Volume 1

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ACENET

ACCELERATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CLUSTERS AND COMPANY NETWORKS

ACENET is a Thematic Network, that brings together 11 regions with a common interest in how clusters and company networks can be stimulated, developed and promoted. In total, seven events will be arranged over a period of 2 years, so as to learn about successful industrial cluster schemes and make contact with important support organisations and companies in the different regions. ACENET is supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise as part of the Innovation and SMEs programme and is member of the Innovating Regions in Europe Network.

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Upcoming events

- 11-13 Novemeber: Official launch of the 6th Framework Programme in Brussels. Read more: http://www.innovating-regions.org
- 12-15 November: Elmia Subcontractor Fair, Jönköping, Sweden. Read more: http://www.elmia.se
- 21 to 23 November: Budapest conference to discuss the 6th framework programme for Switzerland and candidate countries. Read more: http://www.innovating-regions.org
- 22-23 November: "Oslo as a learning region". Conference in Oslo, Norway, on the potential of a learning region approach as a private-public partnership strategy for promoting urban and regional development. Contact Jon-Gunnar Aasen, Oslo Teknopol tel +47 22 00 29 97
- 4-6 December: The 4th ACENET Thematic Network event takes place in Lyon, France. Read more: http://www.clusterlink.com/ACENET/new
- 12-13 December : Workshop "Regional schemes to support RDI activities in SMEs", Valencia.Read more: http://www.innovating-regions.

Kick-Off among aluminium profiles and car engines

On the 6th of February 2002, Acenet had its kick-off meeting in Jönköping, Sweden. Though the weather was rather chilly, the atmosphere amongst the participants was warm and full of excitement. Participants from the 11 member regions could for 3½ days of meetings enjoy the hospitality of the two Swedish ACENET members, Alumiumriket (represented by Länsteknikcentrum) and ID Skaraborg.

Since this was the first meeting, a large share of the agenda was reserved for discussions and development of the work programme. However, study trips to the two cluster initiatives, Aluminiumriket and IDS, (Industrial District Skaraborg) was undertaken. In Aluminiumriket, a visit to SAPA, word class manufacturer of extruded profiles, was made. In Skaraborg, everybody hade the chance to get a guided tour at the VOLVO car engine factory.

Consequently, the kick off was an ambitious start of the network in an atmosphere dominated by eagerness to learn from different ways of establishing and managing successful clusters and company networks.

At the county residence of Jönköping, all 11 ACENET regions together with Jaqueline Lostao from the European Commission and Birgit Friggebo, governor of Jönköping, officially connected to the project.

From left to right: Vladimir Rudl (Prodravje, Slowenia), Roberta Cortese (Vento, Italy), Jaromir Dudek (Ostrawa, Chech Republic), Jaqueline Lostao (European Commission), Erik Bunis (Aluminiumriket, Sweden), Ursula Gacek & Tomasz Gut (Plastics Valley, Poland), Birgit Friggebo (Governor, Jönköping), Christer Martinsson (IDS, Sweden), Yves Guyon (Rhone-Alpes, France), Reiner Kaufmann (Schwarzwald-Baar-Heuberg, Germany), Jon-Gunnar Aasen (oslo, Norway) and Peter Perkonigg (Styria, Austria).

Veneto—Culture, Turism and Industrial Districts

The second ACENET meeting was held in the region of Veneto, Italy, with a trip also to the new member AREA Science Park in Trieste. The region of Veneto has a long tradition in cluster establishment, the so called "industrial districts".

The region has traditionally adopted a bottom-up strategy on economic development facilitating entrepreneurship, industrial clusters and network systems. However, globalisation and increased competition has also put pressure on the industrial system around Veneto, especially to set up an appropriate support system. This flexible, but still supportive attitude might be one reason to why the region has succeeded in developing a broad range of internationally recognised industrial districts.

Study visits to two districts in the region was made. The Montebelluna shoe cluster is one of the 15 industrial districts in Veneto that has been recognised by law. The cluster is a world leading manufacturer of sport shoes of different kinds. The main focus of the meeting was to listen to different policy makers, presenting different ways of sponsoring and facilitating the development of the districts. The Chamber of

Marino Finozzi, the Regional Chancellor for SMEs Policy within the "Regione Veneto", accounted for the special economic conditions in Veneto and the development of the policies concerning industrial districts in

Commerce is the focal organisation responsible for coordinating funding and support services. The Italian government has decentralised law making procedures, making it possible for regions to adopt policies that fit their situation most properly.

The meeting was mainly organized by the Eurosportello Veneto, but half a day was spent at the premises of AREA Science Park in the region of Trieste.

World Class clusters in Styria.

The third and most recent ACENET meeting was held in September this year, in Austria, with exciting tours to clusters in the region of Styria and a short trip to the Podravje region of Slovenia.

On a study-tour through the plant of Böhler-Uddeholm, the Acenet-participants were able to see the whole production-line: e.g. melting – secondary metallurgy – casting – special melting and re-melting – hot forming – heat treat – machining and testing.

Meeting activities included study visits and presentations by support actors and cluster representatives. The aim of the meeting was to communicate cluster experiences from the material-, wood- and automotive clusters in Styria, and to learn from regional support organisations.

The automotive sector is the most dynamic sector in Styria. The AC Styria Automobile cluster was founded in 1996 to facilitate a focusing of all regional actors in the automotive sector and thereby contribute to the fortification of innovative forces and international competitiveness. In addition to the Automobile cluster, there is a new materials cluster in Upper Stryria with the aim of fostering the competences in the fields of materials in the region by establishing co-operations between research and educational institutions and firms.

On the last day a trip to the Podravje region in Slovenia was made in order to learn about their potentials for establishing clusters. A study visit and a presentation was conducted at the Technology Park in Pesnica and at the Chamber of Commerce in Maribor.

The trip was organised by the SFG (Styrian Development Agency) and the Ausseninstitut of the University Leoben. The visit to Slowenia was arranged by the Maribor development Agency in co-operation with SFG.

Clusters - a new perspective on competitiveness

"Innovation and development processes are becoming more and more complex, calling for resources and competences often outside a single company's boundaries"

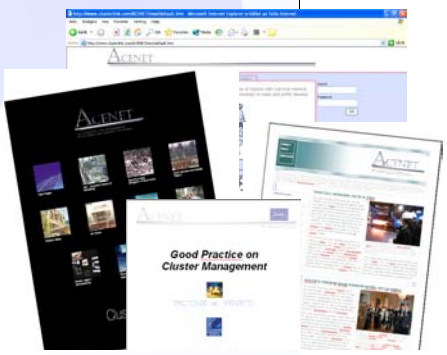
Industrial clusters and business networks are considered one of the most interesting phenomenon in economic development today. Since competitiveness in most industries is now determined on a global scale, and former competitive advantages are now becoming minimum requests, succes today calls for a continous development and innovation of both products and production.

Innovation and development processes are becoming more and more complex, calling for resources and competences often outside a single company's boundaries, especially if the company is small. Cooperation is therefore the key to success in order for small and medium-sized comapnies to stay innovative in todays industrial markets. Cooperation is also the foundation for cluster and network establishments, where companies share experiences, know-how and resources.

Clusters and company networks are also becoming a topic, more and more scrutinised by academia and business consultants. The main goal of the ACENET project is to gather and disseminate experiences among the members on how to establish and manage clusters and company networks, and thus contributes to this trend. A list of different studies on clusters can be found in the list of useful websites on the next page.

Products from the project

Except continous learning and establishing important contacts, ACENET has also generated some useful products for the members.



Four products from the project:
-The website : www.clusterlink.com/ACENET/new
-The marketing folder
-The newsletter
-Tthe good practice reports

The network has its own website—www.clusterlink.com/Acenet/new — where information about the network, downloads (e.g. profiles and case studies of the participating regions) and a discussion forum a can be found. The homepage is intended to be a platform where the members can get easy access to information of interest and interact with each other between the meetings.

Further, a marketing folder with basic information about the project and the members have been developed. The folder is intended to be used for marketing reasons, giving the members credit for being part of ACENET. The folder is a combination of a brochure and a file, which can contain other documents of choice.

Another important product of the project is the establishment of good practice reports. These reports will portray the relative success factors of all members. The cases will be established continuously during the project life span.

Along with these documents, several other documents and reports can also be found on the members section of the homepage. Available to all visitors at the homepage is descriptive profiles of all members of ACENET.

News from the members

Aluminiumriket

In the summer we have had close contacts with the member companies and made individual analysis at the companies. The results will underlie the work towards "the Aluvision", a 10-year plan for the cluster.

Some of the member companies are approaching each other and starting to work together as system-suppliers. Other member companies have joined "Kraft", a national program for competence development.

About 15 development projects have been initiated in the cluster, involving several of the Swedish Industrial Research Institutes. The cluster is planning to join the national programme for Regional Innovation Systems.

In the autumn a series of seminars is carried out. The subjects for the seminars are:

1. Aluminium vs. Steel in future transport
2. Aluminium in creative solutions for building and interiors
3. Aluminium in future consumer goods and in medical care

At the seminars representatives from the market and users as well as experts in technology and product development will highlight their demands and priorities.

Aluminiumriket

Styria

ID Skaraborg

Veneto

Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Podravje

Rhône-Alpes

Plastics Valley

North Moravia and Silesia

Schwarswald-Baar-Heuberg

Oslo

Veneto Region

On September 25, during a workshop held at Sheraton Hotel in Padua, the promoters, players and witnesses of innovation in Veneto talked about issues related to the economic system, role of innovation and new trends in Veneto Region.

For the first time, a draft for a regional strategic plan facilitating the participation of Veneto in the 6th Framework Programme have been explained to operators and institutions on a meeting on September 20 at VEGA Park in Venice-Marghera. Veneto Innovazione, the special agency of Veneto Region for innovation - that gave an important contribution to the draft - organised the meeting, which was the second out of five meetings organised in cooperation with other Italian regions.

New financial instruments for innovative enterprises from BAN (Business Angels Network) North-East are under development. The seminar, organised by Veneto Innovazione SpA, took place on September 13 at the Scientific Technological Park VEGA in Venice-Marghera and provided for speeches from both academics and experts on financial opportunities and new projects.

A first holding company for innovation in North-East Italy have been established. The University of Padua, the Employers' Club of Padua, the Scientific Park Galileo and the holding company E-Venture gave birth to a company managing closed investment funds to support technological development and research in SMEs.

Useful websites

Reports on Cluster:

Innovative Clusters - drivers of national innovation systems, OECD 2001
http://www.dialogic.nl/download/OECD-InnovativeClusters-II.pdf

Report 2002 / No. 3: Regional clusters in Europe, European Commission
http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/observatory.htm

Policy for Inter-firm Networking and Clustering: A Practitioner's Perspective, June 2000
http://www.clusternavigators.com/portal.asp (go to Useful Material/Cyber Library/ Bologna OECD Ministerial Conference on SME's)

Clusters, Innovation and RTOs - A synthesis of the findings from the RISE cluster studies, 29th November 2000
http://www.dialogic.nl/download/RISE-synth-wp1-final.PDF

Industry Cluster Progress Reports, Connecticut Industry Clusters,
http://www.state.ct.us/ecd/Clusters/images/Cluster%20Progress%20Report%20June2000.pdf
http://www.state.ct.us/ecd/Clusters/images/Cluster%20Progress%20Report%20Nov1999.pdf
http://www.state.ct.us/ecd/Clusters/images/cluster%20progress%20report%20feb%202001.pdf

Innovative clusters in Sweden, NUTEK 2001
http://www.nutek.se/kluster/pdf/innovclust_swe_1022.pdf

Prospects for growing knowledge-based industrial clusters in atlantic canada, Final report
PART 1 - Concepts, Analysis and Recommendations
PART 2 - Six Cluster Profiles
http://www.acoa.ca/e/library/reports/knowledge_industrial_pt1.pdf
http://www.acoa.ca/e/library/reports/knowledge_industrial_pt2.pdf

Assisting Cluster Development and Networking in Regional Economies of South Australia, The University of Adelaide, Centre for Labour Research, January 2000
http://www.scrn.sa.com.au/bnrd_project/documents/pract_report5.pdf

Cluster Mapping Report - Business Clusters in the UK - A First Assessment, Department of Trade and Industry, February 2001
http://www.dti.gov.uk/clusters/map/

Other sites of interest:

IRC-IRE Central Unit
http://www.innovating-regions.org
(Innovating Regions in Europe)
http://irc.cordis.lu
(Innovation Relay Centres)

OECD
http://www.oecd.org

RSC, the Regional Service for Clustering in the UK
http://www.clustering.org.uk

Netwin - methodological guide to networking and cluster development
http://www.aditec.org/netwin/

The Competitiveness Institute
http://www.competitiveness.org

The Cluster Competitiveness Group
http://www.competitiveness.com

Cluster Navigators
http://www.clusternavigators.com

Next event in Lyon

The fourth Acenet event takes place between the 4th and the 6th of December in the beutiful French region Rhône-Alpes. Rhône-Alpes is centred on the city of Lyon, and has a population of around 5.6 million, with a research and science base second only to that of Paris.

The region hosts the renowned automobile cluster "Rhône-Alpes Industrial Vehicles" , which is oriented through the network of the suppliers and subcontractors that serve the market. There are around 400 Companies in the cluster, which represent a turn over of 500 Millions €.

The meeting will encompass, along with a presentation of the Industrial Vehicles cluster, a visit at the premises of Renault Trucks in Bourg en Bresse and a guided tour at the process of lorry assembly. Then, a screw cutting cluster as well as a health and biotechnological cluster in the region is visited.

Innovating Regions in Europe

The Network of Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) is the joint platform for collaboration and exchange of experiences in the development of regional innovation policies and schemes. The IRE Network is open to all European regions, including those in Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus.

The network aims to enable regions to access new tools and schemes for innovation promotion and to create an inter-regional learning process. It also seeks to put innovation at the top of the regional policy agenda. It is open to all European regions that can demonstrate good practice in the promotion of innovation.

Since 1994, more than 100 European regions have received support from the European Commission for the formulation of regional innovation strategies through RITTS and RIS projects managed by Enterprise DG and Regional Policy DG respectively. 13 Thematic Networks bringing together over 250 innovation stakeholders throughout Europe have been set up to exchange good practice on specific regional innovation policy topics.

What's on

Call for proposals for INTERREG IIIC

The first call for proposals for all four INTERREG IIIC programme zones is open until 10th January 2003. Cross-border and transnational cooperation initiatives in sectors such as research, technology development, enterprise, the information society, tourism, culture and the environment are amongst the priority actions areas

Communication from the European Commission on the ERA

This document is based on the assessment of the developments achieved so far by the European Research Area initiative, and seeks to identify what should be done to give new momentum to the ERA. (To access the document, visit the website shown below.)

To get more information on the IRC - IRE Network and activities go to:

http://www.innovating-regions.org

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