

Győr, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013

## V4Clusters matchmaking event “SMEs in Clusters” in Győr

The opening conference of the V4Clusters project took place at the INNONET Innovation and Technology Centre in Hungarian Győr on 7 November 2013. The event was hosted by the Pannon Business Network Association, one of the five V4Clusters project partners.

**“Clusters are powerful engines of economic development and drivers of innovation in the EU. It is a challenge for the V4 to address the cluster issue by this pilot project enabling its integration in the broader V4 agenda”,** says *Pavla Břusková*, the President of the National Cluster Association in the Czech Republic and also the representative of the Lead partner of the V4Clusters project.

**The main objective of the project,** which is co-financed by the International Visegrad Fund, **is to open the potential hidden in clusters and their cooperation across strong and emerging sectors of the V4 by their identification and networking with the aim to create networks of V4 Leading Clusters.** The informatisation phase guaranteed by the Czech Knowledge Cluster will include cluster organisations into the digital depository and portal interfaced with the V4 integrated information platform.

The Győr conference will be followed by a one-day cluster matchmaking event in Nitra on 13 February 2014 hosted by the project partner – The Union of Slovak Clusters. The third event will take place in Gliwice hosted by Upper Silesian Agency for Entrepreneurship and Development on 12 June 2014. The final two-day conference in Ostrava will present the achievements of the V4Clusters project in November 2014.

The matchmaking event in Győr was opened by *Pavla Břusková* with the presentation *“Boosting V4 Cooperation through Strategic Cluster Identification, Networking and Informatisation”* as a short introduction to the V4Clusters project. As she mentioned, this important **topic of clusters has been brought at the attention of the V4 for the first time.**

The hosting partner representative, *Balázs Barta*, Managing Director of the Pannon Business Network Association (Hungary) dealt with the role of SMEs within clusters based on the best practice of the West Pannon Region. He presented also many supporting activities for SMEs like International innovation voucher program, management audit or regional trend analysis. He concluded: **“Cluster management itself is a HUB for the cluster as a group of companies. There is the only way to move forward: to provide integrated service portfolio with short-term benefit at subsidized costs”.**

*Péter Keller*, Head of the Cluster Development Group, Hungarian National Cluster Development Office spoke about financing models for Hungarian clusters. From the organizational perspective, the Cluster Development Office was detached as the division of MAG – the Hungarian Economic Development Centre since April 2011 and the main benefits have arisen from the integration of the standardized execution resulting in the direct flow of information with significant savings of resources. However, **the majority of participants appreciated the system of the Hungarian Cluster Accreditation System.** So far there are 22 accredited clusters in Hungary. The President of the Union of Slovak Clusters *Daniel Ács* and also President of National Cluster Association in the Czech Republic *Pavla Břusková* expressed their thoughts on possible implementation of the system in their countries as well.

The message of the Péter Keller's presentation concluded that after many researches realized by the Office it has been stated that **successful clusters do not rely or do not base their service at all on the EU funding.**

During the afternoon session *Balázs Barta* introduced “*Professio Metal Industry and Vocational Training Cluster*”, which was established in 2008 with 15 companies and 2 vocational institutes. Among the benefits of its members there are the marketing activities, improvement of teachers' and tutors' professional skills or reallocation program for supporting migration to Győr. The main objective of the cluster is exemplary: **The high reputation at local, regional and national level at the authorities and recognition among inhabitants as good citizenship examples.**

*Kamila Sochová*, Cluster Manager at KLACR – The Moravian-Silesian Tourism Cluster (Czech Republic), presented the specifics of SMEs development in a regional tourism cluster. KLACR was founded in 2008 and till now has 40 members, cooperates with the Slovak and Polish tourism clusters but is the only service-sector cluster in the Czech Republic. Participants from Hungary commented that **there is currently a lack of such services or clusters and such product portfolio. However, some related activities exist with the Pannon Wine Cluster and thus there is a potential to cooperate.**

The next speaker, *Roman Bíro*, Managing Director of the Automotive Cluster Slovakia focused on the experience of the Automotive Cluster Slovakia in cooperation with SMEs. This cluster was founded by the City of Trnava and Trnava Municipality Region in 2007. Currently the cluster has 28 enterprises, 4 innovations centres, agencies and chambers of commerce and 5 educational institution members. The vision of the cluster is to create a network and critical mass of relevant partners to improve the quality of human resources, but also to support technology transfer and innovation processes mainly but not only in automotive industry. **Slovakia and Hungary together with the Czech Republic are now the leading automotive manufacturers in Central Europe what could be a good basis for further cooperation activities between V4C partners.**

*Marcin Jabłoński*, the President of the Connectionpoint company opened the potential of metaclusters as a chance for development of SME's in Visegrad clusters. He made the comparison between innovation policies applied by the EU in the past and to be applied in the future, informed about Smart Specialization Strategy, methods, synergies, **needs for creation of networks of the V4 innovative clusters which should repower regional innovations and fill the gaps between regional policies.** He also drew attention to some facts worth to be considered as V4 countries which are in the bottom of the EU innovation ratings, don't exploit their potentials, don't have the real cooperation and should tighten collaboration to enable synergy effect. **The Visegrad Group should also participate more actively in the Danube Strategy working groups in order to be better prepared for the future inter-regional projects.**

As it was stated by the organizing partner, the Pannon Business Network Association's managing director *Balázs Barta*, **there are many well working co-operations among clusters at the transnational level, but so far, very rare directly among Visegrad countries.** The V4Clusters event in Győr showed the huge potential of the active co-operation of the Visegrad countries in the field of cluster organizations. **“We managed to unlock those values lying in the cooperation on which we can build in order to strengthen our cooperation in the long term”** he accented at the close of the event.

#### **More information is available:**

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