Call for Expression of Interest
Clusters meet Regions

Context

EU regions need to be able to compete with other more advanced and emerging economies in the fast changing economic and social environment influenced by Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Location matters particularly for clusters. They develop more easily in regional ecosystems with a favourable administrative and regulatory environment and access to skilled labour, markets, financial and business support services. These workshops will bring together clusters and policymakers of the EU, national, regional and local level to learn from each other how to better use clusters to strengthen industrial ecosystems[1], serve national/regional economic development and liaise with other regions with similar transition challenges.

What really matters is the involvement of EU clusters[2] in regional economic governance, in policy design and implementation at regional level.

Clusters Meet Regions workshops are helpful for cluster managers and policy makers in view of engaging clusters in the implementation of regional priorities. Regional authorities need to know their clusters and understand how they can shape, improve, and effectively help in the design and the implementation of the regional development policies. Cluster organisations and their members should take actions and implement projects that are relevant for the economic development of their local communities. The topic of Clusters Meet Regions events will be aligned with the development priorities of the regions interested in hosting this event; in line with the updated EU Industrial Strategy[3] fostering the green and digital transitions as well as resilience building and according to their smart specialisation strategies[4] developed at national and/or regional level. Local clusters should facilitate engagement and collaboration with other European clusters in the same or related economic activities and thus complement regional assets and reinforce capacities to lead the green transition, accelerate the digital transition and build resilience.

Objective of the call

The objective of this call for expression of interest is to draw a list of up to thirteen (13) national/regional authorities with clusters organisations that commit to organise a European workshop 'Clusters Meet Regions' in 2022 and 2023.

The European Commission will select particular locations and dates for these workshops based on the criteria presented below and also taking into account political priorities and supply chain problems related to the current geopolitical situation affecting in particular not only the host region, but also a critical number of regions in other Member States.

Each workshop should be helpful for cluster managers and policy makers resulting in the engagement of clusters in the implementation of regional priorities.

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[1] [Definition of industrial ecosystems | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)
[2] [Homepage | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)
[3] [Updating the 2020 Industrial Strategy (europa.eu)](#)
[4] [Home - Smart Specialisation Platform (europa.eu)](#)

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Who can apply (eligibility criteria)

Applications are opened to any individual stakeholder or to a consortium of more than one stakeholder involved or interested in the regional economic development. Thus, this includes clusters organisations, regional agency of economic development, business network organizations. National/regional authorities can (and are encouraged to) submit their applications as well.

Since Clusters Meet Regions aims at a closer cooperation between the stakeholders that operate in the economic development interests of the region, **having the support of the regional authorities is a must to apply as a host**. Therefore, a proof of their commitment to be involved in the workshop must be attached to the application.

All European regions can host a Clusters Meet Regions irrespectively of their administrative level, NUTS1[5] or NUTS2 are desirable though.

Characteristics of the regional workshops

The workshops will be organized in the framework of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) activities, with the support of the ECCP team. They should be organised as hybrid events of 2 days and held in English. It is possible to make the events interpreted to ensure wider participation. The workshop must target minimum 100 participants. The organising entity will set up a system allowing to broadcast the event online (and ensure its recording) so that the event will be viewed through the European Cluster Collaboration Platform's display media (I.e. Zoom). The ECCP will provide its zoom account and technical staff to set up the requirements to create the link for the streaming.

The workshops should focus on how to better use clusters to strengthen industrial ecosystems to serve national/regional/local economic development. So that, this content and aspects must be considered while setting the agenda:

- Providing good practices of European relevance on the use of clusters in regional development priorities in view of the ECCP toolkit[6].
- Giving visibility to the cluster policy of the organising EU region or in case a regional cluster policy is not in place, how they intend to integrate clusters in the regions' economic priorities, facilitate the cooperation between clusters and regional authorities in their territory and foster territorial cooperation with suitable actors outside the Region.
- Ideally it shall be envisioned as a dynamic event in which the audience and speakers can rely on an adequate environment to make the expected dialogue between the clusters and regional authorities fruitful.

If you need an inspirational example of what kind of event is desired, you can visit the ECCP [website](#) where you will find all the background information (input paper, agenda, proceedings and video recording) related to the Andalusia pilot event that took place in Málaga the 16th and 17th of February or in Vilnius the 26th and 27th of April 2022.

Having the workshop as a part of a bigger event as well as having the facilities already identified where the event can be held will be an asset.

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[5] [NUTS Maps - NUTS - Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics - Eurostat (europa.eu)](#)
[6] [Policy Toolkit | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)

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Support from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Before the event, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform will draft an input paper as a background document for the workshop. Such input papers will provide an analysis of the situation in the region where the workshop will take place on a selection of topics. Their focus shall be on issues such as governance settings, entrepreneurial discovery process, investment opportunities.

The input papers will include key findings and recommendations for policymakers and cluster managers, which will be presented at the regional workshops. They would then add value to and supplement the analytical work regarding the role of clusters in regional economic and social development in the EU.

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform will support the organiser in facilitating the organisation of the event. The ECCP will elaborate the material for the promotion (before, during and after) to be used in the communication channels of the platform itself, by the European Commission and by any other relevant national or local stakeholder.

Support provided by the ECCP		
Before the event	**During the event**	**After the event**
Revision, consistency, and management of all the working documents	Coordination of all the relevant tasks	Follow-up satisfaction survey
Preparation of the input paper for the event	Presentation of the input paper	Responding to questions regarding the input paper
Promotion via the ECCP, the European Commission and other relevant channels	Support with speakers' presentations and documents they might want to provide	Proceeding report for each event
Proposing and contacting speakers/experts/moderators	Coordination of all the relevant tasks	Publication of the video recordings and photos via ECCP channels
Registration of the participants (form, data collection…)	Promotion via the ECCP, the European Commission and other relevant channels	Promotion via the ECCP, the European Commission and other relevant channels
ECCP mailbox to send information for the people registered	Zoom account for the streaming. Setting the link	Distribution of all the final documents between the registered people (attendance report, proceeding report, video recording of the sessions)
Costs of travel and accommodation of speakers		
Information about previous experience		
Contact and feedback from the European Commission		
Distribution of information prior the event (agenda, participants booklet and input paper)		
Contacting with stakeholders, institutions…		

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What is expected from the host?

The host has to propose an agenda following the structure of the Andalusia pilot event. Therefore, it is expected to start from a general view with policy statements by EU, national and regional representatives and follow up by the sessions on the regional industrial development and collaboration with other regions in similar or related industrial ecosystems important for the host Region. If possible, it is desirable to have some successful examples of public-private sector collaboration in that regard. A closing session with a general debate of the outcome also needs to be considered. Besides, there must be a pitching session to facilitate networking and site visits.

Thus, identifying and mapping the regional needs related to the implementation of the smart specialisation policies and the implementation of industrial ecosystems transition pathways elaborated in line with the updated EU Industrial Strategy (digitalisation, mobility, sustainability...) is required as one of the central elements of discussion.

As the previous section mentions, the ECCP will support the preparation of the agenda, its content and structure and contacting speakers.

Providing and financing the cost of the venue, catering, the broadcasting technology (included streaming) and other potential costs such as transportation for the site visits (if any) or a reception for the speakers/moderators/organisers (and possible open to all participants), is also expected from the host.

What is expected from the host[7]	
Before the event	**During the event**
Covering of all the costs	
Providing information and facilitate the identification of regional needs	Event steward/hostess
Engagement of local clusters and other organisations	Professional technical support for the streaming (production equipment, professional cameras, recording...)
Engagement of the regional authorities	
Concept note with and explanation of the context according to the information obtained	
Proposing and setting the agenda*	
Identification, contact and arrangement of the venue	
Contribute identifying the best quality/price accommodations for participants and negotiate promotional rates	
Identification, contact and arrangement of the technical support for the streaming (professional production)	
Identification, contact and arrangement of the catering	

*All the content of the agenda must be agreed with the European Commission (structure, speakers, moderators, etc.)

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[7] See details in annex 2

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Expected outcomes

Outcome 1: To address the importance of cluster policy at regional level and initiate (where cluster policy is weak) or strengthen (where cluster policy is strong) the collaboration between clusters/EEN members and regional authorities.

Outcome 2: To discuss, analyse and plan the use of clusters in each region for the design and implementation of the updated EU Industrial Policy and smart specialisation strategies.

Outcome 3: To initiate and enhance the interregional/transnational cooperation in industrial ecosystems to build, strengthen or reshape EU value chains.

Assessment process

The workshops will give visibility to the cluster policy of the organising region, facilitate the cooperation of clusters and EEN members with regional authorities in their territory and foster interregional/transnational cooperation. The European Cluster Collaboration Platform, with the approval of the European Commission and the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), will select regions according to the following criteria:

Criteria	Criteria description	Assigned weighting
1	Quality of the proposal and level of details: Clear identification and presentation of needs and potential solutions both for policy makers and clusters in the region to be discussed, disseminated, and promoted during the event.	25%
2	Demonstrated capacity/clear strategy to involve key stakeholders (clusters and policy makers)	20%
3	Relevance of the proposal based on regional and cluster needs according to 2021 cohesion report[8], the EU Cluster Panorama[9] and on supply chain disruptions due to the current geopolitical situation	20%
4	Capacity to organise a hybrid event	15%
5	Support offered by the host organisation (i.e. venue, catering, broadcasting), including support going beyond the minimum requested.	10%
6	Accessibility and availability of appropriate accommodations	5%
7	Other aspects, offers and/or suggestion that the region would like to highlight to strengthen its application	5%

A criterion of geographical distribution will also be noted, ensuring that these workshops are done in such a way as to cover as many different countries as possible within the European Union, including the diversity of regions; from the most developed to the followers and lagging behind. The selection up to the 13 hosting region will include proposals from Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe and

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[8] Eighth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion - Regional Policy - European Commission (europa.eu)
[9] European_Cluster_Panorama_Report_0.pdf (clustercollaboration.eu)

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Western Europe in similar proportions, with the aim of providing events close to the regional and clusters communities.

Procedure for submission of expression of interest

Expressions of interest must be submitted duly completed, following the instructions given on the ECCP website. There will be up to four cut-off dates two during 2022 and two during 2023.

Applications must be completed in English.

Only fully filled in and timely submitted applications will be assessed.

This Call is an invitation for an Expression of Interest only. It is not an offer, and the submission of an Expression of Interest does not create a contract or agreement of any kind between the European Commission nor the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and the entity expressing the interest to host the Clusters Meet Regions event.

Contact: In case of any questions on this Call for Expression of Interest, please refer to the Clusters Meet Regions White Book or write to clustersmeetregions@clustercollaboration.eu.

Deadline for submission of the Expression of Interest

This call for expression of interest is continuously open. However, applications will be deemed admissible to be considered for a certain quarter of the year only if they are sent before the respective cut-off date.

The selection of the hosting regions will follow up to four cut-off dates:

- 15th September 2022 – 18.00 CET (Brussels time)
- 2nd December 2022 – 18.00 CET
- 1st April 2023 – 18.00 CET
- 29th July 2023 – 18.00 CET

Entities that have applied for a cut-off can also be taken into account for the next selection without the obligation of submitting a new application. They are encouraged to complement their initial proposal.

Entities can apply before any cut-off date independently from the proposed dates of the event.

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ANNEX I: APPLICATION FORM

You are requested to fill this application online via the link: EUSu,rvey - Survey (europa.eu). This form must be filled in all sections.

All the information must be provided in English, including the additional documentation.