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How to develop new innovative clusters

The session was developed according to the existing examples in the development of innovative clusters, where the development of favourable conditions is extremely important. In general terms, we analysed several experiences carried out in various countries in order to develop innovative clusters.

One of the first items includes the differences between *clusters* (système production localisé) and those not defined as *clusters* or *networks*. The first are considered as a geographic phenomenon, and these companies operate jointly. In terms of networks, these differ from the *clusters* in that they are considered a relational phenomenon based on a pro-active involvement amongst companies and, therefore, there is no geographic closeness amongst them.

Taking this difference into account, how, then, can we develop these innovative *clusters*? One of the vital factors for their establishment is the set up of conditions that will help their development. In the presentation "The Innovative Clusters: a pilot experiment conducted by DGTRE in Wallonia", the Belgian case was analysed. In the region of Wallonia there is a program for the promotion of innovation, based on a study carried out with the support of the government, the aim of which is to stimulate the dynamics of innovation through the stimulation of partnerships and synergies amongst companies.

However, the creation of platforms may also lead to the development of *clusters*. The example of Aragon was presented in the "Aragonese Experience: Creation of Sectorial Platforms", where sectorial platforms were created in order to promote cooperation amongst the various companies. These groups of companies (or sectorial platforms) in the same sector of activity work amongst themselves in a cooperation / partnership scheme with the ultimate aim of introducing competitiveness in the companies through that cooperation. As this is still a pilot project under development, we hope that some of these platforms will eventually grow into *clusters*.

The experience in the North of Milan, referred to in the presentation "North Milan: a transition to Communication cluster", shows a *cluster* in the area of communication, and it involved a very interesting transition period. During the 20th century, this geographic area was strongly industrialized. However, the industrial sector suffered a major crisis and a need to diversify its economic structure. With the development of this industrial diversification and the inclusion of high-technology companies, a *cluster* in the area of communication was developed and, presently, a specific program supports this same cluster.

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In the English case, we believe that networks are a better option when compared to the *clusters*. The companies that are involved in an inter-company network are 13 times more innovative. The networks are, therefore, considered more efficient in leading the companies towards innovation.

In conclusion, all these examples exhibit some common particularities. All of them show government support or interest in the activities. This governmental support, visible in various incentives, aims to develop *clusters* that will contribute towards an industrial structure and, consequently, towards a wider economic structure. Based on a cooperation system amongst companies, the economic diversification that derives from these *clusters* contributes, in a certain measure, to a more diversified and sustainable society.

The support that has been given by some governments implies the elaboration of favourable conditions for the development of *clusters* and not the compulsory development of a specific *cluster*. In these terms and in these examples, the connection between knowledge and the *clusters* is extremely important. The introduction of experts and research centres in the *clusters* shows clearly the importance of connecting knowledge and the *clusters*.