

REPORT

EIT Seminar on "Shaping the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) - Sustainable Energy" Vienna, 16 February 2009

Chaired by Prof. Wolfgang Herrmann, Member of the EIT Governing Board and Executive Committee, this EIT seminar focused on one of the thematic areas designated for the first two to three Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs): Sustainable Energy.

1) Seminar facts

The EIT seminar on "Sustainable Energy" was the second in a row of three seminars on the themes of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities. Interest in the subject was extremely high, with demand for participation heavily exceeding places available. The final audience – just under 200 participants from over 20 countries - reflected very well the variety of actors involved in the knowledge triangle, with representatives from higher education, research, technology transfer, government and business. The latter made up about one quarter of the audience, thereby confirming a very positive trend of stable interest in the EIT from the private sector.

2) Key outcomes

Preparing for KICs: co-location centres

During the first part of the seminar, Prof. Herrmann presented the views of the Governing Board on the KICs and on 'Sustainable energy' as a KIC theme (the presentation can be downloaded from the EIT website at http://ec.europa.eu/eit/pastseminars_en.htm).

He stressed the idea of co-location centres, which will have to be an intrinsic feature of the KIC fabric. Co-location centres are meant to be four to six major 'nodes' within a KIC, where staff from different stakeholders come to work together, face-to-face and which link other partners, such as local clusters of SMEs. Furthermore, each co-location centre should encompass a significant part of the innovation chain.

Preparing for KICs: synergies with other themes

As regards the 'sustainable energy' topic, Prof. Herrmann pointed out that there were significant areas of synergies with the KIC topic of 'climate change adaptation and mitigation', e.g. carbon capture and storage; energy efficiency; alternative fuels; energy storage; the electric economy: heating vehicles etc; or the hydrogen economy. He stressed that such overlap was not only expected, but seen as a positive element of having KICs on these two critical topics. For the sake of focus and for the purpose of the assessment process, KIC applicants will however need to identify the central topic area (sustainable energy *or* climate change adaptation and mitigation) for their application.

'Sustainable energy' – sketching the thematic area

The EIT had also invited several keynote speakers to set the scene for discussion. Speakers represented a complementarity of sectors and organisms within the 'sustainable energy' theme, in order to provide different angles on the subject matter:

Sustainable Energy Generation, Storage and Distribution: Challenges, Limitations and scope of New Technologies -

Dr. Henrik Bindselev, Director – Risø National Laboratory for Sustainable Energy Technical University of Denmark

Energy Based on Renewable Resources -

Prof. Wolfgang Palz, Chairman of the World Council on Renewable Energies (WCRE)

Energy Efficient Mobility: Challenging Technologies for Tomorrow's Transportation Systems

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Steiger, External Relations, Head of Future Technology Volkswagen AG

Energy Efficient Buildings: Sustainable Technologies for Avant-Garde Housing Systems
Dr. Stefano Carosio, Research & Innovation Division Manager, D'Appolonia

Energy Efficient Chemical Conversion and Production: Technologies towards efficient use of resources
Dr. Jan M. van der Eijk, Group Chief Technology Officer, Royal Dutch Shell

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

During the second part of the seminar, an open discussion with EIT Governing Board Members (chair: Prof. Wolfgang Herrmann, co-chairs: Dr. Gołębiowska-Tataj, Dr. Peter Tropschuh) addressed key features of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities, and helped to clarify several questions from the audience in relation to the preparations for the KIC partnerships.

Among the central questions discussed were:

- *Thematic focus of proposals:* The GB emphasised that overlap between the KIC themes – and in particular between the 'sustainable energy' and 'climate change adaptation and mitigation' topics – was intentional. The KIC quality also needs to come from a smart design of these synergies. Moreover, the GB called upon industry and business partners in a KIC to help focus the KIC proposals. The more concrete the proposal, the more likely a strong participation from the private sector will be.
- *Co-location centres:* The concept of co-location centres as presented by the GB triggered several questions, notably as regards their number and the overall number of partners in a KIC. The GB stressed that the concept of co-location centres should not be seen as a restriction but rather as an intelligent way of organising a KIC and making it work. To achieve their aims, KICs cannot be organised as a simple and wide-spread network of a large number of partners, but need certain 'gravity nodes'. In the Governing Board's view, there should be four to six such nodes (the co-location centres), only in exceptional cases should there be more. However, this should not be misunderstood as a general limitation on the overall number of partners in a KIC.
- *EIT label:* Both the Governing Board (GB) and university representatives from the audience were fully confident that participating universities will introduce an 'EIT label' for degrees and diplomas. Such a label will be a brand of excellence for higher education institutions that are partners in a KIC.
- *(Geographical) scope of partnerships:* The inclusion of partners from outside the EU is not only possible, but clearly desirable when setting up the KICs. The EIT cannot be limited to the Europe if its ambition is to boost innovation to world-class levels. As regards the so-called 'new Member States' of the EU, the GB confirmed that it would not give any specific indications in this direction, but that new partnerships were clearly encouraged. While building on existing excellence partnerships, KICs should not be limited to such existing collaborations only.
- *Setting up a KIC proposal:* In view of the KIC selection procedure, and to ensure a sustainable success of individual KICs, a well-founded business plan is of utmost importance. Such a business plan will not only have to address questions of long-term strategy and funding, but also include for example the planning for making the KIC operational/phasing in.
- *Funding: eligible costs:* The GB made clear that there will certainly be guidance in the text of the call for KICs on the type of activities the money from the EIT budget can be spent on. The GB estimates that around 25% of funding of a KIC can be covered by the dedicated EIT budget; the remaining 75% will come from other sources such as private sector investment, national funds or other EU programmes, for example the 7th Framework Programme or the Structural Funds.

Staying informed: next steps

A last thematic seminar on "Shaping the KICs – Climate change mitigation and adaptation" will be held in Madrid on 16 March 2009.

In the run-up to the call for proposals for KICs, which is expected 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>