



# 2° Workshop - C2FUTURE: Knowledge exchange in cluster excellence

## Second Workshop Report

**aclima**



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## 1 | GENERAL OVERVIEW

This first workshop regarding the Competence Map, Skill Gaps and Complementarities between the clusters took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of June during two working sessions. The main objective of this second workshop was the improvement of the service quality provided to the members of the clusters and the design of a future common tool for supporting the internationalization of these companies on 3<sup>rd</sup> country markets.

During this working group C2Future partners exchanged knowledge and ideas on how to prepare and facilitate SMEs to engage in cooperation among them and in 3<sup>rd</sup> country markets, while planning their financial resources, staff, knowledge, how to involve stakeholders and facilitating a soft landing of the SMEs into global markets.

The following table exhibits the clusters and partners that are involved in the working groups:

CLUSTER	Country	Participants	Expertise Area	Activities
SEKEE	Greece	Manos Macromallis and Vasia <b>(not attend the event)</b>	High Tech	Mobile applications, telecommunications providers, innovative communications.
GREEN HOME	Italy	Giuseppe Rossi and Gilda Capano	Sustainable building	Smart cities
CLM	Italy	Sara Cortese	Smart mobility	Supply chain (automotive, nautical, railway, intermodal transport and infrastructure, etc.)
ACLIMA	Spain	Igor Aranguren and Mikel Ibarra	Environmental services	6 value chains: waste, water, air, climate change, contaminated soils.
DTI	Bulgaria	Krasimira Shindarova	Information and Communication Technologies	ICT and Digital transformation
ICT	Serbia	Marina Blagojevic and Anja Pantelic	Information and Communication Technologies	ICT and Digital transformation

## 1.1 WORKSHOP PART 1

### ➤ THE TOPICS ADDRESSED:

Throughout the session that took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, the following points were approached and discussed:

#### ➤ **Preparation services for internationalization:**

It was discussed that the company members of the clusters could be classified in 3 different profiles depending on their size and international experiences. This classification could be helpful in order to identify which type of companies we should address in the preparation services that the clusters might offer in order to develop strategies to go international. The 3 different profiles are defined down below:

1. The first profile of companies that has been identified is composed of big companies in size that have had experiences in different countries and continents. Therefore they are in a very advance phase of their internationalization and might not need further assistance in doing so.
2. The next group would consist of companies that possess some of the characteristics that are thought to be crucial in a journey of going international, however they lack experience or opportunities. This groups are mostly composed of SME and would benefit greatly from the assistance of the clusters.
3. Lastly there are the SMEs that have never had international experiences and do not see themselves with the potential to penetrate new markets in different countries.

Each of the participating clusters presented an overview of the activity carried out by their member companies in relation to the internationalisation processes the member companies of each cluster carries out. They were also encouraged to mention which of the 3 profiles they believe their members resemble the most. This was facilitated via questions provided in advanced to the working group.

- **How do you assess “international-ready” companies? Which key elements (size, staff, products/services, financial support, etc.) are necessary that your member companies must possess before they become competent to dive into an international project? In addition, they were also asked to SHARE which basic services they each offer to “go international” towards a specific country.**

Based on these questions each cluster gave insights into their perspective and actions:

- **ICT:** The entire ICT cluster is organised as a bottom-up initiative; the member companies are directly asked which one is their target market and all the actions ICT takes are focusing on the promotion of the product/service in that destination.

They do not assist companies in the first phase of soft landing, as they do not evaluate which of the companies are ready to go international or which market would be the most beneficial to penetrate; rather they tend to act more upon the input from the market in the second phase of internationalisation, focusing on looking for business opportunities in the already established target market. Specific actions mainly are B2B match makings with other associations and clusters in destination to take further action and establish a contact between companies, via fairs, meetings, webinars, and any other interesting event.

- **GREEN HOME:** The member companies of Green Home have had very limited international experience in the past. It was explained how they had a project in Switzerland that was not successful due to the lack of knowledge in the internationalisation process. Economically it was a good deal, however the cluster could not support the member companies through it as they did not possess the necessary characteristics and skills to go international. It was identified and concluded that having all the documentation and website in English, as well as having fluent English-speaking professionals is one of the traits a company should develop before targeting international markets.
- **ACLIMA:** Aclima has 2 different approaches regarding the international services they offer. The first one is the Outside to Inside approach, where they travel to a new country to gather information about that specific market. The idea is to contact different clusters and associations from those destination countries, who provide Aclima contacts and knowledge. Business missions are also arranged to those countries, where the associates are invited and agendas, meetings, fairs etc. are held with the objective of creating project opportunities.

On the other hand, they have the Inside to Outside approach consisting of working groups for the associates (SMEs mostly). In these working groups member companies work together with the objective of creating common offer; they work together to reach win-win environments. By filling the gaps of each other, they develop and offer the entire value chain of that project. They also work on encouraging the companies to go international, as overall they are pessimistic about their chances of success and not aware of their potential and opportunities.

- **CLM:** It was highlighted that CLM has members that already have experience outside national markets, however as they consist of bigger companies, they do not require assistance from the cluster. Focusing on SME, the companies by themselves as well as the cluster as a whole they lack experience outside Europe. They aspire to expand to new markets, as the wish of the member companies to enlarge their market and customer segment has been communicated, however the cluster has limited experience offering this service.
- **DTI:** The biggest associates are outsourcing, therefore in internationalization actions they focus on SMEs. In the first phase of preparation, they work closely with the companies to develop their mission, vision, and values. This is believed to be essential to establish the correct mindset and therefore successfully implement themselves in another countries. An internal analysis is done to the product/service

being offered to conclude which market would be most suitable. Once this has been done, they establish contacts with similar associations as DTI in the chosen country. This way they obtain information about the market and come back to the companies with a report, which will be analysed to conclude which market to go to. Moving on to the second phase, they arrange webinars, events, conferences, trade fairs etc. to gather information. They have even done trade missions in certain markets with the economic support of public institutions.

➤ **Take outs of the discussion:**

After each one of the clusters giving their perspective on the topic, we can sum up all the answers in the following topics:

➤ **Company profile**

The companies that need the most assistance in their journey to go international are mostly SMEs that have had little or no international experience so far. Therefore, we will be mostly focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> profiles aforementioned.

➤ **Approaches to start international projects**

During the discussion, different approaches and methods to enter a new market and begin an international market were mentioned. They can be summed up in the following 3 procedures

- EU projects: They consist of projects in a European level carried out by means of collaboration among companies across all Europe. It gives the participating companies the opportunity to take their first internationalisation steps while building connections with companies that might come in handy for future collaborations. The rest of the companies get the opportunity to experience in first person your abilities/capacity/potential and therefore opens the door for you in the country/market they are located. EU funds are used to finance these projects.
- Focusing on SME companies that lack the competitiveness to penetrate a new market due to their small size, they can get together to successfully effectuate international projects. Therefore, SME companies that are competitors in the national market can get together and create a new company between them all (where they will all invest their resources) that will take action in the international markets.
- Instead of focusing on a country as a whole, another way to get to a new market is to look for specific projects. The opportunity would arise when the companies have the capabilities to fill in the gaps of the local company that is going to lead the project and therefore establish a collaboration

➤ **Internationalization plans**

To conclude the first session of the WG2, it was discussed that the actions taken regarding the internationalisations of the member companies of the clusters so far could be divided in 2 different phases:

The first one would consist of the **internal** and **external analysis**: the internal analysis consist of collectively or individually gathering information about the companies that form the cluster and evaluating their product and potential. On the other hand, the external analysis can consist in any type of action to get information about the destination countries the companies have intentions to consolidate in. Actions can range all the way from gathering macro information from the local government or contacting foreign associations with similar objectives to trade missions to destination countries. A platform to efficiently obtain macroeconomic data of each countries called Enantio was mentioned during a discussion, which could be helpful for the external analysis.

Enantio website: <https://www.enantio.com/>

The second phase, which is the one most developed by the C2Future clusters, is the batch of **direct actions** taken to establish contact with destination and put into action the project. Visits to specific companies, meetings with potential collaboration opportunities or B2B events such as webinars, virtual visits and attendance to trade fairs are some of the actions of this second part.

This process will be explained and discussed more in depth in the second session of these working group. In addition, each attendee will be encouraged to specifically elucidate which actions they carry out in their day-to-day tasks.

### ➤ **Opportunity in Canada**

In order to understand more in depth the market in Canada and the potential opportunities that might arise for C2Future, the attendees were introduced to Ruggiera Sarcina, Director of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Canada. She delivered a presentation to provide insights into the Canadian market and how to penetrate the market, starting from an overview of Canada as a country. The tech sectors of the country, the clusters and the importance of sustainability in the next normal policies were covered during her talk.

The deliverable ended up with a mention to a specific opportunity for the clusters, the Business Forum on AI, which is open to participation to the rest of the countries. It was mentioned how AI as an accelerator and facilitator of the transition to a circular economy and in the pursuit of sustainable development goals, focusing on the topics of energy sustainability, new materials, circular products & materials flow and logistics & mobility. All of these will be addressed via plenary sessions, round tables, B2B, R2B, C2C, market learning and networking sessions.

## 1.2 WORKSHOP PART 2

### ➤ THE TOPIC ADDRESSED:

Further commenting on the international actions that were discussed in the last session, it was stated what an international plan is and the 7 steps that consists of it were explained:

1. Study of the export capacity of the company and analysis of the firm's available resources
2. Analysis of the international environment
3. Analysis of potential target markets.
4. Study of selected markets.
5. Select the most adequate target market entry mode.
6. Commercial and marketing plan for each market.
7. Define the action plan.

During the beginning of the second working session, the clusters were requested to share which of the aforementioned actions they take in the day to day to assist the companies. The input has been collected into the following table

THE 7 STEPS FOR AN INTERNALIZATION PLAN		ACLIMA	GREEN HOME	CLM	ICT	DTI	SEEKE
<b>Study of the export capacity of the company and analysis of the firm's available resources.</b>	Forms, questionnaires	X	Just once		X	X	
	Individual diagnoses	X	x			X	
	Group sessions for data collection				X	X	
	Collection of international plans	x		X	x		
<b>Analysis of the international environment</b>	Situation of the sector or value chains internationally			X		X	
	Identification of high potential countries	x		X		X	
	Which countries are betting on the sector	x		x			
	Select and prioritize (with your partners)	x					
<b>Analysis of potential target markets.</b>	collect macro information to select the countries	x			x	X	

<b>Study of selected markets.</b>	Concrete study of the market and the sector: Government, chamber of commerce, consultancy firms, people...	X				X	
<b>Select the most adequate target market entry mode.</b>	Sessions with the partners to select the most important countries for them	x			x	x	
<b>Commercial and marketing plan for each market.</b>	Set the objectives	(collectively)					
<b>Define the action plan.</b>	Agendas, meetings, trade fairs...	x	x		x	X	

When analysing the table there is no doubt that the section that is most developed by the clusters is the definition of the plan. The experience in contacting similar associations in destination countries, attending trade fairs, doing trade missions, or creating meeting agendas is extensive overall.

Looking at the first point, the internal analysis of the company or the study of the export capacity, majority of the clusters have mentioned having tried to gather information via forms and questionnaires, however the lack of engagement of the member companies have resulted in receiving very few responses. Doing the questionnaires by phone rather than email is one of the solutions that has been highlighted. Individual diagnoses, which have sometimes been conducted by the clusters, also seem a good suggestion however they require more resources and dedication.

Regarding the analysis of the international environment and potential target markets, few of the clusters have shown previous experience. It has been mentioned that some clusters take these steps with companies that already have an international market, however they do not work on it with the members that have null experience. the easiest way to do so might be through websites to obtain macroeconomic data such as Enantio, as it has been suggested earlier.

Concerning the commercial and marketing plan, it is a point the clusters have never touched upon nor developed. Coming up with a marketing plan would consist of a very different and specific task for each company, therefore the clusters rather leave this point to be developed by the companies themselves.

Overall, the takeout could be concluded on how the clusters focus most on the points that can be developed through collective working groups or that are might be interesting to more than one company. In addition, they also have extensive and successful experience in the definition of the action plans involving direct actions at destination countries.

## 2 | CONCLUSIONS

- **A focus on SMEs**

After the clusters gave insights into their international actions, it was concluded that the SMEs are the types of companies that the clusters must put their efforts on undoubtedly.

- **International experience**

The other reason why some of the clusters do not offer internationalization services is the lack of knowledge and experience. So far they have done very limited work in international markets and have focused more in national markets, however, they have shown interest in doing so in the near future if opportunities arise.

- **Defining the action plan**

From all the 7 steps of an international plan, all the clusters focus their efforts mostly on the last step, the definition of an action plan in an already chosen country. Some clusters collectively elaborate on the analysis of the companies and markets in order to conclude the most adequate country to target, however others lack resources to offer these services to their companies.