

ISE Project Outputs & Results: Cross-Border Clusters



European Regional Development Fund

Project Output 6:

“Establishment of a group of new sector-focused cross-border clusters in the 2 Seas region”

Information from ISE Application Form:	Reporting on the establishment of a group of new sector-focused cross-border clusters in the 2 Seas region (July 2020)
<p>Activity Description: “Consultation meetings will be organised with SMEs to determine the key focus for the creation of 4 new cross-border clusters within the group. PP2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 will lead on this and SMEs will then be invited by project partners from their region to join a series of new sector-focused cross-border clusters. The clusters will facilitate partnerships, enable international collaboration & cross-border working between SMEs to help with accessing new business opportunities in & beyond the 2 Seas area. The partners will identify 80 companies to form four cross-border innovation clusters – however, on a case by case basis, partners will jointly agree to allow more SMEs to join the clusters if there is demand and if they present growth potential and commitment to the project activities.”</p>	<p>The ISE Project has encouraged new cross-border SME partnerships & collaborations and created new cross-border clusters. Part of the derived benefits of these clusters is the removal of barriers to cooperation (especially during Brexit), which will enable long term crossborder cooperation for SMEs.</p> <p>Partners selected and invited businesses from the ISE regions with innovation and internationalisation potential to the 4 cross-border clusters, most of which were involved in previous activities (taster sessions, pathway events etc.) to be part of one of the clusters: food & drink, digital & creative, mechatronics and new materials. The businesses from the partner regions who became official cluster members also each formally signed an agreement to join one of the ISE clusters through a completed Cluster Sign Up form.</p>
<p>Expected Project-Specific Result: “80 SMEs from the partner regions benefiting from membership of one of a group of 4 sector-focused crossborder clusters and providing opportunities for cross-border collaboration, tech-transfer and the application of innovation techniques. Clusters remaining in place after the implementation phase of ISE (thanks to detailed options analyses & scenario planning by project partners in liaison with cluster members - likely ongoing activity to be led by researchers from HEIs in partner regions). This output will include the creation of a cross-border web platform to enable communication between the members of the group of the new cross-border clusters during the ISE project and afterwards.”</p>	<p>133 businesses from the partner regions benefitted from membership of one of the 4 cross-border clusters.</p> <p>On joining a cluster and signing a Cluster Sign Up form, companies were also invited to join one of the (closed) LinkedIn groups for each of the ISE clusters. This communication web platform enabled potential cross-border working between the cluster members as they were able to further connect via the LinkedIn platform. Both partners and cluster members in the LinkedIn groups were also able to share useful information and tips within the groups, ideas, as well as upcoming ISE event promotion.</p> <p>An additional platform was also set up by the partners for the Digital & Creative cluster using Slack.</p>
<p>Target Groups: “SMEs from England, France, Flanders & the Netherlands with an appetite for innovation and cross-border collaboration.”</p>	<p>Carefully selected SMEs primarily from the following priority and emerging industry sectors in the partner regions including: mechatronica, new materials, agri-food, digital & creative industries. Although these 4 sectors were the main target groups, the partners did not wish to artificially close any potential possibilities for innovation and cooperation with companies that</p>

	<p>didn't fit neatly into a sector definition - ISE was able to let suitable SMEs from different sectors participate to add value.</p> <p>SMEs were invited by partners to participate and 'sign up' to the ISE clusters to help them apply innovation tools and concepts to their own business as well as benefit from being exposed to knowledge and expertise by HEIs and have the opportunity to attend major innovation events.</p>
<p>Durability of project output: "The clusters will continue to work jointly beyond ISE on tangible commercial gains thanks to measures put in place during the implementation phase i.e. identification of a cluster lead & deputy and an early options appraisal for continued, sustainable cluster management scenarios."</p>	<p>Towards the end of the ISE Project, the partners worked with some of the companies from ISE Digital & Creative cluster (1-3 cluster leads per ISE region, including one 'deputy' per region) to put in place a final cluster action plan. This involved agreeing a cluster communication platform (internal and public) to be used regularly, branding, future cluster meetings and events (1-2 per year), administrative arrangements, cluster terms of reference, agreement for the purpose of the international cluster / partnership, and a cluster constitutional document, etc.). The partners recognised that there would be a lot of work involved in ensuring the cluster continued beyond the life of the project, although it was already well on the way to becoming a sustainable, independent digital and creative cluster.</p> <p>Although physical gatherings were not possible towards the end of the ISE project due to Covid-19, a programme of alternative virtual events (focusing on Brexit, cross-border working and innovation during covid, etc.) was put together to keep momentum and to work towards finalising an effective Food & Drink Cluster action plan with companies in the remaining months of the project.</p> <p>Establishing the Mechatronics and New Materials Clusters was more of a challenge for ISE and the number of cluster members for these two clusters has been lowest of the 4 cross-border clusters. Both these sectors have been harder to work with as companies do not typically see themselves in either of these sectors, rather use these 'topics' as a tool. Towards the end of the project, the decision was therefore made by partners to complete the final Mechatronics and New Materials cluster events as planned, and that it would not be possible to effectively take forward these two clusters beyond the life of the project (although partners continued to keep regular contact with these companies throughout).</p> <p>Through the ISE cross-border clusters, SMEs in the sector groups will continue to share learning and ensure sustainability. The cross-border clusters (digital & creative and food & drink) will grow and develop, working together on new opportunities beyond ISE.</p>

The Cluster Terms of Reference

The cluster terms of reference were outlined by the project partners and agreed by all digital & creative cluster members (the same will be done with food and drink cluster). It sets out the working arrangements for the cluster and lists vital steps and actions that the cluster has agreed to follow to ensure continued success of the cluster beyond ISE:



Digital & Creative Cluster: Draft Terms of Reference

- The cluster will nominate a **cluster lead** (named individual or organisation) or leads (from different partner countries) to take forward cluster activities
- The lead will be responsible for the overall **planning and coordination** of the activities of the cluster including setting a **timetable for cluster meetings, activities and events** to bring members together on a regular basis to explore further opportunities to collaborate and identify business opportunities
- The lead will ensure that **reports / minutes** of meetings and agreed actions are recorded as appropriate – documentation will be circulated to the group as soon as possible after a meeting
- Cluster members should agree to attend at least **two cluster events or activities** each year
- Day-to-day communication between clusters will take place using the established **Linked In & Slack** groups and by other means (email, phone etc.)
- **Membership can be extended** to include other businesses and experts as necessary in agreement with existing members

Cluster Action Plan (Template):

ISE Cluster Action Plan 2020-2021

Action Title	Description	Lead Organisation	Timescale
Keeping in Contact	Making sure that interaction between cluster members continues via the Linked In group		

Purpose of the Cluster Document (for the ISE Digital & Creative Cluster):

Imagineers International Cluster Purpose



The Imagineers International Cluster is a partnership of networking groups from within the digital creative industry that aspire to engage with sector colleagues from across the world, to collaborate, share and learn.

The purpose of the Partnership is:

- To offer a cross border peer to peer network that subscribes to the values of transparency, commercial integrity and partnership
- To proactively support a culture of shared learning and sector skills advancement to the benefit of the partnership and the wider economy
- To reach out and engage with similar sector groups across the world to share, learn and collaborate to the mutual benefit of all

The Partnership also recognises the different development stages of each regional network within the international cluster and will therefore assist other hubs that need to be helped along to become more established in their local area.

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