



VIDA

value-added innovation
in food chains

Training 1.- How to innovate successfully in an international context

Additional materials



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Chapter 1

Summay of the online training
course

1. Environments for boosting the collaboration in VIDA regions

Clusters provide added value to SMEs, as they provide easy access to markets of interest to the client SMEs, provide additional support in building innovation capacity, information on finance opportunities and finding (launching) customers.

Moreover, there are numerous networks that support businesses, some are more general in scope, other have a specific industry they focus on. Learn about how those networks and organizations can be beneficial to you.

2. How to build a trustworthy environment

What is actually needed in order to build a trustworthy environment with international partners, stakeholders, shareholder, peers, family and friends? Simply speaking you use common sense, and in the InnoSup VIDA project we have experience and possibility to share our knowledge from successful projects. The classic perception and often the most common mistake is that you tend to assume that everyone is similar to you, is honest, communicates and have more or less the same goals as you, which is why we often tend to prefer working with likeminded people. We strongly advice to have an open mind in the working environment and differentiate with different partners. Pay attention to the goals; make sure that they are achievable, and you have the right motivation for you and the partners in order to be successful. This also counts for the ongoing levelling of expectations, which can never be done too often and it is always best to consider writing them down instead of verbally levelling of expectations, which has a risk for being misinterpreted. Use the tools available, which could be for example, Lol's, NDA's, collaboration agreements like the consortium agreement and that we currently have at free disposition for the companies to download and utilize. They only need to log-in on the website to gain access to the templates on. <http://cleansolutions.dk/da/toolkit/>

Organise yourself with different tools that are available. Utilise the tools available that you feel comfortable with and would most likely include written agendas for the meetings and send out before in order for documents to read by the participants beforehand. Send out minutes with decision points and next steps. Utilizing of Grantt charts can come in handy. If you enhance brainstorming and kindly make sure that the people also understand the scope and the conditions of the sessions. Give priority to building a trustworthy environment is often a very important part. Usually for 99% for the cases it will be the money that the partners will earn that has a clear priority, however also making sure, if possible, that the people or partners are not overloaded. Keep a Plan B organised, just in case something does not go as planned. Remember to reach

out for scaling the opportunities, which can you contribute to the innovation and successful environment and, if shared, a higher ROI for everyone. Create an environment where successes are celebrated and always keep a budget for combining business and social gatherings. If you want stronger and more innovative possibilities, keep in mind to work hard, communicate, motivate, organise and structure work with a range of diversified people that will enhance and create the better environment with more innovative results

When working or building an international consortium (either for an EU project or a commercial project) the following issues are key:

- Be transparent – be clear about what you can offer and about your motivation. This helps setting clear expectations among all partners.
- Be honest – Do not cheat. Honesty can be hard and might be difficult at moments, but it helps in building the credibility of your organization as project partner.
- Keep an open mind – Every project is different moreover there can be cultural differences between partners that could make collaboration more difficult, keeping an open mind may help overcome those issues.

3. How to write a good proposal

- It needs to match your objectives. Do not just do it for the money
- Select and prioritise – there are multiple programmes, setting priorities and objectives helps you identify the most relevant programmes
- Find support that could be helpful, e.g. clusters, governmental bodies, consultancy agencies.
- Start on time and prepare well. Solid preparation is key
- Focus on the benefits to the EU, rather than the benefits to your company
- Submitting a proposal for the first time, register with the European Commission to receive your PIC code, this can take up to 5 weeks.

4. Next steps in case of no success

- Learn from the feedback and or contact your local or national contact point. For EU subsidies the national government has often so called NCP's that can provide you with all necessary information.
- Find out about other funding scheme's that might welcome your proposal.
- Don't forget about the good part. You will learn from the feedback but most importantly, building a consortium expands your network and may help your business also outside the scope of a European project.

5. Good practices in VIDA awarded projects

- Make sure you meet the criteria, such as TRL level and a clear benefit to the Food value chain.
- Be clear about your project and objectives, timeline, role of partners and outcomes. Provide suitable arguments supporting your application. Have in mind that you are presenting an innovative solution and the evaluators maybe do not deeply know these solutions.
- Answer the questions. The questions provide guidance and are linked to the evaluation criteria, use all the space provided in the forms for explain each paragraph. Answering the questions thus increases your chances on a sufficient scoring. It is also very important to pay special attention to the budget, detail the information and consider the budget requirements.
- Cross-regional consortia tend to write more successful proposals than purely regional or national consortia. Looking for relevant partners outside your direct network may pay off – you can ask your local cluster for support.
- Cross-sectoral: VIDA will award projects that bring solutions to the water-energy efficiency challenges on the food sector, also promoting the KET integration for these solutions.

VIDA Calls Tips:

- Look for the support to have an external reader to revise that your proposal is clearly written.
- Pay special attention to the TRL explanation: provide enough evidence to prove that the technology is at a TRL level between 6 to 8 at the beginning of the project.
- Bring solutions to the food sector challenges. Check the [challenges](#) that the VIDA project has identified.
- 62% of the awarded projects were cross-regional, but building a cross-regional consortium only makes sense in case of adding value.



Chapter 2

Best practices in VIDA clusters

6. Water Alliance

The Water Alliance is a unique partnership of public and private companies, government agencies and knowledge institutes involved in water technology in the Netherlands. The Water Alliance focuses on innovative and sustainable water technology that can be used worldwide. It brings together a complete chain of innovation for water technology, from first idea, research & development, specialised laboratories, a water application centre, various demosites, launching customers to international applications with commercial companies. Indeed from knowledge to business. It is driven by the idea that technological development and innovation is needed to develop new markets and thus create new business opportunities for the water technology industry. In this way the Netherlands will become the European Water Technology Hub, with its focal point at the WaterCampus Leeuwarden.

Best Practice #1 Active support of innovative technologies

In order to support the companies with the most innovative technologies in the Netherlands in their business development, Water Alliance has established the Water Alliance Innovation Stimulation Award (WIS Award). This award gives the winning company a full year support worth € 10.000,- in promotion and business development. Every year the 10 most innovative technologies will compete in a 2-stage competition. During the competition Water Alliance promotes all 10 technologies. In the first stage the companies compete for the votes of their peer water tech entrepreneurs during a pitch round at a major water tech event in the Netherlands. After this vote, the five technologies/companies with the most votes will go to stage 2. In the second stage, the 5 finalists will pitch their technologies again, this time for peers as well as an jury of experts with a track record in science and business. The vote of the jury and the votes of the water tech entrepreneurs (each 50 per cent) will decide the winner of the WIS-Award. Over the years, the WIS Award has grown into an important award focussing specifically on innovative technologies developed by SME's.

Best Practice #2 Extending networks and business opportunities through cluster collaboration

Clusters in different regions know the key challenges in their region. The Water Alliance has been working together with a Korean cluster to bring companies together. A specific example is the case of a company in the monitoring industry (Company X).

Over several years Water Alliance has established a good connection with the Korean water cluster. During a visit of the Business Development manager to Korea, he was informed about a company facing monitoring issues. Seeing opportunities for Company X, the BD manager asked for a meeting with the Korean company to whom he pitched company X. Following the pitch by the BD manager, there was much interest in more information on the company. After several

exchanges and support from the Water Alliance, the CEOs of the Korean and Dutch company met to discuss further collaboration.

This is just one of the many examples of how the networks of clusters can reinforce the opportunities for companies in both cluster's networks

7. BalticNet PlasmaTech

BalticNet-PlasmaTec (BNPT) is an international cluster since the foundation (German-Polish cooperation) in 2006. Since then, more than 70 members from 17 different countries joined the cluster. So in total BalticNet-PlasmaTec has partners in 17 different countries mostly in Europe but also in Brazil, India and Russia. With the help of these members, BNPT can offer internationalisation services to all these countries. The services including: contact to companies, R&D institutes, universities and stakeholder; information about possible funding in the countries; local contact partner and organising fair visits.

Furthermore, BNPT together with 3 other clusters (Nanoprogress, InovCluster, Plastiwin) established in 2018 an European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) in Prague, Czech Republic. A European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) is a type of legal entity of the European corporate law and it is designed to make it easier for companies in different countries to do business together or to form consortia to take part in EU programmes. The main aim of the EEIG is to reinforce international cluster cooperation to better support SME access to global value chains. The vision of the EEIG is to combine different experiences, know-how and value chains in order to boost business and innovation. The mission is to run a sustainable EEIG with high added value services for SMEs and innovation actors and engage them into long-term business and R&D cooperation with partners and consumers from Europe. These are the services:

- Access to funding
- Finding cooperation partners
- Help to enter new markets
- Motivational and awareness-raising seminars for internationalisation & internationalisation training.
- Market intelligence.
- Fact-finding missions.
- Providing the access to the international cross sectoral collaboration platform.

- Trade missions.
- Peer mentoring programme.
- SME direct support.
- Creation and support of working groups focused on specific target market.
- Means to support the internationalisation of cluster's affiliated SMEs.
- Supporting the preparation and implementation of the Internationalization strategy.
- Collaboration with government bodies.
- Funding and other opportunities.

8. Cluster for the efficient use of water – ZINNAE

ZINNAE, the cluster for the efficient use of water is a non-profit association that works to offer solutions to water security challenges in order to build a sustainable and resilient future, working under the principles of the circular economy and intelligent society. The organization integrates 40 full members (60% SME), including the most innovative and active entities related to water sector in the north-east Spanish region of Aragón, considering the quadruple-helix: companies (manufacturers and suppliers involved in all the water value chain) research and education centers, and local, regional and national public administrations, such as Zaragoza City Council and the Ebro river Basin Authority.

ZINNAE participated in the design of the RIS3 Strategy that highlights three priority areas of action: Resource efficiency; Quality of life (Food&Health) and Sustainable Mobility. Aragonese Clusters headquarters is based in the European Center for Enterprises and Innovation, based in the Engineering Campus of the University of Zaragoza; supported by the Regional development agency, the eight regional clusters share a co-working area to encourage networking and innovative collaboration. ZINNAE and the Aragonese Regional Government launched in October 2018 the Thematic Area “Water Smart Territories” for industrial modernization with the leading support of two other regions Centre Val de Loire (France) and Fryesland (The Netherlands) in the

For boosting the networking and collaboration between their partners, Zinnae is organized in 3 workshops, (periodically developed 1-2 per year) that aim to promote the innovation and internationalization of its partners also promoting their collaboration.

- Internationalization and business development: The aim of this workshop is to define and develop activities that increase the international business of ZINNAE partners, both companies and R&D&i centres.



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- Innovation commission: its purpose is to identify and develop innovative projects between its partners. Within the framework of this commission the main private and public calls for R&D, will be monitored.
- Communication commission: This commission works to promote the visibility of its partners, highlight the relevance of the water sector and identify its main areas of work in each moment.

In addition to these activities, ZINNAE organized every year (October-November) its Strategic Immersion Workshop, which objective is to tackle and discuss relevant issues for the water sector, and strategic areas of work in water management.



Chapter 3

Title of the Chapter

