

RAPIDE NEWS

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RAPIDE

CREATING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS: FIRST WORKING SUMMIT HELD IN CARDIFF

The Cardiff working summit (WS1), a key component of the first phase of the project, encouraged partners to actively engage with each other on the theme of creating effective partnerships for innovation. Discussions were prompted by the case study Accelerate Clusters, which was presented by the Welsh host partner as summarized below.

WS1 was an opportunity for the 12 partner regions to discuss and compare experiences on partnerships based on practical examples, to exchange views on what has worked and what was more challenging and to draw out some general lessons learnt across the partnership that will feed into their respective action plans.

Networking with a purpose – assessment of Accelerate Clusters

Huw Bryer, from consultancy Old Bell 3 who evaluated Accelerate Clusters, talked to delegates about the project's partnerships and networks and its membership system. Six industry-led clusters were set up to support this particular sector: end of life vehicles, alternative fuels and power trains, collaborative logistics, motorsport, design and manufacture, new vehicles. The findings of the evaluation showed that whilst the birth of the initiative was slow, the policy context and funding framework provided support necessary for it to succeed. The initiative facilitated multi-level partnership, most crucially between businesses.

Partnerships in action – Minibus case study

Kevin Hammett, from the Welsh Assembly Government, and Jonathan Williams, from the University of Glamorgan, presented the Minibus case study, a University led project supported in the context of the Accelerate Clusters initiative. Whilst the diversity of the partnership was described as a challenge – as some of the technology used for the project existed but not necessarily in the same context – it is nevertheless considered a success on several levels.



Working group sessions

Delegates were also invited to discuss what they have learnt from both the good practice posters and the case study in three smaller groups. The following factors were seen as crucial for the success of projects from the discussions that took place during the sessions:

- more flexible definition of output/ outcome Indicators are needed
- trust lies at the heart of every successful partnership and has to be built carefully
- a common problem or challenge is a good starting point for a strong partnership
- an intermediary body is useful when getting public and private partners working together and understanding each others' language
- political engagement was identified as a key component of successful partnerships



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Dear RAPIDE Partners,

As you already know, I took up the challenge of managing RAPIDE at the beginning of February. I want to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to work with you on what is an exciting project.



Projects such as RAPIDE are becoming more important than ever. South West RDA Chair Juliet Williams made it clear in her presentation in Patras that 'we are today in the midst of a technological and social revolution. Regions with strong innovation support structures will be strengthened and more competitive after the current crisis.'

Our project is about strengthening our regions, it's about the business of business – exchanging and applying knowledge and information, what innovators, academics and companies can do when they work together and how the public sector can support them. Our third, and final, working summit in Bath at the end of April, will focus on the role of public bodies in minimising the exposure of innovative businesses to risk

RAPIDE is one of the first projects of its kind in Europe, where European regions work directly with the Commission and focus on delivery. It's not easy doing new things, especially when they are challenging and have to be done fast! But we are up to the job and well named - a 'rapid,' water inbetween a smoothly flowing stream and a waterfall, indicates this philosophy of speeding up but not falling down!

As a Fast Track Network we are in regular contact with a number of Commission DGs, including Enterprise, Regional Policy, and Information Society. This is helping us to drive forward RAPIDE's work and giving a high profile to our network. We showcased RAPIDE at the Regions for Economic Change conference in Brussels earlier this month, where three of our partner regions presented our work as a fast track project so far.

I am looking forward to working with you all as we start to develop the Regional Action Plans.

Benjamin Kucher
RAPIDE Project Manager



“One of the crucial issues for all partnerships is trust – we’ve built that now in this network and the willingness to engage with each other openly and honestly is increasing all the time”
(Lorelei Hunt, Chair of the RAPIDE Steering Group)

Phil McVey (SW England), Sami Laakkonen (Lapland) and Malgorzata Wisniewska (Kujawsko-Pomorskie) presented the financial tools in their respective regional operational programmes. Their presentation demonstrated how differently funding can be used within different regions and boosted the discussion at the summit.

The remainder of the working summit was dedicated to poster and working group sessions aimed at distilling the main thoughts delegates would take home with them, which are as follows:

FINANCING IS CRITICAL AT PATRAS WORKING SUMMIT

On 12-13 February the RAPIDE working summit on financing innovation took place at the Patras Palace Hotel.

The RAPIDE partners met for the second working summit to analyse case studies, exchange expertise on financing innovation and make use of the input from regional development agencies, management authorities, and financing experts.

After experiences at the summit on effective partnerships in Cardiff, partners went further in interrogating and analysing their case studies. Networking sessions were also used effectively as an opportunity to learn more about each others regions and experiences.

Peter Groumpos, President and CEO of the Patras Science Park, spoke to partners about the linkages between research and innovation, entrepreneurship and education and the role of the public sector in this triangle.

Patrycja Szczygiel, Head of Strategic Planning for the Pomeranian Region in Poland, outlined in her presentation new ways of financing innovative and risky start ups, even with

European structural funds.

The host region case study, FANOS, was an integrated network of support services to SMEs in Western Greece. The work of the Western Greece Business Angels Network was presented by Dimitris Karayiannis, Director of the Business Innovation Centre, and Dimitris Diakodimitrou, from the Achaia Cooperative Bank in Patras.

This case study enabled the RAPIDE partners to experience at first hand how important trust between all actors is when establishing efficient support structures, including trust between all public partners, start up businesses and other engaged businesses.



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- **Trust:** this was once again identified as key to the successful completion of projects, and also for the RAPIDE network itself. Delegates felt a lot of progress had been made since the launch of the network in Torun, last October.
- **Risk:** how can we minimize risk in financing innovation? And how can the public sector help the private sector to manage its exposure to risk especially regarding technical innovation? These issues will be explored at the **third working summit in Bath, England on the 22-23 April 2009.**
- **Speed:** the often slow speed of financing projects is problematic, especially for innovation. Delegates see the acceleration of innovation funding as absolutely crucial.
- **Environment:** the right business environment is crucial – this doesn't just mean investments in infrastructure, but work to change attitudes is a key job for public bodies.

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