

REPORT

EIT Seminar on "Climate change mitigation and adaptation"

Madrid, 16 March 2009

Chaired by Prof. Julia E. King, Member of the EIT Governing Board, this EIT seminar focused on one of the thematic areas designated for the first two or three Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs): Climate change mitigation and adaptation.

1) Seminar facts

The EIT seminar on "Climate change mitigation and adaptation", which took place in Madrid on 16 March 2009, completed the series of thematic seminars that was held for each one of the three potential topics for the future Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). As for the previous two seminars, interest was high and the audience was a good reflection of the variety of actors involved in the knowledge triangle, with representatives from higher education, research, technology transfer, government and business.

2) Key outcomes

Climate change mitigation and adaptation as a topic for the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)

To set the scene for the seminar, Prof. Julia E. King presented the views of the Governing Board on 'Climate change mitigation and adaptation' as a KIC theme (the presentation can be downloaded from the EIT website at http://ec.europa.eu/eit/pastseminars_en.htm).

Sketching out the potential scope of this thematic area, Prof. King mentioned for the area of mitigation– by way of example: low carbon transport; forestry and farming; waste and landfill; energy efficiency devices; low energy/low emissions processes; and small scale carbon capture and storage. For the field of adaptation, potential topics include, again as examples, prediction and planning; weather and flood; crops and farming; infrastructure impact; resilient water sources. However, not only are these lists non-exhaustive, but there are also possible synergies with the two other KIC themes, i.e. Future information and communication society; and sustainable energy, and notably with the latter.

'Climate change mitigation and adaptation – sketching the thematic area

To shed further light on the topic from different angles, a number of keynote speakers from a variety of backgrounds shared their views on the challenges lying ahead in this field:

Climate change - the scale and urgency of the challenge

Professor Sir Brian Hoskins, Climate Change Committee member and Director of the Grantham Institute for Climate Change, Imperial College London

Adaptation – preparing for the new conditions

Esko Kivisaari, Deputy Managing Director, Federation of Finnish Financial Services

Mitigation – a renaissance lies ahead

Patrick Oliva, Executive Vice-President, Michelin

'Clean Tech' - climate change and new business opportunities

Pat Burtis, Investment Manager, Amadeus Capital Partners

Preparing for KICs: co-location centres

In a session dedicated more particularly to the KIC opportunity in the area of climate change, Prof. King highlighted the idea of co-location centres, which will be a key element of the KIC structure. KICs are expected to have, typically, four to six co-location centres or major 'nodes', where staff from different stakeholders come to work together. This will be a crucial element for the success of the KICs, since – in Prof. King's words – knowledge transfer is a "contact sport" where people need to meet face-to-face. Furthermore, each co-location centre should encompass a significant part of the innovation chain and actively reach out to other partners, such as local clusters of SMEs.

Selecting the KICs – Criteria and procedures

The co-location centres as well as other key features of the KICs are clearly outlined in the selection criteria for the KICs, which were published in early March. In this context, Prof. King highlighted the novelty and innovative nature of the KIC selection procedure, which will be carried out during the final quarter of 2009. A major advantage of the KIC selection procedure is its non-bureaucratic approach, making the submission of proposals simple, transparent and cost-effective. Proposals for KICs should not exceed 40 pages and will need to outline clearly a business plan and on the organisational, managerial and governance arrangements. The evaluation will be carried out in several steps by independent panels of external experts.

Discussing the KICs – moving towards a clearer understanding of the concept

In a second part, an open discussion with EIT Governing Board Members (chair: Dr. Martin Schuurmans, panel members: Prof. João Caração, Dr. Gołębiewska-Tataj, Prof. Julia E. King, Dr. Peter Tropschuh) addressed key features of the KICs, and helped to clarify several questions from the audience in relation to the preparations for the KIC partnerships.

Among the central questions discussed were:

- *Co-location centres:* When does a node 'qualify' as a co-location centre? The key point is that people in the larger part of the innovation chain/web can work together and make an impact. Furthermore, within a KIC, partners should be willing to let one of the centres 'lead the game'. This way, it can be a win-win situation for everyone, since the net result for all the other centres participating in the KIC is an enhanced quality of the activities.
- *Development of a KIC:* In an initial phase, could a KIC start from one node (i.e. co-location centre) and grow to include more nodes only later on? Generally speaking, the KICs are certainly not expected to be fully operational once they are selected. At the same time, while they can develop gradually, a core of mission-critical elements needs to be at the centre of setting up the KICs - such as co-location, finances, management. However, a KIC needs to be a dynamic concept. Along its life-time it can – and needs to – adapt to the changing environment in which it operates.
- *Incentives:* What is the incentive for knowledge triangle partnerships to collaborate within the framework of the EIT and not outside? It is not the financial incentive alone – the EIT funding will cover around 25% of the overall budget of a KIC over time – but rather the strategic leadership offered by the EIT. For instance, the EIT will be instrumental in improving the KICs along the way through the key performance indicators it will apply. Another example is the range of additional possibilities that will be provided by the EIT through its own activities as well as through facilitated access to funding through the EIT Foundation or other mechanisms.

Staying informed: next steps

The EIT is putting a strong accent on the entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education component of KICs. For this reason, an 'Entrepreneurship Seminar' will be organised in Wrocław (PL) on 6-7 May. Back-to-back to this meeting, an EIT Info Day for KIC proposers will be held on 8 May, also in Wrocław.

Moreover, in the run-up to the call for proposals for KICs, which is expected to be launched in April 2009, the EIT is working hard to ensure a maximum level of transparency and information. The EIT website will be the central information tool and is regularly updated: <http://eit.europa.eu>