Updated Report on Collection of Best Practices

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Revision History

No.	Version	Edition	Author(s)	Date
1	1		Clémence Castell (SCS)	20.01.2023
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	Comments:	Proofreading		
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Introduction

EXCITE aims to strengthen cluster management and facilitate exchange and strategic partnership between cluster staff and cluster members by using the ClusterXchange mobility scheme. ClusterXchange is a new pilot project to promote short-term exchanges to better connect industrial ecosystems in Europe. The project will focus on skills, processes and services related to digital transformation - both in terms of the cluster organisation itself and its members, to be able to support them in successfully accessing global markets.

This report presents notable cluster management practices of the EXCITE consortium, covering core cluster management aspects. The Consortium is composed of six European digital clusters:

- Silicon Saxony, microelectronic cluster in Germany,
- DTI Cluster, digital cluster in Bulgaria,
- Business Hive Vilnius, digital cluster in Lithuania,
- Mazovia Cluster ICT, digital cluster in Poland,
- GAIA, digital cluster in Spain,
- SCS Cluster, digital cluster in France.

In the frame of the project are taking place training and best practice-sharing activities, with the aim to

- ➔ Improve the clusters' practices in terms of performance and level of services,
- ➔ Reinforce the clusters' relations and have a better understanding of each-other's ecosystems, to bring cross-border matchmaking opportunities to the cluster members, through the ClusterXchange missions,
- ➔ Build synergies through the elaboration of joint-services.

The present collection presents the best practices that were the subjects of discussions during the above-mentioned activities.

Methodology

The assessment of the EXCITE clusters' challenges and practices was structured in five distinct cluster management areas, chosen based on the dimensions structuring the **criteria of the Gold label of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative**[1].

1. **Cluster structure**. (*Structure of the cluster*) Refers to the cluster's "identity card": key thematic focus, members' typology, concentration, geographic focus, etc.
2. **Cluster strategy**. (*Strategy, objectives, services)* Refers to the purpose of the cluster, and its strategy making, implementation and monitoring.
3. **Cluster operational organisation**. (*Typology, governance, co-operation*) Refers to the operational structure: organisation, team management, internal management processes, governance.
4. **Cluster business model**. (*Financing cluster organisation management*) Refers to the income model of the cluster: services offer definition, membership fee management, etc.
5. **Communication and reputation**. (*Achievements, recognition*) Communication to the cluster members and prospects, and to the external stakeholders (financers, policy makers, etc.).

These dimensions structured the clusters' reflexion regarding the assessment of their own practices, conducted through a workshop, and a self-assessment survey[2], at the very beginning of the project (M1-M3).

For each of these core areas, the EXCITE consortium clusters selected and describe several of their best practices in practical sheets for collaborative experience sharing and replicability.

[1] ECEI Gold label criteria, dimensions p.5: https://eucles.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/130226_Public-Document-for-GOLD-Assessment-preparation.pdf – EUCLES labelling: https://eucles.be/labelling/ ;
[2]More information in D2.1 *Skill development plan (internal)*

1. The EXCITE clusters

Silicon Saxony

Full name of Organisation: Silicon Saxony
Location Geographic coverage: Saxony, office in Dresden, Germany
Membership: 400 members, 80% SMEs
Key Technology focus and specialisation: Microelectronics, Industry 4.0, Software, AI
Creation date: 2000

DTI Cluster

Full name of Organisation: Cluster for Digital Transformation and Innovations(DTI Cluster)
Location Geographic coverage: Bulgaria, office in Sofia
Membership: 100, 94% SMEs
Key Technology focus and specialisation: Microelectronics, Industry 4.0, Software, AI
Creation date: 2008

Business Hive Vilnius

Full name of Organisation: Business Hive Vilnius
Location Geographic coverage: Lithuania, Baltics, office in Vilnius
Membership: 25 members (100% SMEs)
Key Technology focus and specialisation: hardware, security, block-chain, AI and enterprise software startups
Creation date: 2010

Mazowia Cluster ICT

Full name of Organisation: Mazovia Cluster ICT coordinated by Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Społeczno-Gospodarczego „Wiedza”
Location Geographic coverage: Warsaw, Mazovia district, Poland
Membership: 402 members, 88% SMEs
Key Technology focus and specialisation: ICT, AI, IoT, Robotics and specialisation: energy management, space technologies, cybersecurity
Creation date: 2007

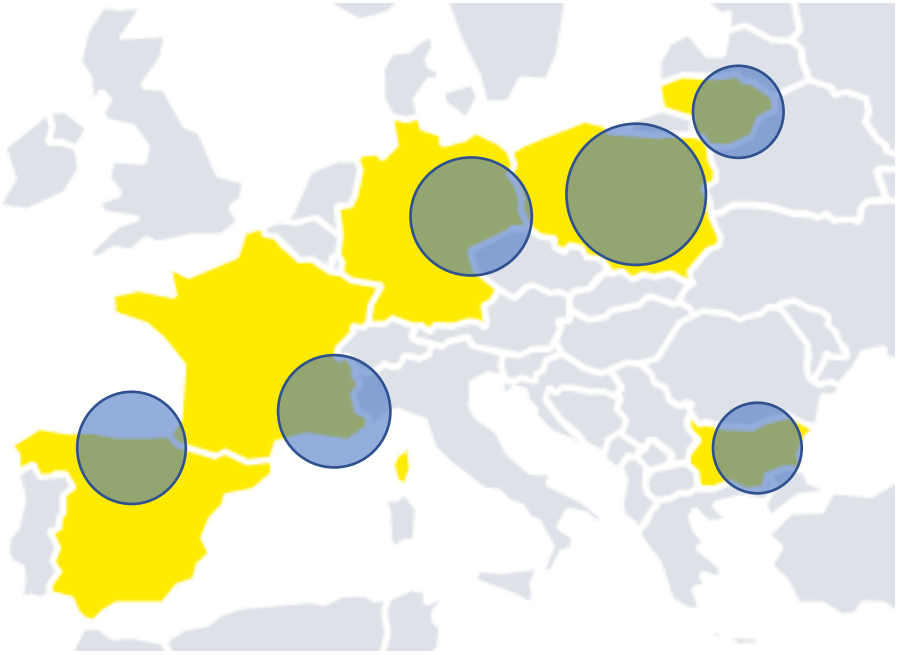
GAIA

Full name of Organisation: Gaia -Association of Knowledge and Applied Technologies industries in the Basque Country
Location Geographic coverage: Basque Country, Spain, offices in Bilbao and San Sebastián.
Membership: 311 members, 65% SMEs
Key Technology focus and specialisation: Electronics, Informatics, Telecommunications, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Experiential Intelligence, Cybersecurity
Creation date: 2008

SCS Cluster

Full name of Organisation: Pôle Solutions Communicantes Sécurisées (Secured Communicating Solutions Cluster)
Location and geographic coverage: French Region Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, with 2 main offices (Rousset & Sophia-Antipolis)
Membership: 310 members (72% SME)
Key Technology focus and specialisation: Microelectronics, AI, IoT, Cybersecurity
Creation date: 2006

Geographical coverage



2. Challenges assessment for best practices collection

2.1 Cluster structure

Common challenges

Regarding cluster structure, all six partners share challenges regarding they sectorial focus. As most of them are dealing with horizontal thematic – technologies that can be applied to various markets – the first difficulty is to be able to reach and be recognized in vertical sectors and **bring new markets to their members, at local and international level**. On the one hand, communication with players of other sectors can be difficult, because of unfamiliarity in terms of technology, specific challenges, and requirements. On the other hand, clusters also meet the difficulty to address consensus-messages and to tackle the needs of all members regarding the access to market, as they are targeting various markets – digital clusters focusing on several key enabling technologies, their members are diversified, and such technologies can target a wide range of markets.

Change of the economic context entails changes in the cluster strategic focus, and sometime can reconsider its purpose. Some clusters went through restructuration to adapt to new challenges, such as digital transformation, which requires to target new kinds of members, with new kinds of needs in terms of support and of market prospects. Resulting challenges are the **building of new competences and expertise**, the **recognition of the cluster in new fields**, and **attracting and retaining new members**.

BEST PRACTICES NEEDED

- Practices linked to **cross-industrial partnerships**, which would help make connexions with market-oriented clusters and relevant company prospects for the members, **at local and European level.**
- Practices linked to **members' attraction, loyalty and engagement in the cluster activities**.
- Practices linked to **competence and expertise building in strategic technology and market fields**.

POLE SCS

GOOD PRACTICE

SCS Cluster agrees partnerships with market-focused clusters, on calls for interest based on value chain analysis and needs for digitalisation of the market sector. The aim is to bring the members to collaborative cross-sector projects giving them access to clients.

2.2 Cluster strategy

Common challenges

As regards cluster strategy issues, the major challenge shared by all the EXCITE clusters is the difficulty to **reach an active involvement of the cluster members in the strategy making**. Thus, the strategy can be mostly formulated by a few players and not by the majority, and it may be difficult to ask members to think collectively and not only for their own interests. This results in the fact that the strategic priorities followed by the cluster reflect only the interest of a few, and in a disinterest and mistrust of the others. The ambition of the clusters is to tackle the interests and challenges of the majority of their members and appear as a consolidated strong sector.

The majority of the clusters also need to **improve their strategy monitoring processes**. From the difficulty to define reliable KPIs, the lack of time-resources to achieve an efficient and constant reporting, the multiple reporting imposed by several authorities – when the cluster is partly public-financed, to the lack of skills to efficiently use reporting tools, there is a ground for collective improvement in this field.

BEST PRACTICES NEEDED

- Setting up of a **process of strategy co-creation format involving more members**, encompassing their needs and visions.
- **Motivation skills** to better engage the cluster members and keep them active.
- **Efficient collaborative reporting processes and tools** (such as CRM) engaging team members to achieve up to date reporting easily.

BUSINESS HIVE VILNIUS

GOOD PRACTICE

Due to their small-size, Business Hive Vilnius has a demand-driven strategy, based on a good awareness of their members' needs thanks to members' involvement – even if it remains difficult to build the strategy on the long-term.

GOOD PRACTICE

Gaia performes an efficient KPIs monitoring thanks a tool allowing easy data reporting (Odoo).

GAIA

2.3 Cluster organisation

Common challenges

The clusters have diverse needs regarding their operational organisation, mainly depending on their maturity and size. However, the majority of them expressed **challenges in the workload and time management** which is most of the time high given the cluster's resources, and staff and management skills. Thus, most of them expressed a **lack of constant training** of their team, mainly due to a lack of time. Some of them expressed challenges in keeping the **operational team motivated**; some others also noticed the difficulty to efficiently **share among the team up-to-date members' information** regarding day-to-day activities and performed services. Finally, some clusters also think of **re-structuring their internal organisation** and become able to handle general activities on the longer-term.

BEST PRACTICES NEEDED

- **Efficient internal organisation** allowing optimised workload and time management, and alignment between the departments and the cluster structure.
- Practices **increasing human resources and expertise**, such as partnerships with members
- Leadership **trainings for the cluster staff**
- **Team cohesion** practices
- Efficient **knowledge management** among the team thanks to the **CRM/other processes**

GOOD PRACTICE

Mazovia ITC Cluster organised their working teams in technology & market competence areas. In addition, they build temporary working groups for the needs of projects with experts of specific fields.

Mazovia Cluster ICT

2.4 Cluster business model

Common challenges

Business model good practices generated the most interests from the partners. First, most of them are interested in **exploring new services to enlarge or even re-design their services offer** and ensure continuous incomes from private sources.

The second challenge deals with **membership management**, and more precisely with ways to ensure the memberships renewal each year. This concerns issues of members' loyalty and satisfaction of the cluster activities, but also issues of inefficient membership monitoring in terms of subscription-fee payment, and of heavy administrative processes for subscription.

Finally, some clusters also expressed a difficulty regarding the **pricing of membership and services-fees**. For some clusters, especially the ones whose public subsidies are decreasing over the years, it may be a challenge to adapt fees to the market reality, and to justify it to the members who were used to low prices. For some others, the challenges is even to establish the strict payment of the membership to their members.

BEST PRACTICES NEEDED

- Services and joint-services allowing successful **matchmaking inside the cluster and cross-cluster**s via physical and virtual formats
- Services and methodologies **bringing demand and supply together**
- Organisation of **major event with entry-fee**
- **Elaboration of services offer** and price list
- Light **subscription process**
- **Payment monitoring** process and system

SILICON SAXONY
THE HIGH-TECH NETWORK

GOOD PRACTICE

Silicon Saxony organise B2B events with entree-fee.

2.5 Communication, visibility & reputation

Regarding communication practices, and cluster visibility and reputation, most of the clusters have challenges in optimising their **members' reach**. First, some are implementing many actions and events and have troubles in **managing their information flow efficiently** – the members are overloaded with information, which may lead them to ignore e-mails from the cluster. Second, members are more likely to actively read **targeted communication** regarding their specific focus sectors, or individual communication targeting an individual need – which is also a challenge as the more members clusters have, the more difficult it is to have a good knowledge of each individual members' needs and interests. Likewise, reaching the right entry-point-contact in the organisation is also challenging. Besides, **getting feedback from the members on their success stories** is also needed by the clusters to better assess their added value to their ecosystem, but it remains difficult to track.

Some cluster also expressed the difficulty to **be visible next to a wide range of other similar organisations,** sometimes overlapping the cluster's services. Thus, the clusters have challenges in standing out and demonstrating their added value to their members.

Member's engagement in the cluster's activities is thus a challenge depending on many factors, of which the COVID context, as many core activities like formal and informal meetings, that used to maintain and raise the members' motivation, were largely impacted – and the members' participation to such activities tends to remain lower than before, even during cooling down periods. Besides, events planning has become difficult due to the risky and changing context.

Finally, challenges were also recorded regarding the **use of communication channels**, and especially needs for skills in **using social media**.

BEST PRACTICES NEEDED

- ➔ **Targeted-communication** practices
- ➔ Communication actions **demonstrating the cluster's added value**
- ➔ Practices to **track success-feedback** from the members
- ➔ Optimised **use of communication channels and social media**
- ➔ Edition of **digital content**

CLUSTER FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & INNOVATION

GOOD PRACTICE

DTI Cluster offers numerous formal and informal meetings to their members to keep them involved in the cluster activites – even if the COVID context restrained these activities.

3 Cluster's Best Practices

Summary

Cluster business model.

Communication and reputation.

3.1 Silicon Saxony

BEST PRACTICES

Strategy

Organisation

3-days strategy workshop and retreat

Operational organisation: Alignment of the cluster management team with the cluster strategy

Taking time off from the regular workload and using at least three days of dedicated collaboration to review the last period, analyzing the efforts and objectives and key results. By integrating the whole team from assistants to the CEO it gives the chance to onboard everyone to the year ahead and align the cluster teams work with the cluster strategy and member needs as well as increasing the overall team spirit.

Additional to the actual work on the relevant topics, the use of an off-side venue has the charm to give teambuilding an additional value, by including social happenings and avoiding “distractions” like regular work, phone calls, E-Mails, family 😉.

Agenda:

- Day 1: Welcome – Work – Feedback – Socializing
- Day 2: Welcome – Work – Feedback – Socializing
- Day 3: Welcome – Work – Final Feedback – Departure
- Rest of the year: Implementation

Everyone is focused on the task on hand – team members get each other to know better – team work makes the dream work

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1. Start and Welcoming

Expectations

Everyone knows beforehand the schedule of the Retreat and the purpose. Still, people tend to have different expectations and wishes. Therefore, and to loosen the occasional strain, some sort of alignment is appropriate. Several methods are valid, e.g. “I wish-I like-I wonder” as a more long-term overview of expectations and a simple feedback-list regarding expected results for the things ahead will do. If your team is new, and people do not know each other well yet, other methods may be due. The first mentioned method is also a good way to keep track of the overall development, when used on each occasion and analyzing the changes over time (hopefully, it won’t be the same every time; 😊)

After everyone had a chance to express their expectations and a short summary, one (the moderator) can point out, which of these will be addressed, and/or which are not on the schedule. Everyone should be now sufficiently focused and on the topic.

2. Why and What

Strategy

Often, but not necessarily always, the clusters overall strategy is not know within the office team. A short comprehensive review is due (10 -15 min presentation). Because, in the end the daily work should be properly aligned with the cluster strategy. How else will it be achievable?

Long list of actions

Within the cluster a lot of actions are ongoing. There are several services to the members, projects of any kind, events, exhibitions and so on but also basic stuff like controlling, book keeping and meetings. To have an overview and not to miss anything a long list needs to be prepared.

Divide the cluster management team into groups according to your regular structure or by chance. And put every group to work on it. Depending on the size of your cluster and the number of actions you may need up to 90 min or even longer for this group interaction. You can use whiteboards or Flipcharts and each action on one sheet of paper of identical size to pin on the charts.

However, at the end you have your long list with all actions and indication of what type of action it is (project, service, event etc.).

Finalize the exercise by presenting it to the whole management team.

Milestone and Deadlines

Next step would be, to put the list for visibility and further preparation on to a sheet of endless paper, divided by 12 sections, representing each month and marking the final date (Deadlines and Milestones) as well as estimated weeks of extended work on these actions (e.g. the three weeks before an major event are more or less reserved). The result will be something according to the middle picture on page 1. Of course, in parallel this exercise should be duplicated digital by means of an excel sheet or other project management tools (e.g. Microsoft Projects) to use it for monitoring later on and compiling additional information.

OKRs/KPIs

To keep track of the efforts and the success of the work towards the strategic goals, certain Objectives and Key Results should be clear or need to be defined. For the period of a year

clear Key Performance Indicators need to be established. For each action, if viable at least one, for larger endeavours more, but not more than 3. There are several tools and apps available to help keep track of these, e.g. perdoo. Monthly or at least quarterly monitoring is appropriate.

As these KPI need to be accepted by everyone contributing to it, the team is split into groups according to all tasks which are related to the objectives. Giving the groups 15-20 min for brainstorming and developing a restricted number of KPIs helps with it. Afterwards, the group leader may reason the results in front of the whole team. Thus, these are validated and confirmed.

The OKR and KPI can and probably should also be included in the above-mentioned Excel or PM-Tool.

Acknowledgement

Within this part, you will try to estimate or extract the purpose or usefulness of all actions. Several aspects can be included:

Revenue of the actions

- Acknowledgement or recognition by the cluster members (use your satisfactory survey)
- Count of attendees or users (events, services)
- Alignment with cluster strategical goals (objectives)

You may assign scores to each category and may also develop your own weightings. But you can with this information calculate a numerical value for the “value” of your actions.

Synergies

Often, the number of actions is overwhelming when displayed in this manner. People tend to doubt, that this is manageable. For one, it may indeed the case and things have to be re-tasked or canceled. This will be addressed later. Other actions may be interconnected, and the synergies must be identified. Such as certain event may be part or contributing to projects and so on.

Back to the respective groups of your team, each runs to their actions (according to responsibility and participation) and cross-checking which other actions may be contributing to each other and by doing one task others are accomplished, too.

This exercise can be best done using a digital copy of the long list of actions and having all actions as well as vertical and horizontal displayed. Thus, a matrix is built, where easily potential synergies can be marked.

All actions for the year are summarised and potential synergies are identified by having everyone on-board and aligned to the cluster strategy.

3. Who (with Whom) and When

Team – Knowing each other – re-building teams

To have the best people available on hand for each identified tasked and action, you must take care of your team. Often issues occur, despite all best efforts. Additionally, only because people worked long together, they do not necessarily make the best possible team. This part of the best practise example is about aspects of personalities as much as capabilities and awareness of one´s available work capacity.

Your teams should contain not only people of each necessary working skill and experience but also of the so-called soft skills. Even in small teams a leader is required as well as diplomats, and creators and workers, to name some. Probably, all hard/work skills within your team are knowns, but if not, use some methods to identify your own experts within. This can be as easy, as giving everyone the task to describe their most beneficial skills for actions on hand, including what is not so well ore loved to be done. Basically, it is an individual SWOT-analysis.

People

More complex is the assessment of your team's personality. Issues within the team which lead to hindering the progress of the work are based on misunderstandings. Why people act as they do and where miscommunication is coming from must be identified. Key is to give your team the chance to self-access their personality and make each other's visible.

Two methods are suggested:

Your team prepares a profile of which characteristics, skills and habits may contribute to the team effort or disrupt it. An example is the use of the "Super-hero vs. Super-villain" method by the digital innovation playbook. These profile sheets can be displayed later in the office to remind and review everyone.

In addition, and as extension, a personality test can be done by each member of the team. There are several theories available, but all are consistent in terms of good teams are built of a balanced set of personalities. Within the scope and time frame of this best practice example fit the personality test at 123test.com. Again, the results can be displayed anonymized later to have them to hand and check whether your teams are built accordingly.

Capacity

There is never enough time to do what must be done.

Yeah, everyone complains about not enough time and too much to do. On the other hand, if asked, most cannot tell you how long a certain task need to be prepared. For the next step, we will try to make the available time visible and more obvious. First, everyone needs to know, their individual working hours. You can easily calculate how many these are for each year. Then, you must subtract all non-working days (weekends, bank holidays etc.). Please add your vacation days and either your own (and these you needed to take of children etc.) ill-leaves or these of the statistical evaluated for your region, country. Lastly, subtract your hours you from overtime work and not accumulated vacation days of the last year.

Surprisingly, only roughly three quarters will remain from 2000h (e.g., Germany, by 40h weekly). Doing this for every member of your team, gives a total of available working hours. Now, this will be used to check and define the capacity for each of your actions in the long list from above. But bevor we can go there, we need to be aware of something else: Even with the calculated capacity, not even these remaining hours are meant to be spent completely. You must consider:

Time to meet and call colleagues and stakeholders.

Prepare office stuff to do the actual work, e.g., E-mail correspondence, self-management.

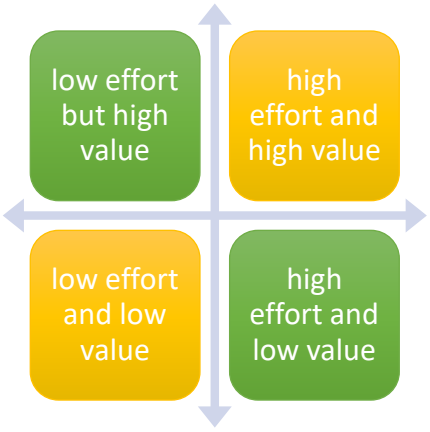
You will need to prepare new services, define new projects and so on to develop your cluster and your own teamwork as well as a healthy amount of vocational and educational training.

Additional time to deal with the unexpected; and you can be sure, there will be actions dropping on your lap, you never considered.

According to studies and experience, for the last part (4.) you should have 20% (a whole working day per week) reserved. For the others (1. Through 3.) you will need probably 10-30% overall. Considering this, you can only spend 50-70% of your working hours on projects, events, services.

With this information you can send your team back to the long list of actions and let them allocate there estimated (or take the hours booked in your time recording system) necessary capacity (hours) to each action they are contributing to. Remind everyone to take care of the above-mentioned conditions. Clearly, your team will come to the point, to think they will have to do the same amount of work with only half the time. But that, is simply not true. Going back to synergies it can be discovered, that by contributing to one action/task one will also contribute to some others. Thus, no additional capacity needs to be spent.

Finally, you will get by addition of all hours, the effort for each action. Combined with the value for the acknowledgement you put all your actions to a diagram, see below. This you can use to argue better about things, you may not do anymore or change the business model behind.



Personality tests may unveil surprises or approve what everyone suspected…tools to build more effective teams

4. How

The final day is reserved for anything which helps your team to take on the tasks on hand and get feedback as well as collect pain points.

Processes

If there is the necessity of establishing new processes, use part of the day to brainstorm on it and let the established or new teams find there own way. Remind them, that it is not only important to do the work, but also to report/communicate results. Everyone should be to some degree able to give answers to any of your actions related questions.

Tools and tips

Also, use some time to teach the team the use of proper tools, often precious time got lost by using the wrong tools or not using them efficiently. Same goes for the allocation of repetitive or special tasks, for them you may or should have identified your team´s experts or the need of further training.

Internal development projects (new services, changes within the team)

According to the identified pain points during daily routines and alignment with the cluster strategy or need of new actions (services for the cluster members) “new” project teams can be established. Within the allocated capacity (time budget) selected short-term projects will be created with their own timeline and tasks.

Controlling

Finally, some semblance of controlling needs to be found. More in terms of internal controlling of the team and how the contribution to the OKR and KPIs find their way into the management. Additionally, this also contributes to the internal communication, keeping everyone on board.

Finish this whole exercise with a review to the expectations, open feedback and of course the next steps to be taken.

Do not forget to thank everyone for their contribution, patience, and insights.

Sorry! That’s not the end. Of course, you have to keep on track and refine a lot of the results further and get feedback with your stake holders, board etc.

Organisation of paid events and conferences

Technical conferences and exhibitions for SiSax members and non-members with paying fees

Besides own events Silicon Saxony (SiSax) organises diverse professional events like congresses, symposiums or conferences for third parties. From conception and planning to organisation and implementation, it offers everything from a single source. Location, programme, music, lighting and technology - together with its network of specialized service providers, SiSax has the perfect solution for various stakeholders accumulating over 20 years of experience in organizing large-scale events, including technical conferences and exhibitions in physical and hybrid format.

Silicon Saxony has been organising tech conference such as apc|m Europe (>20 yrs), SAW Symposium and Smart Systems Integration & Exhibition (SSI) on behalf of other institutions for several years. These are established events now. We have also our own conference and exhibition Silicon Saxony Day (500+ participants) and the DecompileD (IT) conference.

In case of organisation of events for 3rd parties the target audience are primarily SiSax member companies and institutions who need help with technology conferences organisation. Additionally, SiSax supports companies' requests to assist with preparation of companies´ anniversaries.

Added value proposition: smooth all-around organisation of events, through and detailed planning in steps, great platform for networking and exchange on key technologies.

Fees: paid service, often with differentiation between members and non-members: members have access with a discounted fee (often approx. 50 % less) for attendance or/and exhibiting. Speakers, poster presenters, selected by the Programme Committee are admitted either with a discount or for free depending on the event.

Co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union

In focus - APCM conference and Silicon Saxony Day

apc|m Conference

- ➔ Apc|m: https://www.apcm-europe.eu/home/
- ➔ Apc|m on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/10548673

The European Advanced Process Control and Manufacturing (apc|m) Conference is a self-financed technical conference directed to manufacturers, suppliers and scientific community of semiconductor, photovoltaic, LED, flat panel, MEMS, and other related industries. The topics are focused on current challenges and future needs of Advanced Process Control and Manufacturing Effectiveness.

The conference takes place at various centres of the semiconductor and photovoltaic industry in Europe annually. The conference is organized by Silicon Saxony, a member of European Semiconductor Networks.

The conference takes place between March and April every year.

Preparation:

The preparation process consists of several consecutive steps:

- Preparation of the “Call for Papers” mailing in Newsletter-to-go
- Sending of mailing with the “Call for papers” with a deadline to submit a paper presenting their technology or solution, via Newsletter-to-go + “Save the date” for the event describing overall topics defined for conference.
- Via Converia tool (is valid for registration) the Programme Committee collects the papers and evaluates which ones will be admitted to the various Technical Tracks (parallel sessions with presentations).
- the Programme Committee reviews the papers and gives comments / observations for improvement and SiSax sends an email with guidelines to the speakers containing the improvement suggestions;
- In parallel, SiSax chooses 3 Invited Speakers who will receive 40 min timeslots to present their topic and 3 Keynote speakers with 30 min presentations

- As soon as the speakers are chosen, SiSax sends information to speakers with overall instructions.
- Some of the contributors, whose paper is not chosen receive an offer to present their poster with a discounted fee.
- When the programme and the participation packages are finalised, SiSax sends an email once again to all national and international stakeholders with the invitation for participation.

The **presentations** run in parallel under 3 major topics (tracks).

Catering and technical support services are often suggested by venue´s local organisational and technical team.

Number of participants: 150-300

Different participation levels (packages):

- Speaker: are selected via the above process. Speakers receive about 15-20 minutes timeslot to present their topic. No fee for participation to the APCM
- Invited/ Key Note speakers: are selected from the key local partners of SiSax
- Poster Presenters: have a 3-5 min slot to present their poster in the Poster Session, which can be also sponsored). Additionally, there is an evening Poster Reception where the participants can network is offered.
- Sponsors : become sponsors for sessions
- Exhibitors: applies for an exhibition space to show-case their products/ solutions
- Attendees: purchase and entry ticket

Fees

- Paid service for both members/non-members. Members have access with a discounted fee (often approx. 50 % less) for attendance or/and exhibiting
- Prices – speaker / poster presentation - about 20% discount from the full price
- Early bird - 699 eur until end of February
- Full price – 799 eur – no differentiation for members and non-members

➔ Apc|m impressions 2022 (short video):
https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6917461974217834496

Responding to the demand from the industry and scientific community on high quality technical conference

Sustainable revenue stream for the cluster that reinforces its self-financed business model

SiSax annual Flagship event – Silicon Saxony Day

- ➔ SSD: https://www.silicon-saxony-day.de/
- ➔ Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhmVYrpWyys

Silicon Saxony Day is **the largest ICT conference in Saxony**. It offers cross-industry insights into technologies and solutions in the areas of hardware, software and connectivity. In addition to knowledge and technology transfer, the goal of this networking event is the open exchange between developers, producers and users of information and communication technologies (ICT).

A main stage and several theme islands create space for networking, professional exchange and exciting insights into players and technologies in the ICT industry. While the main stage with its high-calibre keynotes and panel discussions reflects the entire spectrum of our network, the theme islands represent a clear technological focus. In short pitches and talks, the islands offer insights into challenges, use cases, lessons learned, best practices and novel business models.

Organisation

The overall methodology for the organisation process is similar to the organisation of APCM.

- Call for papers/ contributions - short abstract describing the presentation are collected via Forms
- Programme committee consists of several companies – 5-6 people to evaluate the presentations that the companies submit
- Location: Dresden Airport - open space in the business area of the airport spread over 2 floors.
- Catering and the technical support are provided by the venue´s orga team with the full coordination of SiSax

Major difference to APCM are:

- Speakers/ Contributors/ Organising Committee/ Board/ Students: receive a free-of-charge ticket
- Tickets price: difference for Members / non-Members – 50 % discount for Members
- 3 Keynotes / Panel Discussions
- 5 Topic Islands: Autonomous Systems | Artificial Intelligence | Smart Digital Systems | Wireless Technologies | Microelectronics | Sustainability | Environmental Social Governance that run parallelly – the attendees receive the headphone to better hear the presentations

- Exhibitors can choose the location of their booth using the Tool Typo which displays the planning of the venue to let the companies to book their booth
- B2B-Matchmaking offered via B2Match

Formats

- 5 min pitches (pure presentation with set of slides)
- 10 min presentations/ technical-scientific (demonstrators)
- Fish-Bowl / Panel / Keynote (30-45 min)

Number of participants: 300-500

Value creation for members: providing an innovative and international platform for sharing ideas and trends for future information and communications technologies

Organisation of Technical Conferences and Exhibitions on behalf of third parties: Smart Systems Integration Conference (SSI)

- ➔ SSI: https://smartsystemsintegration.com/
- ➔ SSI on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/77606014

The Smart Systems Integration Conference intends to cover all aspects of system integration, from System on Chip (SoC) via System in Package (SiP) to System of Systems (SoS) – both, hardware and software aspects . Its key mission is to connect the smart systems community and to align research activities along the whole value chain for future smart and sustainable system solutions.

The conference connects researchers from academia and industry as well as policy and decision makers. Since about 15 years the three-day event is commonly organised by Fraunhofer ENAS together with the European Association on Smart Systems Integration – EPoSS to link technology and policy aspects in one event. It is technically supported by Silicon Saxony.

In an engaging and compact format, the conference provides a unique and valuable opportunity to interact with the stakeholders of the smart systems community along the value chain by means of technical sessions comprising talks and poster pitches, strategy panels, podium discussions and exhibition booths. RTOs, SMEs and industry share their latest approaches and results.

Organisation

- The overall organisation process doesn't differ much from the APCM conference preparation.
- Major difference is that Silicon Saxony is commissioned by the third parties for its technical organisation.

- The procedure to collect the papers contains 2 steps:
  - Abstract submission
  - Full paper submission
- SSI has 5 parallel tracks.
- Technical support: equipment renting + 2 Technical people (from the venue often)

International presence at Trade Fairs and Conferences helps to increase visibility and attractiveness of a cluster for the international partners for organisation of joint events in future.

💡2023 - year location was suggested by Visit Flanders/ Flanders Invest & Trade that approached Silicon Saxony at SEMICON 2020, where SiSax has the biggest booth at the fair, where 35 SiSax companies co-exhibit.

Packages

- More sponsor packages with different prices (10 in total)
- More Exhibition options: small booth, medium, large
- Attendance tickets

Number of participants: 150-300

Finding a local partner that can support with organisation is of key importance

Figure 1 Apcm & SSI together in Bruges 2023

3.2 DTI Cluster

CLUSTER FOR
DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION &
INNOVATION

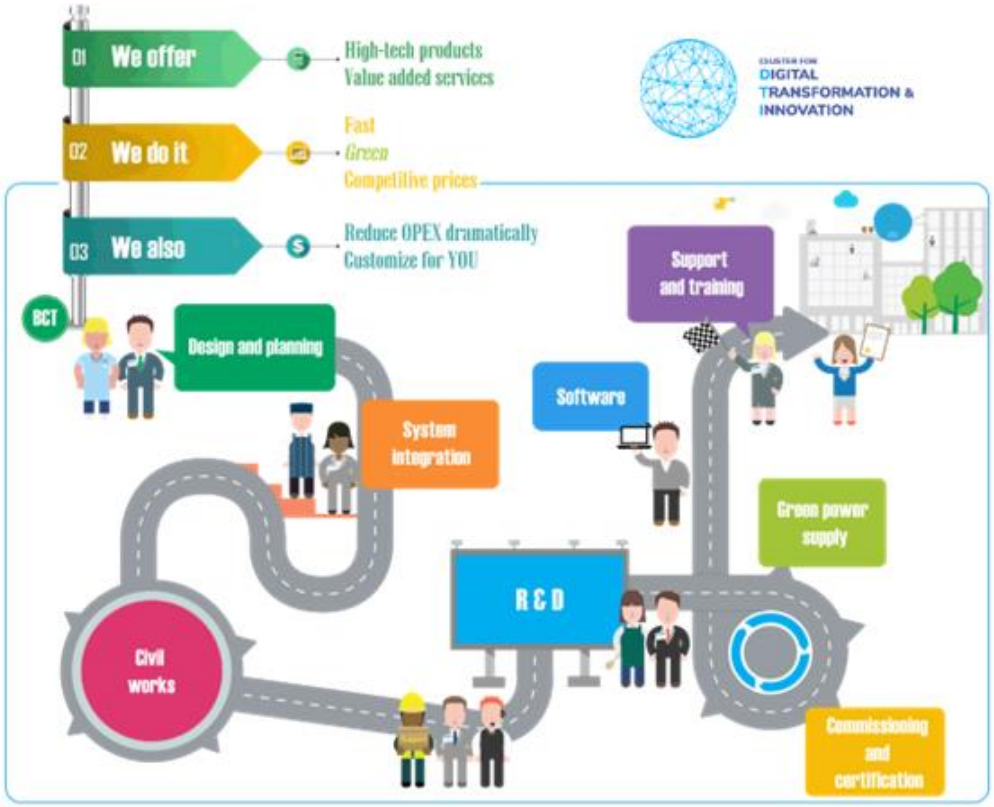
BEST PRACTICES

Ecosystem animation practices

Bulgarian Cluster for Digital Transformation is small cluster where 1 technical university and 14 SMEs are members. One of the main aims of the cluster is to strengthen the collaboration among cluster members for development of joint products and services, share resources and go to international markets.

DTI cluster management and coordination team defines the key actions for success

- **Promotion of collaborative work**
- **Promotion and animation**



Bulgarian Cluster for Digital Transformation has diverse expertise covering complex projects engineering (for example for telecommunications from the design and planning, system integration, construction, consultation, green power supply, training and implementation). The companies in the cluster are relatively small, the Bulgarian market is also limited, and the companies resources are limited.

In order to support the competitiveness of the company members, DTI management and operational team are taking different actions to strengthen the collaboration among cluster members for the development of joint products and services, sharing resources and going to international markets.

To this end, DTI Cluster management team are facing the following challenges:

- **Building trust among cluster members** to share information, to speak straight for the problems they meet, their vision for the future as well as their technologies.
- **Providing good knowledge on each other products and services** – in order to establish collaboration, to cross – promote the company to clients, to attract them in projects the knowledge of products and services is a must.Establishing joint understanding and standards – one of goals of DTI Cluster was to create a pool of experts that could be used for bigger projects, international projects and etc.Facilitating a wide global network of partners – connecting partners.

8 ecosystem facilitation actions

To answer the challenges the following animation actions are implemented:

Challenge	Actions
Building trust	- Informal meetings on interests for the CEO - Informal meetings for staff members - Afterwork events - Weekend long retreats out of the city to combine collaborative work and free time together to provoke ideas and knowledge sharing (twice per year) - Formal meetings: general assembly meetings, formal meetings when opportunity appears
Good knowledge on each other products and services	Every months, one of the members of the cluster is a host of the cluster meeting: introduction of the team, update on new products, projects, technologies
Joint understanding and standards	For creation of pool of experts and working together, cluster members agreed on joint standards of work and knowledge
Wide global network of partners	DTI cluster is part of wide network of partners Joint business missions of the cluster members has been organised to different part of the EU, Asia,

Results:

The cluster members joined forces in a number of projects and activities working together on Bulgarian and International market:

- The cluster is a member of the Management Body of Intelligent Communication
- Infrastructures Lab (ICI Lab) at Sofia Tech Park scientific complex. ICI Lab offers unique activities for all Balkans and Western Europe -research, development and testing of devices for the European Rail Traffic
- DTI is a partner of National Railway Infrastructure Company. Several infrastructural projects for railway transport have been implemented.
- Companies in the cluster have proven themselves as trustworthy partners delivering high quality services and implementing number of national and international joint projects
- 8 company members of the cluster joined forces and established Smart Networks Joint company for building telecom networks in Germany
- DTI Cluster members participated together in several business missions and trade fairs: Russia, Dubai, Colombia, Taiwan and Morocco

3.3 Business Hive Vilnius

BUSINESS HIVE
VILNIUS

BEST PRACTICES

Business (re)modelling

Cluster service

BHV provides business modelling services for cluster and non-cluster members in the ICT sector (but not limited to it) that are facing various business issues - loss of market share, loss of clientele, loss of competitiveness.

There can be many reasons for these unwanted changes for organization, both externally and internally that are difficult to manage. Therefore, external intervention or just analysis by the third party can provide needed insight. However, as our experience shows, insight is rarely enough and as a result, a guiding hand to introduce new processes, practices or simply put new ideas into action, is necessary.

These are the following phases of how business modelling service is executed by BHV:

Phase 0. Questionnaire

Before the process is started, the following core questions are asked in order to understand the current situation the inquirer is in:

- **What service or product do you provide? Who are your main competitors?** Define your product or product line. Define your competitor's product.
- **Who's your target customer?** Your product or service should solve a specific problem for a specific group of consumers. Your business model should consider how big your potential customer base is.
- **How will your product or service benefit those customers?** Your business model should have a clear value proposition, which is what makes it uniquely attractive to customers.
- **What expenses will you have?** Make a list of the fixed and variable expenses your business requires to function, and then figure out what prices you need to charge so your revenue will exceed those costs. Keep in mind the costs associated with the physical, financial, and intellectual assets of your company.
- **How are you making money?** Outline your existing or planned revenue streams.
- **What are your key metrics?** Identify ways (apart from profitability) your company will measure its success, for example - customer acquisition costs, costs needed to acquire regular clientele.

Phase 1. Analysis

Current business model identification, product lineup analysis, market analysis, analysis of marketing and sales activities, quality of service, product costs and value. Additional goal in this stage is to check how accurate the client is with the market evaluation.

Phase 2. Product modeling & variations.

Depending on analysis results, a number of hypotheses are described.

Phase 3. Market check

The hypotheses are checked for market response.

Phase 4. Remodeling or modeling

According to results of analysis - new goals and KPIs. Clients are provided with new or updated goals and core KPIs for the new business model and plan of actions to be set in motion.

Most commonly used business models:

- Business to Business Model.
- Business to Consumer Model.
- Customer to Customer Model.
- Freemium Business Model.
- SaaS-Based Business Model.
- Subscription-Based Business Model.
- On-Demand Business Model.

Phase 5. New product strategy

Product features, communication, pricing, sales, personnel training. Redefined or prepared from scratch depending on the existing situation.

Phase 6. Piloting and launching

Coordination during the process. The execution is mostly done by the client, thus the required training to ensure the proper change management is provided (if needed).

Phase 7. Result analysis

Overview of the results in accordance to goals and KPIs.

Phase 8. Adjustments

Corrections when and if needed.

Follow-up actions

Activities to ensure proper process depending on success or challenges encountered in following work.

Depending on the case and client situation, not all phases are executed same way, or, at times are even skipped. Each case requires individual approach – there are cases, when no changes to business model or product line-up were made, however other strategy execution points like marketing, communication, pricing, main website had undergone major changes.

BHV provides following benefits for their members:

- Gain or regain strategic competitive advantage.
- Optimization of existing product line-up.
- Optimization of business processes.
- Development of new products.
- Consistency of execution – improving connections between strategies and action plans.
- Change initiation and management.
- Optimizing marketing strategy, tools and actions.

3.4 Mazovia Cluster ICT

BEST PRACTICES

Mazovia Cluster ICT

Strategy

Business model

Cybersecurity Analysis

Cluster service

The Cybersecurity Analysis is part of MCICT services portfolio. Its aim is to raise awareness of SME regarding cyber risks, help them detect threats and provide expertise and adequate answer to the identified challenges and needs.

Service added value

- ➔ **Identification** of potential security threats and vulnerabilities in information systems and networks.
- ➔ **Analysis** of security incidents to determine the cause, scope and impact of the incident.
- ➔ **Mitigation** and management of risks associated with security threats and incidents.
- ➔ **Increasing** the resilience and effectiveness of security controls and processes.
- ➔ **Ensuring** compliance with regulatory requirements and industry standards.
- ➔ **Facilitating** timely detection and responding to security incidents.
- ➔ **Provision** of useful information and metrics for security planning and risk management.
- ➔ **Improvement** of the overall security posture of the organization.
- ➔ **Protection** of sensitive information and prevent data breaches.
- ➔ **Fostering** a culture of security awareness and best practice within the organization.

Service Areas

Infrastructure

Information security management

Security incidents

Business continuity management

Maintenance of systems

Method of service delivery

The service is carried out by qualified consultants who work closely with the client. The individually established work schedule of the service consists of: definition of the work plan, implementation of the consulting part stationary at the client's site, analysis of potential non-conformities, preparation of the service report, summary of the service and discussion of the report with the client.

The cybersecurity service has several benefits:

- ✓ Improve the resilience of IT systems and networks.
- ✓ Reduce the risk of financial and reputational damage from cyber-attacks.
- ✓ Increase customer and stakeholder confidence in the organisation's security capabilities.
- ✓ Provide valuable insights and metrics for security planning and risk management.
- ✓ Support continuous improvement and optimisation of security controls and processes.

The security of doing business, as well as the requirements of customers, are to some extent based on cybersecurity, where an organisation's maturity in this area is becoming a prerequisite for starting business cooperation.

Steps to valorise the service

- **Use the metrics and data** generated by the cyber security analysis to demonstrate the value of the security investment to the organisation. This can help justify security spending and secure additional resources where needed.

- **Incorporate cyber security analysis findings** into incident response plans and procedures. This will help ensure that security incidents are detected and resolved in a timely and effective manner.

- **Consider conducting regular cyber security analysis** to monitor the effectiveness of security controls and processes over time. This will help identify trends and patterns in security incidents and provide insight into areas for improvement.

- **Use the results of the cyber security analysis** to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and industry standards. This can help avoid fines and legal action resulting from security breaches.

- **Finally, use the cyber security analysis to support a culture of security awareness** and best practice within the organisation. This can help reduce the risk of security incidents and create a safer environment environment for all.

Operational technology & market competence areas

Working teams organisation

Mazovia ITC Cluster organises working teams in technology & market competence areas to create solutions to sectoral problems, develop strategic documents and create recommendations for the different sectors.

Working teams are typically composed of individuals (cluster members) who possess different skills and knowledge related to a specific industry or field.

In technology teams, members typically have technical skills such as software development, hardware engineering, data analysis, and project management. These teams are responsible for designing, building, and maintaining technology products or services. They work together to develop technical solutions, solve technical problems.

In market competence teams, members typically have skills related to marketing, sales, customer service, and business strategy. These teams are responsible for understanding customer needs, analysing market trends, and developing marketing and sales strategies. They work together to promote and sell technology products or services, and ensure that the technology products meet customer expectations.

In many cases, technology and market competence teams work closely together to ensure that technology products are both technically sound and meet the needs of customers. By combining technical expertise with market knowledge, these teams can create products that are both innovative and commercially successful. Effective communication, collaboration, and teamwork are key to the success of these multifunctional teams.

The methodology for our working teams typically involves the following steps:

1. Defining the problem or opportunity

The team identifies the problem or opportunity it needs to address, based on market research or internal needs.

2. Conducting research and analysis

The team conducts research and analysis to understand the problem or opportunity in more detail. This may include analysing data, conducting market research or testing prototypes.

3. Defining objectives and scope

The team defines the objectives and scope of the project based on the research and analysis. This involves setting clear objectives and defining the scope of the project.

4. Develop a plan

The team develops a plan to achieve the goals and scope. This includes creating a project plan, defining tasks and timelines and allocating resources.

5 Implement the plan

The team implements the plan by following the defined tasks and schedules. This may include developing technology solutions, marketing and sales strategies or other tasks depending on the project.

6 Monitoring progress

The team monitors progress to ensure the project is on track. This includes tracking milestones, identifying potential risks and adjusting the plan if necessary.

7. Assessing the outcome

The team evaluates the outcome of the project to determine whether the objectives have been achieved. This may involve analysing data, reviewing customer feedback or conducting other types of evaluation.

Effective communication, collaboration and coordination between team members is key to the success of this methodology.

MCICT's working teams have several **advantages**, including:

- **Diverse expertise**: Working teams bring together individuals with diverse expertise and skill sets, allowing for a comprehensive approach to problem-solving and product development, providing both technical and market expertise.
- **Efficient decision-making**: Working teams can make decisions more efficiently than individuals working alone, as team members can draw on each other's knowledge and expertise. This ensures that decisions are well-informed and based on a range of perspectives.
- **Improved innovation**: Working teams facilitate innovation by combining technical expertise with market knowledge. This ensures that products and services are innovative and meet emerging market trends.
- **Increased collaboration**: Working teams generate collaboration and effective communication among team members, which improves coordination and increases efficiency. By working together, team members can leverage each other's strengths to achieve common goals.
- **Improved problem-solving**: Working teams effectively solve complex problems that require multiple perspectives and areas of expertise. This leads to more comprehensive and effective solutions.

- working teams help MCICT develop better products and services that are both technically sound and meet customer needs
- effective teamwork and collaboration have led to innovative projects and solutions, which brings financial benefits

Recent results of MCICT's working teams

The Energy Sector working team (the engineers, specialists in energy, ICT, marketing, and finance)

- developed the project "Local energy clusters" for building the autonomy and energy security of local communities by investing in the modernisation of energy infrastructure and in the implementation of innovative IT technologies.
- developed a new service "Energy transition strategy" (system to analyse the initial energy consumption, define the service process, develop rules, procedures, and components of the service)
- developed, submitted and received funding for the golden standard "Combined Heat and Power Plant of the Future"

3.5 Gaia

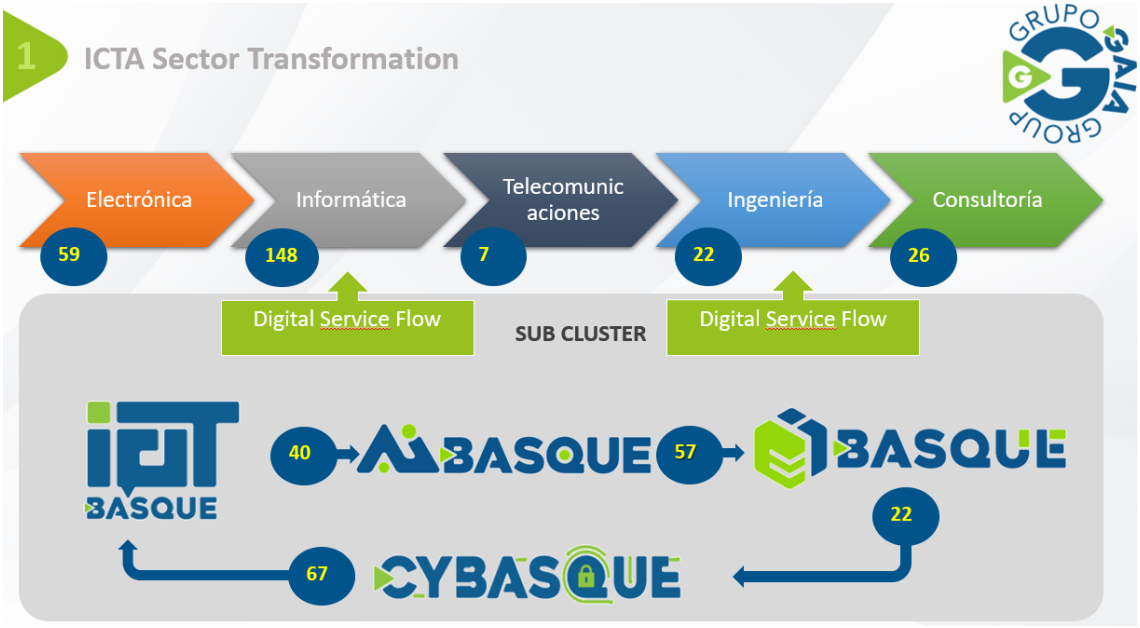
BEST PRACTICES

SME Accelerator Offices

Matching digital demand and offer

Gaia, the Cluster Association of Knowledge Industries and Applied Technology, has designed a strategy based on priority enabling technologies for the sector : Internet of Things, Visual Intelligence, Artificial Intelligence, and Cybersecurity as a transversal element.

In order to structure supply, mature demand and generate collaboration dynamics, Gaia is creating a network of demonstration laboratories for each enabling technology.



GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Fostering the digital transformation of industry by promoting networked, collaborative spaces led by ICT services, the natural channel for supporting and assisting industry in its Digital Transformation.

In a context of globalisation (with the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, etc.) which requires rapid evolution and adaptation to promote rapid business recovery, it is proposed to apply the following principles:

- Digitalisation, as a means of → COMPETITIVENESS
- Digitalisation as an accelerator of → SUSTAINABILITY

If what we are looking for is greater functionality and to be able to work not only locally but through any browser on any computer or Smartphone in the world, we will have to purchase the Enterprise version, which requires a paid license.

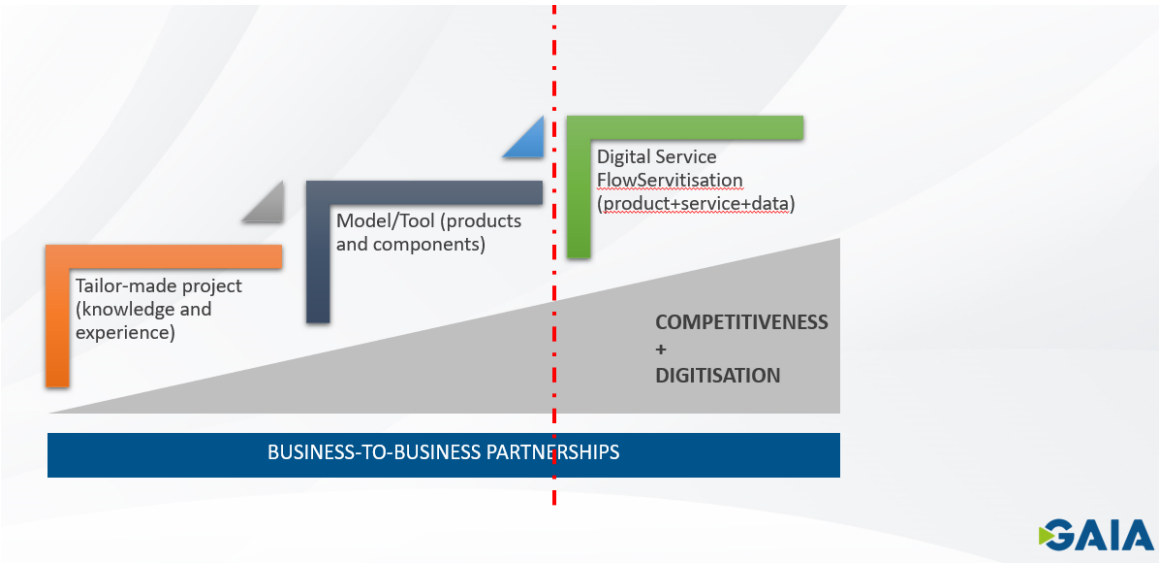
All Odoo applications are fully integrated and communicate with each other which helps to forget problematic integrations and get an easier user experience.

Odoo updates versions every year.

CHALLENGES

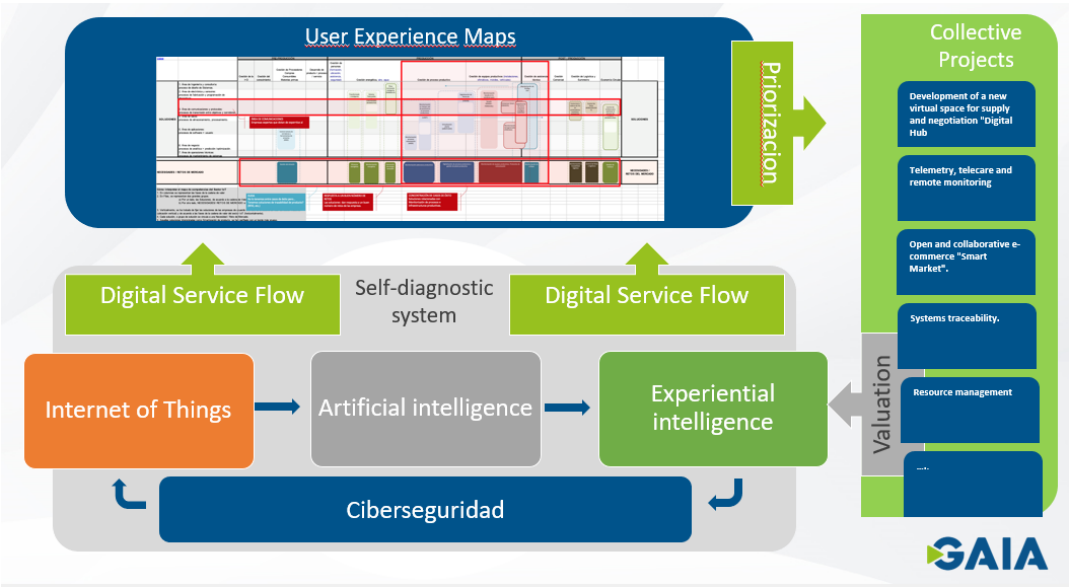
The ICTA sector (Knowledge Industries and Applied Technology) is facing a new evolutionary challenge, to offer solutions to the rest of the economic sectors that allow them to digitise to a greater extent and add value to their product/service through servitisation.This new approach increases the competitiveness of the economy as a whole.

However, it requires commitment to establish inter-company alliances that complement their know-how and this is where GAIA can act as a lever between companies in the sector. In this line, the LAB network plays a fundamental role.



ECOSYSTEM

An ecosystem has been proposed that is capable of triggering collective projects where companies from the same or different enabling technologies collaborate, thus offering the existing connection between them.

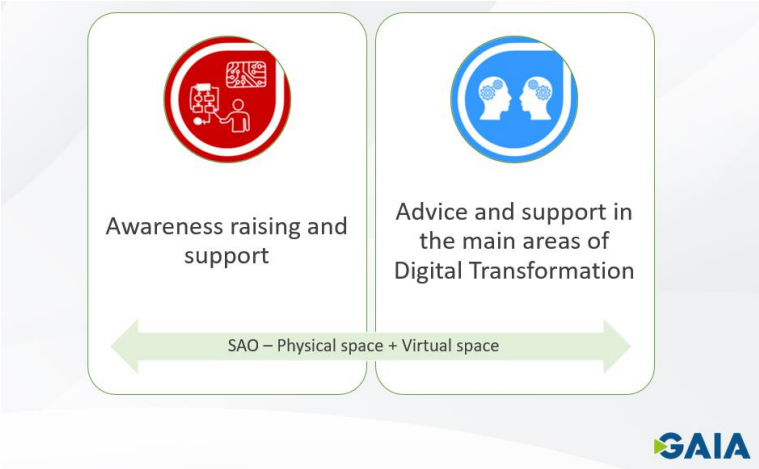


SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

SERVICES

With both physical and virtual space, the OAP will offer services along two lines.

- Awareness and support services
- Advice and support in the main areas of digital transformation.



Initially, the laboratories will be organised by enabling technology, as each of them requires specific infrastructure. It is through the dynamisation programme that awareness-raising will be verticalised and oriented by sector, and activities can be organised, e.g. for the machine tool, automotive, etc. subsectors. In this way, work is carried out on a matrix basis, focusing on the contribution of technology to each economic sector.

Awareness-raising and advocacy

LABs - Physical demonstrator space

- Actions to promote digital transformation (workshops, seminars, contents, conferences, meetings, etc.).
- Actions to stimulate technological demand
- Technology test
- Show room - success stories

LABs - Virtual

- Supporting guides
- Success stories
- Actions to promote digital transformation and stimulate technological demand (Webinars, etc.).

Advice and support in the main areas of Digital Transformation

Individual Support

- Industry 4.0 Diagnosis - determining the degree of digitalisation
- Action Plan

CAU

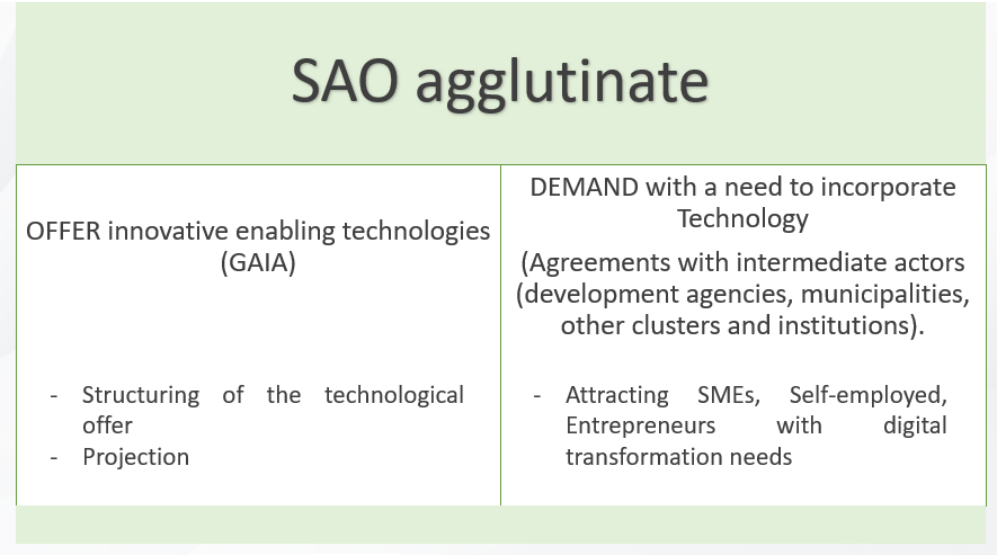
- ttending to and resolving queries
- Virtual LABs, on-line collection of solved queries

Collective Plan

- Activities
- Projects

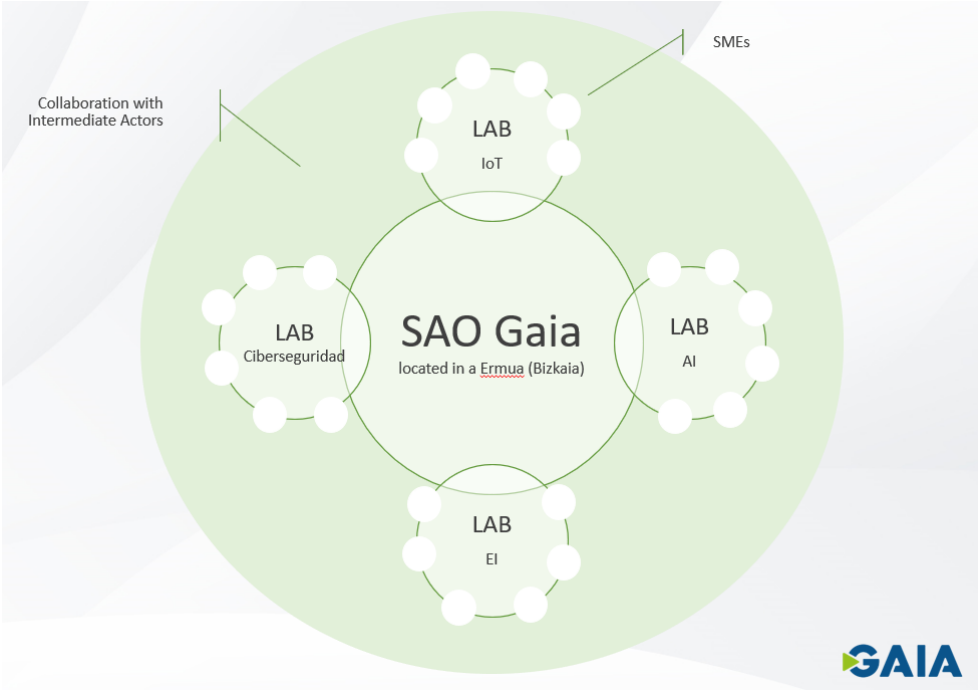
STRUCTURE

The structure of the SME accelerate office (SAO) is as follows.



The SME accelerate office - Gaia Office, located in Ermua, has a network of LABs (demonstration spaces) for Enabling Technologies (IoT, Artificial Intelligence, Visual Intelligence and Cybersecurity). These LABs are an instrument of projection, awareness and support for SMEs on innovative methodologies and technologies.

In this model, intermediate agents play a key role in accessing and attracting demand in order to achieve the objectives of the SME accelerate office (SAO).



Strategy

Organisation

Odoo - internally developped CRM tool

KPI tracking, Communication targeting, Ecosystem knowledge management

A proper tool for the cluster management is necessary to have an effective way to manage all aspects of the cluster management and the communication with cluster members. In case of GAIA, Odoo is used for services such as accounting, website management, budgeting, project and membership management, internal newsletter (GAIA Sarean), event and attendance management, hour control or company characterization, among others. There are more modules that are foreseen to be added in the future like talent management, CRM or questionnaires to cluster members.

ODOO

➔ https://www.odoo.com/

Odoo is a package of applications, in principle aimed at companies, whether large, small or medium-sized companies, which allows you to globally manage all the needs you have in that company, from purchasing, sales, accounting, billing, payroll, social network management, human resources and a myriad of aspects that can be managed from the same software. It is a very powerful tool, visually intuitive and very easy to use once we have learned the basic steps. There are two main versions, Community and Enterprise. The first one is open source, so we can download it for free, and allows a local installation. The problem is that it is not a complete version, since there are modules, some of them quite important, that are not included in this version.

If what we are looking for is greater functionality and to be able to work not only locally but through any browser on any computer or Smartphone in the world, we will have to purchase the Enterprise version, which requires a paid license.

Co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union

All Odoo applications are fully integrated and communicate with each other which helps to forget problematic integrations and get an easier user experience.

Odoo updates versions every year.

BENEFITS OF ODOO

As mentioned, ODOO has a great number of benefits for the entities using it. These are just some of them and the most relevant ones for cluster management:

ODOO's benefits:

- Accessible from everywhere (Cloud)
- "All in one" tool
- Digital Transformation
- Open Source

- **Digital Transformation enabler:**

Thanks to ODOO most of the internal processes of the cluster management can be digitalized. ODDO counts on a great number of modules for each of the needs that a cluster may have including the marketing tools, communication with clusters and financial aspects. Therefore, any process that currently clusters are managing with offline tools can be done in a digital way with all the benefits that this implies.

- **« All in one »**

As mentioned before, ODOO counts a great number of available modules, almost all that an entity needs for the management. In case of clusters, it contains a huge range of possibilities covering and supporting all the services offered by them to members. Having an unique tool for the management facilitates the work to cluster managers as they only have to interact with one tool instead of using different ones for the different services offered. In case of ODOO the interaction between the different modules is complete and accurate, therefore the information needs to be added ones and "exploited" in several ways and with different purposes. In addition, having one password helps also the users.

- **Accessible from everywhere (Cloud based)**

ODOO is a cloud-based tool which means that while there is access to the internet, the user may get mobility and access from anywhere. And, above all, from any device. With cloud computing, information is no longer only in the office, so mobility and flexibility in terms of the worker's work environment are benefited (either for work or to serve customers). This is one of the major advantages of cloud computing. Likewise, in ODOO we do not have to worry about making backups, since the cloud itself performs them automatically and, most importantly, with secure encryption that is proof against any type of hacker attack.

As ODOO is based on cloud computing, workers can share applications, information and documents at high speed. In addition. This results in greater internal communication within the company, either among employees or with suppliers and customers. One of the major benefits of this is that the negotiation and sales processes can be greatly streamlined.

- **Open Source**

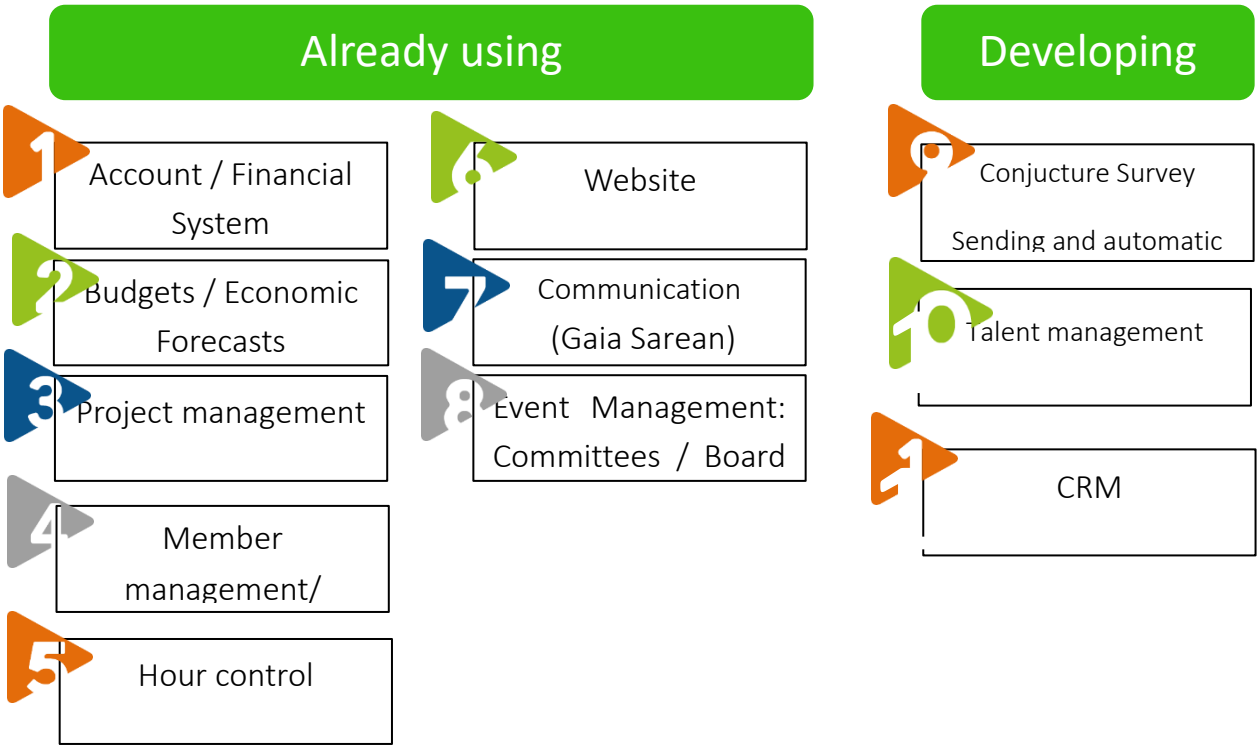
ODOO is based on Open Source, which means that the source code of the software is delivered. By having access to the code, companies can use it to develop themselves or third parties. They can also add functionalities that have been developed by other users in the community. It is a benefit from the users, because as it is Open Source, the company is not linked to any party, which means that if the user is not pleased with the services offered by the developer, it is easier to change it and choose another company. Actually, this is the example of GAIA that in the middle of the integration the provider needed to be replaced and it did not cause too many problems. The dependence on third parties is avoided.

- **Constantly updating**

ODOO offers automatic updates based on the experience and requirements of the millions of users who use it. Thus, having the latest updates facilitates the use of cloud computing by not having to install any new version. Also new modules might be launched and it is really easy to users start using these additional applications.

ODOO has a huge range of possibilities and modules for the needs of any kind of entities. Each user may use those needed at any moment. It is very easy to upgrade and integrate new modules at any time

MODULES BEING USED



As mentioned, ODOO has a very big range of possibilities. From these GAIA is using the most accurate ones for clusters which work in a great way:

- **Account and financial system:** all the accounting and the management of financials are implemented in ODOO.
- **Budgets and economic forecasts:** it allow to make future provisions
- **Project management:** it allow the management of all aspects related to all project from the organizations, from each of the tasks to the economical parts
- **Member management:** it helps to have a database of all cluster members in one location and accessible to everyone with rights. It also helps to "characterize" and have all the relevant information of the company. It can be used to find collaborations and areas of interest among all the partners.
- **Hour control:** it has a module helping to allocate the hours of the personnel to each of the projects and to control the entry and exit of employees.
- **Website:** everything related to the website is also done in ODOO, where the website can be updated, the information and news of the members can be included and needed sections can be created in an easy way.
- **Communication:** all the activities related with the communication with cluster members can be done using ODOO, such as the internal newsletter, organization of events and sharing the invitations and creation of email marketing campaigns.
- **Event management:** this module help to create new events such as board meetings and internal committees where anyone invited to them (thanks to the characterization) might have access to the relevant and updated information to any of the events generated.

In case of GAIA these are the main use of ODOO at the moment, but new features will be developed in the near future which are very relevant and interesting for clusters:

- **Surveys:** surveys to know and make some studies thanks to the replies of cluster members in topics of interest
- **Talent management:** module to get CV-s from students or unemployed people and who are aiming to work in the companies of GAIA.
- **CRM:** to have the registration with all the services and communications with the cluster members in a visible and unique way.

These are the main modules considered until now, but in the future some other additionals might be needed.

PRIZING ODOO

As ODOO is based in Cloud, it brings significant cost savings. Investing in software licenses or IT infrastructure is a thing of the past. In addition, since cloud computing does not require any special hardware, the energy consumption derived from the use of equipment or servers and even technical personnel is reduced. Since cloud computing has affordable costs, an SME can afford to buy a few licenses to use the cloud, while a multinational can buy hundreds. Either way, both will be able to use the services equally. Moreover, if at a certain time of the year more storage is needed, it is entirely possible to expand it immediately.

The cost of Odoo is free and without limitations in its Community edition, where the huge community of +16,000 developers shape and continuously improve the software.

The company Odoo S.A, offers a paid edition based on Odoo Community, with some extra modules and functionalities. This version has a monthly cost for each module used (about 20€/module), and for each user (about 10€/user).

Both versions are compatible with each other. Odoo Community can be implemented by any consulting firm, but to access Odoo Enterprise you must go to an Odoo partner, whose knowledge and best practices are verified and tested.

➔ Pricing plan of ODOO: https://www.odoo.com/pricing-plan

3.6 SCS Cluster

BEST PRACTICES

Business Model

Visibility & reputation

Innovation project labelling

Access to network of experts and to public funding

SCS has set up a formalised and proven process which facilitates the access to public funding to their members' innovation projects. More than funding, the label allows project leaders – most of the time SMEs – to gain visibility and recognition of their innovation by a commission of technology and market experts, who provides valuable expertise and network of contacts.

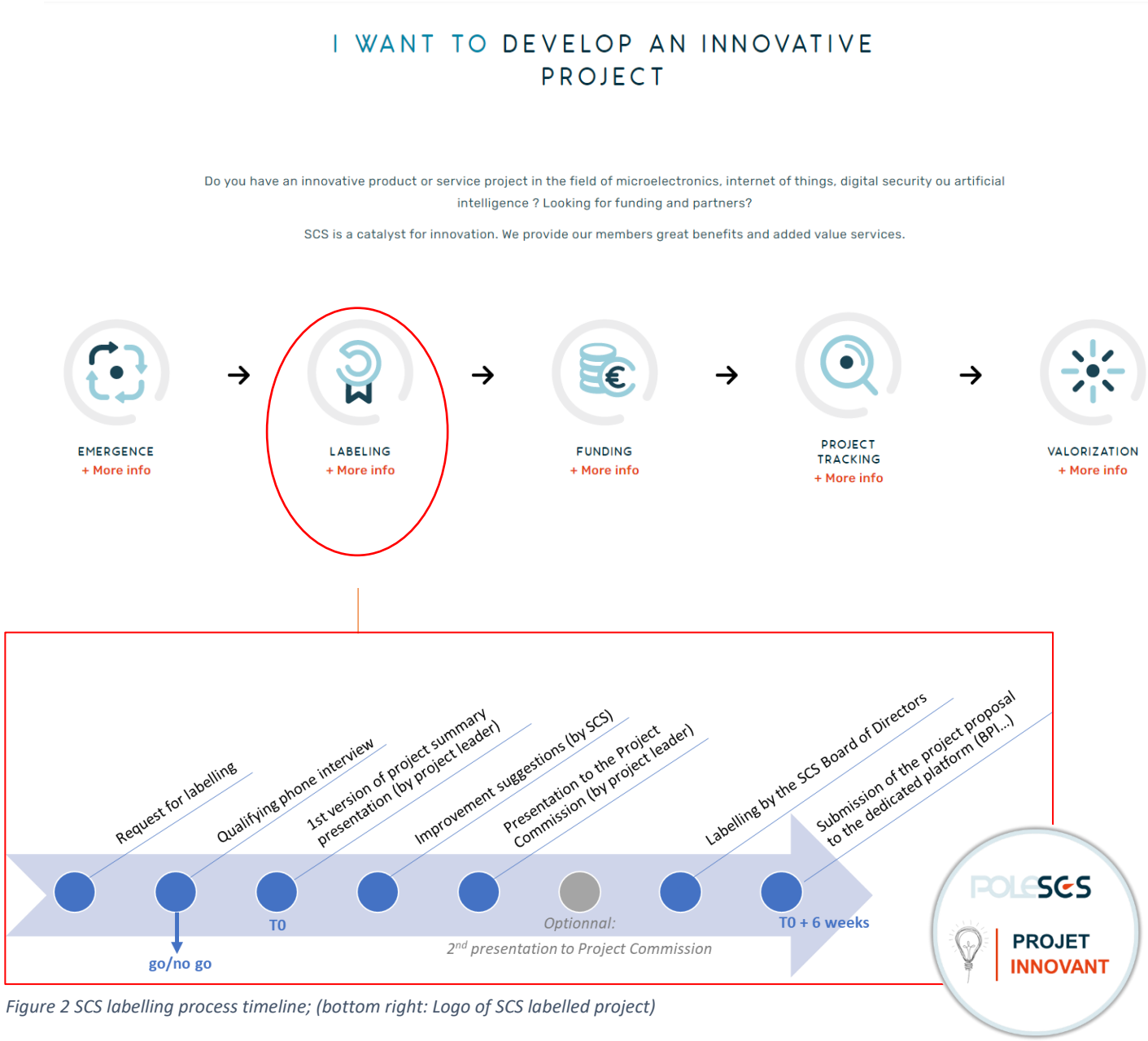


Figure 2 SCS labelling process timeline; (bottom right: Logo of SCS labelled project)

Co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union

The process lasts 2 months in average and consists of several key steps and several iterative steps before labeling:

1. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

The project leader sends a project summary document to SCS which verifies the eligibility of the project with regard to the funder's specifications and SCS's labelling rules. The financial capacities of the bearer and partners are also verified. If the project is eligible, the project leader receives a PPT presentation frame of the project, which he prepares for presentation to the SCS project commission.

2. SUPPORT TO PROJECT PROPOSAL

Before, during and after the process, the project leader and/or partners are accompanied by the SCS team to improve and build their file. SCS offers many services such as advice and recommendations on the content of the file (state of the art, locks, markets, partners, budget, ...), research and proposals of partners, entry of files and documents on dematerialized platforms, presentation of projects to communities and co-financiers, verification of financial capacities and advice, free provision if necessary of specialized consultants to provide help on points specific, provision of market data, etc.

3. SCS PROJECT COMMISSION[3]

REVIEW No. 1

The project leader presents his project face-to-face according to the format requested from the SCS projects commission for about 45 minutes. The presentation is in interactive format with exchanges. Following this presentation, the experts fill out a voting grid with comments that formalize written feedback including the positive points and areas for improvement to be made to the project. The generic criteria* of the voting grid can be adapted and/or supplemented according to the specificities of the calls for projects. If the voting grid with the consideration of comments reaches a level greater than or equal to 3 (rating of the project commission on a scale of 1 to 5 on about 20 criteria grouped into 4 groups) the project committee pronounces a positive opinion for the label. In the event of a negative opinion, the project leader has the opportunity to participate in a second review. A written return is sent to the bearer with the result of the notice and the corresponding comments

REVIEW N° 2 SCS PROJECT COMMISSION: VOTE AND OPINION OF LABELING

The bearer returns to present to the SCS projects commission face-to-face the improvements requested following the 1st review, for about 30 minutes. Following this presentation, the experts fill in a voting grid again with comments and the project committee pronounces a final positive or negative opinion for the label. A written return is sent to the bearer with the result of the review and the corresponding comments.

[3] See the composition of the SCS project Commission here: https://www.pole-scs.org/en/offers/innovation/labeling/

4. FORMAL VOTE OF THE SCS BOARD

The operational team presents a summary of each project with the opinion of the projects committee, the summary of votes and comments. On the basis of the recommendations of the projects commission, the division's board votes according to the statutory rules and decides whether or not to issue a formal label.

This process is supported by SCS's innovation operational teams and a project commission of up to **15 members** , with the following characteristics:

1. Belongs to an SCS member entity
2. Has a strong experience in innovative projects and has participated in one or more collaborative R&D projects

The composition is balanced with representatives of large industrial groups, SMEs and Research laboratories. Each representative is subject to confidentiality via a confidentiality agreement with SCS. Preparatory and conclusion documents are exchanged through a secure platform. Each expert completes a voting grid including criteria adapted to the different calls for projects concerned. The votes are anonymised and averaged and constitute the final basis for assessing the projects.

The process is fully described on the SCS website and presented regularly at information meetings (4 per year minimum). It is based on labelling specifications that describe the different stages, conditions and criteria for labelling. This document can be downloaded from the website.

**Generic criteria of the Voting grid*

Project content - Innovative aspects
Clarity and good Problem identification
Description of proposed innovation(s)
Description and positioning in relation to the state of the art
Degree of disruption and proposed innovation (low: 1 - strong: 5)
Sufficient technological readiness *(only for development projects)*
Strategic aspects
Adequacy with regard to the strategic axes and the ecosystem of the cluster, effects on the territory
Environmental impact, eco-conditional aspects
Strategic nature for the project leader
Structuring aspect with regard to CIMPACA technological platforms and / or CIU Santé *(if use of PT or CIU note = 4, otherwise 3)*
Co-labeling (with 1 pole, note= *4; with more than one pole, note=5)*

Construction of the project
Organisation and structuring of the project
Clarity of deliverables and expected results
Ability of the leader to carry out the project well
Adequate project budget
Potential value creation
Description and attractiveness *(size and growth)* of target markets
Strategy and commercial positioning
Relevance of the business model
Creation of turnover and employment
Incentive effect of the aid
Favorable label opinion if no eliminatory mark and if averages of each chapter >=3 *Scale: 1: mediocre, 2: fair, 3: good, 4: very good, 5: excellent*

How does it contribute to the Cluster's Business Model?

For each financed project supported through the labelling process, SCS Cluster obtains a success fee, which depends on the grant amount.

Main advantages for the project leader:

- Access to a pool of reliable experts
- Visibility to corporations and potential clients/partners
- Facilitated access to public funding
- Recognition by experts and funding bodies
- Gain of time

Technology Working Groups

Animation of pools of technology experts for technological watch, strategy roadmaps review and excellence recognition.

SCS facilitates its ecosystem of innovative players with means of events allowing focused exchanges on its strategic technologies (AI, IoT, Cybersecurity, Microelectronics), technological expertise, qualified networking and the emergence of innovation projects.

SCS animates 4 Working Groups on each of its strategic technologies – AI/Big data, IoT, Cybersecurity, and Microelectronics – composed of the technology experts members of SCS (academicals, corporations, SMEs and other businesses). The facilitation of these Working Groups takes the form of several activities:

Working Group Events

1 or 2 event per year per technology

Open to SCS members, and to all with fee

Working Group event consist in one-day conferences or workshops with a panel of technology-experts sharing knowledge about technological trends and main pain points. These conferences are always related to a specific theme depending on the main trends and challenges of the moment. They also include B2B activities at the agenda (networking lunch, SME showroom).

The presentations made during the Working Groups are available to all SCS members via a dedicated section of the intranet.

Figure 3 Microelectronics Working Group, 09/05/2022 in Gardanne, France

➔ Promotional video of SCS working Groups: https://vimeo.com/364773621

WebTech Webinars

1 WebTech webinar per month

Open to all

Webinars with up to 3 technology providers presenting a specific challenge related to its technological expertise. The goal is again to animate technological watch, and to provide visibility to SCS members, but also to provide technological expertise from external players of the ecosystem.

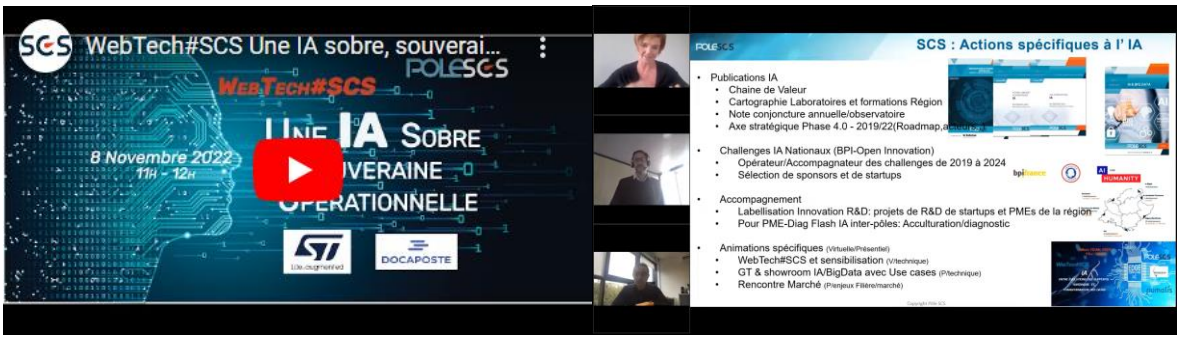


Figure 4 Example of WebTech "Operational sober and and sovereign AI" with ST Microelectronis and Docaposte, on 8/11/2022

➔ SCS WebTech webinars replays are available on SCS website: https://www.pole-scs.org/publications/videos/

Updates of technology roadmaps

Every 4 years + in case of core impacting economical context

Figure 5 SCS technology roadmaps update process timeline

1. Kick Off meeting – short committee, M1

The process starts with the constitution of short expert committees in each technology. These committees count 3 to 5 experts each, with academics, SME and corporation representatives. SCS innovation & strategy manager then holds a Kick Off meeting with the short committees, in order to:

- Validate the roadmaps' format and update process.
- Set up the new context and identify the main fields of updates.

After this meeting, the experts collaboratively work on the roadmaps' draft documents to include their amendments.

Figure 6 SCS technology roadmaps update process (2021 COVID-19 impact update). From left to right: Technologies, Deliverable, Main impacts and perspectives, Composition of short expert committees,
Source https://youtube.com/watch?v=YbdLB73JRqc&si=EnSIkaIECMiOmarE

2. Plenary meeting – Working Group Event, M3

Two months after the Kick Off, a plenary meeting is hold (one per technology) – consisting in an extra Working Group event dedicated to the roadmaps' update. During these Working Groups, the new roadmaps draft are presented to SCS members. All SCS members are invited to contribute and to submit their visions.

After this event, the short expert committees are going through a new amendment phase to take into consideration the inputs and highlights from the Working Group.

3. Presentation and validation vote - SCS General Assembly, M6

Two months after the Working Group event, the final versions of the roadmaps are officially presented to SCS General Assembly for validation by all members, before publication.

Frequent re-assessment of each technologies value chain and identification of gaps and needs for new players

Flexible process for frequent review of the cluster strategy, conducted by SCS members, based on SMEs, corporation and academic research collaboration.

- Visibility provided to expert members at Working Group events & webinars
- Visibility & acknowledgement provided through the contribution to technology white papers, roadmaps, ecosystem mappings/catalogues, and other publications
- Generation of B2B networking, tech partnerships and collaborative projects

Conclusion

The major challenge shared by all EXCITE clusters through the five explored cluster management areas is the engagement of the cluster members, which is at the basis of the cluster's reason for being, from the definition of a consensus strategy tackling the interests of the majority of the players, to the profitability of the performed services, through the target's reach and impacts and performance monitoring.

To achieve the improvement of their practices in all the areas which we went through in this assessment, the EXCITE consortium is exchanging each other's practices which appear to be diverse, through training activities, dedicated workshops during study visits, learning tandems, and the elaboration of joint-services.