly connected with the European Joint Undertakings ENIAC and ARTEMIS.

The vision of an ecosystem with a 'Silicon Valley' brand quality implies actively attracting foreign high-tech investors to the Netherlands. Conversely, Point-One plays a key role in enabling Dutch companies in developing business in fast growing export markets, such as China. The SME group in Point-One has expressed the ambition to develop themselves into a group of exporters, with 50% of revenue realized outside the Netherlands. Point-One actively supports this ambition.

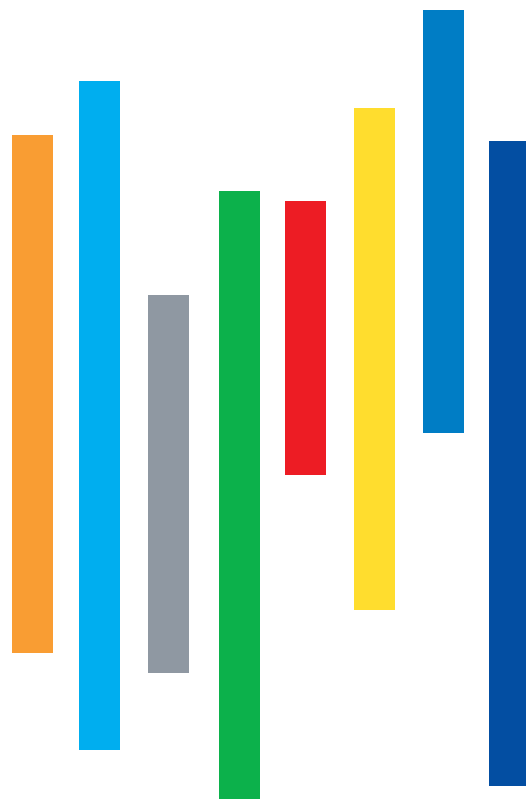
Promising is also our 'interpole' approach. This approach targets our connection with European competitiveness clusters in the Point-One domain such as Systematic, Silicon Saxony, MinaLogic and Sophia Antipolis. Point-One, together with these clusters has defined themes on R&D cooperation and cluster development, and recently entered into a cooperation agreement with Systematic.

One of the common themes is bringing SMEs to participate in European collaborations. This was operationalized in our European Intercluster call in 2007.

In brief, Point-One is actively engaged in European partnerships and clearly considers the cooperation with our European colleagues an essential part.

The Competitiveness Clusters Forum is an initiative in which we are glad to take part.

<http://www.point-one.nl/>



# 4<sup>th</sup> Competitvity Clusters Forum - Towards world class clusters

13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008 in Sophia Antipolis

## Clusters in the Leuven Knowledge Economy Region.



by



Dr Martin Hinoul

Out of the K.U.Leuven (University Leuven-Belgium) research laboratories and IMEC (Interuniversity Micro Electronic Center), a total of one hundred companies have spun off, as of today. Also many Flemish, Belgian and international companies have set up in Leuven, resulting today in more than three hundred technology companies. Most of these companies belong to one of the five clusters active in very specific niches.

Five distinct clusters are formed:

-Life Sciences Cluster- with a strong research group for Molecular and Cardiovascular medicine, the centre for Human Genetics and the Centre for Experimental surgery.

-Functional Food Cluster- with a strong research in the field of molecular and cardiovascular medicine and the research group in immunology.

-Telematics and communication cluster-with research in IMEC and the department of Electronics.

-Microelectronics and nanotechnology cluster- with IMEC

and the laboratory for Solid State Physics.

-E-security cluster- with research in the faculty of applied sciences and the department of exact sciences.

The Leuven Knowledge Economy Region believes strongly that these clusters "represent the driving force for new economic development. They are concentrations of innovative interdependent enterprises, working in a specific field in a specific geographic area and in close proximity to centres for research.

<http://ird.kuleuven.be/>



[www.sophia-antipolis.org/ue2008](http://www.sophia-antipolis.org/ue2008)

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