

Nitra, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014

## V4Clusters matchmaking event “Identification of the V4 Clusters” in Nitra

Going in line with what was proposed within the V4Clusters project, the topic of the second cluster matchmaking event was “*Identification of the V4 Clusters*”. The identification is one of the core activities of the project which will help to map the clusters in the V4 countries with special focus on cluster organizations in strong industries which bring added value to the V4 region. The project is co-financed by the International Visegrad Fund.

The event took place on 13 February 2014 in Nitra, Slovakia and was hosted by the Union of Slovak Clusters – the association which is aiming to network the leading clusters in Slovakia in order to become stronger in the creation of the national cluster policy. As stated by the President of the hosting organization *Daniel Ács*, Nitra is the capital of agriculture and therefore, the main focus of the **event with the subtitle “*Creating partnerships in forestry*”** was on sustainable development mainly in agriculture and forestry sector. In order to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation, the invited stakeholders included researchers and cluster managers also from other areas.

One of the key objectives of all four cluster matchmaking events organized within the V4Clusters project is **to bring the ideas from the brainstorming of actively involved participants into new projects which would connect the Visegrad countries through further cooperation**. Moreover, since all partners of the project are institutions which are overarching the clusters in their respective countries, special focus is placed on the idea **to give clusters the strength to be more visible, especially on the international scale**. The event organized in Nitra brought some opportunities which could help to achieve these objectives.

The first opportunity was presented by the President of the Union of Slovak Clusters *Daniel Ács*, who gave a snapshot on **the possibility to establish an operational group / cluster within the European Innovation Partnership (EIP)**. EIP has a strong context which is coming from the Europe 2020 Strategy within the societal challenge “Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability”. The idea behind the presentation of this possibility was to encourage the participants to look deeply in the European and national programmes in order to find out whether there is such opportunity within their respective countries. The establishment of such operational group / cluster may help to reflect the challenges of the European Union, ensure the transfer of knowledge and technologies and apply theory into practice.

In order to **strengthen the cross-sectoral approach** which is currently highly desirable aspect of development in Europe and beyond, *Luděk Kühr* from BIC R&D Ltd. (Czech Republic) presented the possible interconnections of agriculture and forestry with space industry. Using space assets to bring new joint solutions was welcomed by participants since space is becoming more important in agriculture in terms of advanced satellite mapping, using of new technologies and material sources, disaster management, etc. Space as a horizontal approach provides great opportunity to link various partners in joint projects of cross-sectoral character.

Coming back to clusters, the advantages of **building consortia of cluster members with partners outside the cluster** was highlighted by the manager of the CREA Hydro&Energy Cluster (Czech Republic) *Břetislav Skácel*. In order to become internationally visible, it is essential to find partners for EU projects. *Pavla Břusková*, the President of the National

Cluster Association (Czech Republic) said that **“the emphasis should be placed on the new emerging topics”** since everybody already knows the traditional industries. This event can help to bring us to such topics through discussion, exchange of ideas and preparing the environment for the future cooperation. The representatives of the National Forest Centre (Slovakia) expressed their positive attitude to participate in the events organized by CREA and to bring their experience and solutions into cooperation with CREA. Such expression of interest is one of the crucial aspects in creating partnerships what is one of the expected outcomes of the V4Clusters project.

The above ideas were supported by the statements of *Marcin Jabłonski*, the President of Connectionpoint (Poland), who said that **“small initiatives are not visible in the EU. Visegrad group is a possibility to merge forces and to show the strengths of the four countries involved”**. V4Clusters project can help to boost this merging. “Visegrad is a sparring partner for western countries and we need to get the most benefits of it” he added. Clusters may significantly help in this effort. First of all, it is necessary to see the clusters as concrete tools for development and not just as a momentary trend.

However, **the Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of the cluster organization development and cluster policy support within the Danube region countries** was signed in September 2013 in Vukovar, Croatia among associations of clusters from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. The Memorandum was signed at the Danube level which is even wider than the V4 level. However, one of the outcomes of the V4Clusters project could be the memorandum signed inside of the project what was welcomed by all participants. Further interesting outcome could be **to put people together and to prepare a project within the Danube Strategy**. The essential idea behind this is that **the V4 countries are very close and this enables them to act as one unit**. *Daniel Ács* encouraged the participants to be even more ambitious. **The Danube Strategy provides the opportunity to create broader partnerships** than just V4. Since Horizon 2020 expects such broad partnerships using this opportunity could bring value added to future joint projects.

Lately in the afternoon, the participants were split into two sessions where one was dedicated to the forestry and the second covered other industries. The speakers within forestry session: *Ingrid Kriššáková* and *Tomáš Bucha* from the National Forest Centre (Slovakia), *Tomáš Mikita* from the Mendel University in Brno (Czech Republic) and *Géza Király* from the University of West Hungary (Hungary) expressed their **willingness to find partners and to prepare joint projects**. They identified joint ideas for project preparation, e.g. using open calls under Horizon 2020. They dispose of unique systems used in the forestry sector. What they should think about is to offer these systems to other countries in order to move forward and to use their research potential for European projects. The brainstorming within other industries prepared the ground for future successful partnerships.

#### More information is available:

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