

# **Building collaborative networks in the Baltic Sea Region**

...experiences and reflections from a practical  
approach to inter-regional smart specialisation

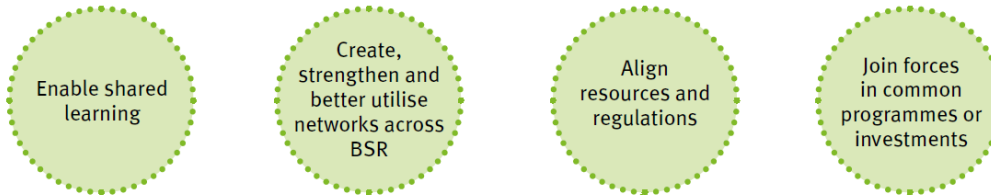
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## Questions to consider...

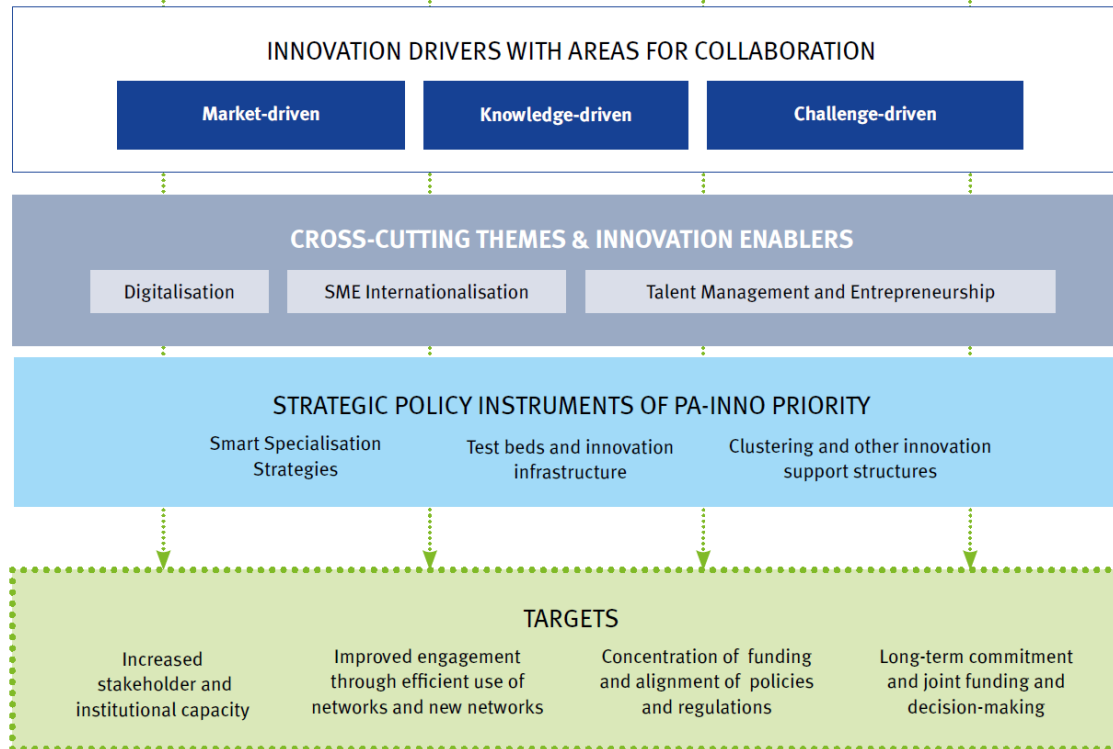
- **Is there a “best reason” to connect over boundaries?**
  - learning/knowledge exchange/inspiration
  - market expansion or supply chain extension
  - teaming up/critical mass
  - complementary efforts in a joint solution to a challenge
- **Whose needs/priorities drive what to do...what to start with?**
- **What role do strategies and analyses play?**
- **What are the most efficient mechanisms to get things going?**

# Policy Area Innovation - focus areas and targets

The roles of PA-INNO



Focus of PA-INNO



A focus on joint action through...

- Aligning policies and funding
- Creating, developing and using transnational networks

Working towards longer-term joint investments

Activities with output

Targeted results

Desired change

**CHANGE**

A globally competitive position within  
Research and Innovation for the Baltic Sea Region

So how do you get down from the clouds...  
move from concepts and strategies to  
actually doing things?

## An example operational approach: BSR Stars Innovation Express



- **Addressing shared policy objectives for SME internationalisation and transnational innovation collaboration (interregional S3)**
- Using a common approach encompassing a joint call, matchmaking event and learning activities – coordinated by DASTI, as part of the BSR Stars flagship
- Leveraging cluster/network organisations to mobilise SMEs (and other actors) – tailoring project activities to identified needs
- Providing “seed investments” (between 10-60.000 EUR per project grant/country) for short-term collaborative projects (12-18 mo)
- **In first three calls (2013-2015), more than 4 MEUR has been invested in 134 collaborative innovation projects, involving 240 clusters and more than 3300 SMEs**

# Policy-level partners from eleven countries (2016 call)

## Funding/cooperation and extended partners



Ministry of Higher Education  
and Science  
—  
Danish Agency for Science,  
Technology and Innovation



**Innovation Center  
Iceland**



**Innovation  
Norway**



**Swedish Agency  
for Marine and  
Water Management**



Brandenburg Economic  
Development Board



**Generalitat  
de Catalunya**

**ACCIÓ**

## Associated partners



**MAJANDUS- JA  
KOMMUNIKATSIOONI-  
MINISTEERIUM**



**go-cluster**  
EXZELLENT VERNETZT!



Ministry of Economics  
Republic of Latvia



**MINISTRY  
OF ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**



## Overview of Innovation Express activities 2013-2016

	2013	2014	2015	2016
# Funding partners/ partners/ countries	6 partners 6 countries (DK, FI, IS, LT, NO, SE)	8 partners 6 countries (DK, FI, IS, LT, NO, SE)	6 partners 6 countries (DK, IS, LT, NO, SE + ES/Cat.)	8 partners 7 countries (DE,IS,LT,NO,SE + DE/Brand.,ES/Cat.)
Total budget (EUR)	1.210.000	1.526.500	1.355.000	1.835.000
# appl. recd/appvd	47/40	84/54	58/40	59/39
MMkg Event	Copenhagen, DK 9-10 April	Berlin, DE 18-19 September	Copenhagen, DK 17-18 September	Warsaw, PL 19-20 September
#part./ countries	165 participants 70 clusters 15 countries	300 participants 150 clusters 24 countries	285 participants 151 clusters 32 countries	250 participants 150 clusters 30 countries
Other learning activities:			Experience exchange workshop (CPH, Sept '15)	Workshop on strategic internationalization (Riga, June '16)

# CLUSTER MATCHMAKING CONFERENCES

## Why:

- Creating meeting places for cluster organisations for building up their international network.
- Combining the conference with possibilities for funding (Innovation Express, EU funding) and further development of partnerships with other partners (Enterprise Europe Network)
- Creating a setting for mutual learning, sharing of knowledge and best practice on internationalisation of clusters.

## What:

- Over 1000 participants (some all four times)
- 260 unique clusters from around 30 countries
- 1725 cluster-to-cluster meetings
- Workshops and Clusters Labs

## Results

- Over 120 cluster collaboration projects
- 14 larger partnerships (longer term collaboration)
- A lot of bilateral follow ups
- Over 3300 SMEs have engaged in international activities
- “I have learned so much that I want to implement in my cluster”





## Summary of Results (2015 call) - initiation of 27 bottom-up partnerships

- 40 approved applications, resulting in 27 new international collaboration projects
  - 23 applicants teaming up in 10 joint projects
  - 17 additional approved projects
- Projects directly engaging more than 1180 SMEs in international collaboration
- Projects in a range of sectors (with the largest number of applicants in environment/green technologies and ICT)
- 30% of projects cross-sectoral – combining partners with expertise in different business, service or research sectors
- A majority of targeted partners (75%) located within other Baltic Sea Region countries, with a growing number of partners from other countries

## Example of interregional projects from 2015 call

### 23 applicants teamed up in 10 "joint projects"

Project Title and (Acronym)	Partnering Countries (partners from funded applications in bold)	#SMEs engaged
Sustainable building in circular resource economy (ecoConstruct)	AT, <b>DK</b> , <b>NO</b> , PL, SE	57
Intercluster cooperation on healthy and functional foods (DK/E Healthy Food 2)	<b>DK</b> , <b>ES</b>	16
Bridging the gap between construction, IoT and 3D printing (HT2C)	<b>DK</b> , <b>ES</b>	9
Railway Cluster Cooperation Europe (RCOE)	<b>DK</b> , <b>ES</b>	15
Nordic Furniture Making (NFM)	<b>DK</b> , <b>NO</b> , SE	65
Nordic Water Network – a platform for Nordic water business innovation (Nordic WIN)	<b>DK</b> , <b>ES</b> , FI, <b>NO</b> , SE	85
Involving spectators and participants in events through experience technology (ISPE X-tech)	<b>DK</b> , <b>ES</b> , NO, SE	42
Entrepreneur Creative Showcase 2016 (ECRES2)	<b>DK</b> , NO, SE	80
Process Industry – Zero Waste (PRO-ZERO)	IS, <b>NO</b> , UK	500
Joint Strategy for Building an International Brand for the Nordic Health Technology Industry (NorHealthTech)	IS, <b>NO</b> , SE	60

## Example Innovation Express project (2014 call): Accelerating Bio-Economy Innovation for SMEs (ABEIS)

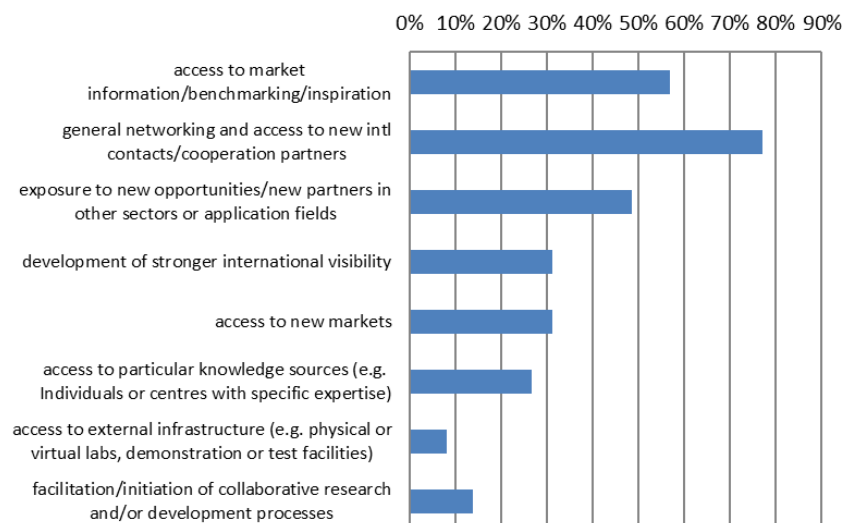
- Partners from four countries: Innovation Network for Biomass (DK); *Tarvala Bioeconomy Campus/JAMK University of Applied Sciences (FI)*; Tretorget (NO); Paper Province (SE)
- Aimed at boosting innovation processes and exploiting new market possibilities in the circular economy by creating higher value-added from side- and waste streams
- Engaged more than 40 individuals (from SMEs, large companies and research organisations) in study visits and B2B matchmaking
- Resulted in new knowledge and expertise, access to larger test markets and new technology, new cooperation partners, initiation of longer-term research and innovation projects, and a stable platform for ongoing learning and collaboration



*“We have initiated contacts from all the different events, both commercial and (development) collaboration – many of which would not have been possible without this project’s help. A better understanding of different markets is easier (to attain) when meeting and getting first-hand information through meetings.”* (Carl Romlin, Project Manager, Drinor AB, SE)

## Learning from evaluation - needs and results for SMEs

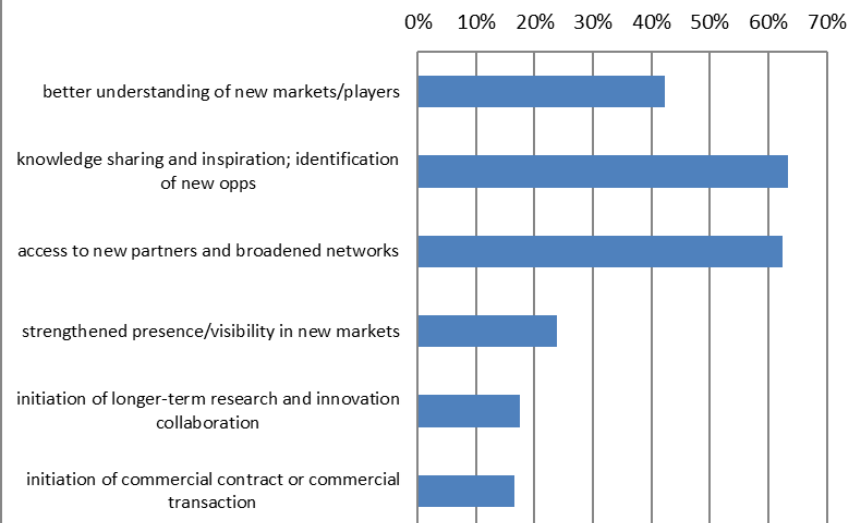
**SMEs' view on most helpful internationalisation support activities (n=109)**



*“In daily production, we do not have the time and opportunities to seek new partners and internationalization. This project has given us the possibility to get new inspiration – and has been a source of education and teambuilding for my company.”*

Tapperiet, SME within FoodNetwork, DK

**SMEs' view on main results/effects of the project for their company (n=109)**



SME respondents viewed **knowledge sharing and opportunity identification**, and **access to new partners and broadened networks** as the main results. Even though Innovation Express projects are quite short, nearly 20% indicated that projects also resulted in the *initiation of longer-term research and innovation collaboration or commercial contracts*.

# Success factors and Improvement Areas

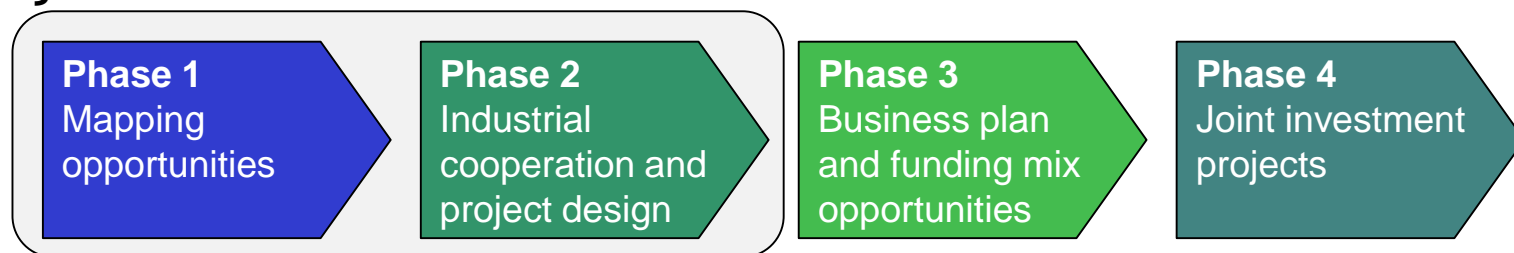
## Success Factors

- Simple, pragmatic approach
  - Two partners from two countries
  - "national rules" and varied financing levels
- Addressing shared (broad) policy objectives
- Focused on mobilisation/ engagement and initial (experimental) linkages
- Financing (from NCM) for the "transnational level"
- A national agency (DASTI) with mandate to coordinate the transnational level

## Improvement Areas

- Achieving even better alignment between policy partners (e.g. Financing rules, levels and timing of funding), **while** maintaining simplicity
- Broadening the base of policy partners (even outside BSR)
- Connecting to regional- and European-level smart specialisation platforms and investments
- Developing long-term commitment to transnational efforts (despite organisational and political shifts), and a stable, longer-term framework for implementation

## A different approach to initiating interregional partnerships and industrial cooperation, yet with the same challenge to move toward joint investments



### **BSR Stars Innovation Express projects**

- Framed within a (general) call; time delimited projects
- Key initiating agent = cluster organisations/intermediaries
- Start with matching and mobilising actors...jumping directly to identification of opportunities
- No designated lead
- Funding generally from national (cluster or other) programmes

### **S3 Interregional Partnerships**

- Framed within thematic platforms; ongoing process
- Key initiating agent = regional managing authority
- Start with scoping and mapping, then matching/mobilising actors, then identification of opportunities
- Designated lead region(s)
- Funding/expert support generally from EU (including ESIF)

## Reflections on the questions

- **Is there a "best reason" to connect over boundaries?**

"Define the issues – areas of inter-regional interest...then define the projects."

- **Whose needs/priorities drive what to do...what to start with?**

"Let industry be in the driver's seat...what is interesting for them? Then be open to working with those who have the desire to collaborate on the same things."

- **What role do strategies and analyses play?**

"Certain more specific information cannot be found in the smart specialisation strategies...(must come from actors closer to companies)."

- **What are the most efficient mechanisms to get things going?**

"What's the role of government? Just bringing the actors (particularly companies) together... providing the frame."