CRN
Cluster Research Network

Clustering
on the Island of Ireland:
A Gap Analysis

CLUSTER RESEARCH NETWORK:
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Dr Eoin Magennis and Clodagh Barry

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CLUSTERCENTRE · Ulster University Economic Policy Centre · MTU Munster Technological University · UCC University College Cork, Ireland Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh · supported by InterTradeIreland

ACCELERATE GDT

PROJECT KICK-OFF – April 27 @ 11.15

Clustering on the Island of Ireland: A Gap Analysis

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https://intertradeireland.com/assets/publications/ITI-CRN-Report.pdf

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DEVELOPMENT OF CLUSTER POLICY & PRACTICE

REPORT
CONTEXT
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VIEWS ON
THE
GROUND

OECD:

"at both the national and regional basis the key concepts that underlie the cluster approach continue to be at the centre of policy formation"

IRELAND:

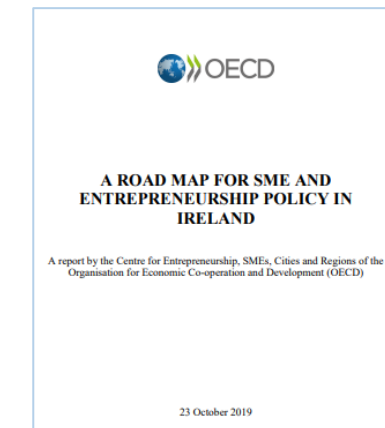Development and promotion of clusters - *increasingly* become instrumental and accepted part of enterprise policy
AND
as a practical policy tool slower to gain traction among policy (makers) than in other advanced economies

OECD Studies on SMEs and Entrepreneurship
SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland

OECD

Report of the SME Taskforce:
National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan

An ambitious long-term strategic blueprint for Irish SMEs and entrepreneurs

January 2021

OECD

A ROAD MAP FOR SME AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP POLICY IN IRELAND

A report by the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Cities and Regions of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

23 October 2019

Department for the Economy

A 10X ECONOMY

NORTHERN IRELAND'S DECADE OF INNOVATION

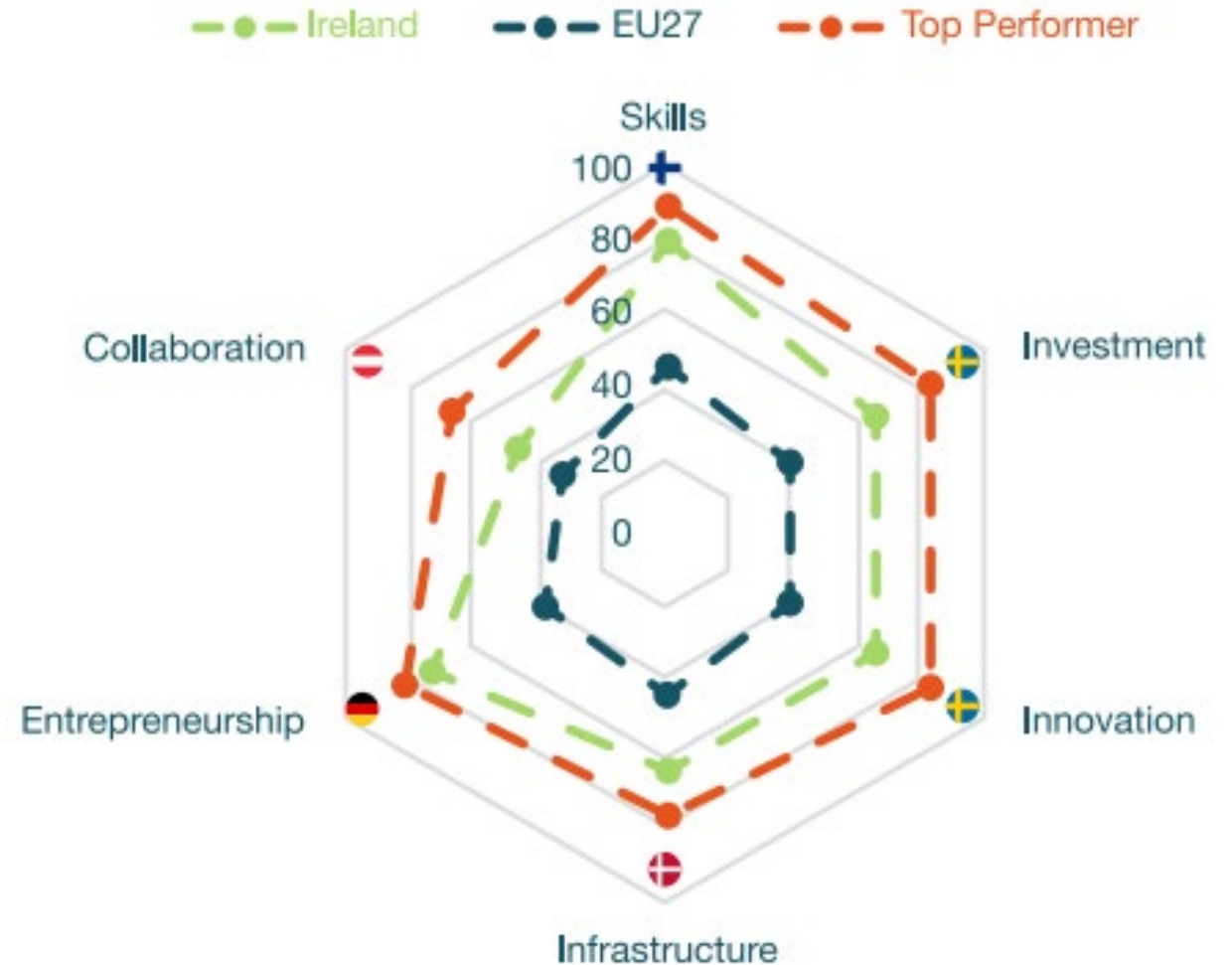## COLLABORATION IS KEY

REPORT
CONTEXT
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DATA

Figure 1: Enabling conditions for Advanced Technologies for Industry; Ireland, EU average and top performing country, 2020
Source: Southern Regional Assembly (2021)

REPORT
CONTEXT
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DATA

Figure 1: Enabling conditions for Advanced Technologies for Industry; Ireland, EU average and top performing country, 2020
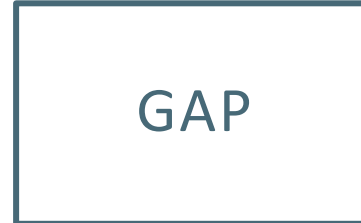*Source*: Southern Regional Assembly (2021)

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RESEARCH APPROACH

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FOCUS

WHERE NOW?

Cluster Policy

Cluster Practice

TOWARDS BETTER

Cluster Practice

Cluster Policy

GAP

KEY ELEMENTS

- Experience
- Challenges
- Opportunities

KEY EXPERTISE

i. Cluster Managers
ii. Local Economic Development Personnel
iii. Regional Economic Development Personnel
iv. Cluster Business Leaders & Directors
v. Policy Makers
vi. Academic Researchers.

PROCESS APPROACH

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HOW

ROUNDTABLES

September – November 2021

6 stakeholder groups

  i. Cluster Managers
  ii. Local Economic Development Personnel
  iii. Regional Economic Development Personnel
  iv. Cluster Business Leaders & Directors
  v. Policy Makers
  vi. Academic Researchers

Input from 104 participants

ORGANISATION

- 2-hour sessions
- Invitations with prompting questions
- Plenary plus break-outs
- Introductions - networking

FOCAL QUESTIONS

- What is their organisation's experience with clusters and clustering?
- What challenges for clusters exist - from their organisation's perspective?
- What policy & implementation supports are required?

PROCESS

- Description – main themes & issues
- Analysis - resonance

REPORTING FINDINGS

Table 1: Cluster Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities on the Island

CATEGORY/COHORT*	WS1	WS2	WS3	WS4	WS5	WS6
CLUSTER EXPERIENCE						
Active Involvement	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Financial Support Provider		✓		✓	✓	
Active Interest	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHALLENGES						
Lack of National Cluster Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data / Mapping / Analysis	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Funding Models	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education and Support	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Agreed Cluster Definitions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Activity / Initiative Balance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
OPPORTUNITIES						
Progress towards National Cluster Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long Term Funding Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cross Border Collaboration	✓		✓		✓	✓
Promotion of Irish Clusters Internationally	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Strategic Policy Challenges - green/digitalisation/RIS3	✓		✓		✓	✓
Training & Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Centralised Supports/Resources	✓	✓	✓		✓	

*WS1 - Cluster Managers WS2 - Local Authorities WS3 - Regional Authorities/agencies WS4 - Business Leaders WS5 - National Policy Makers WS6 - Academic Researchers

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REPORTING FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS 1 & 2

MOVING TO CLARITY

Cluster as a concept remains confusing - lacks an agreed definition.
This is likely to continue **without** Departmental leadership across the island driving ahead with cluster goals, programmes and criteria.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Leadership and buy in is required at national government level if a clustering programme of substance, aligned with international best practice, is to be formalised to drive competitiveness in key areas of national importance across the island.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Agree appropriate definitions for Cluster, Cluster Organisations and Cluster Initiatives to be applied in the development of policy, programmes and infrastructure across the island of Ireland and differentiate them clearly from alternatives.

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REPORTING FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS 3 & 4

POLICY

Take account of

- life cycles of clusters,
- include both mature and nascent industries,
- the scale (geography and resources) at which clusters best operate

understanding that the trust and collaborative relationships upon which clusters thrive take a **longer-term** timescale to develop.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Develop a Cluster Policy which includes programmes with appropriate time scales and cycles.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Establish Centralised Cluster Financing Programmes based on Key Performance Indicators relevant to the cluster focus aligned with strategic priorities.

REPORTING FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS 5 & 6

LEARNING, EDUCATION, & CAREER PROGRESSION

Support development of a professionalised cadre of cluster managers as a pre-requisite for the success of any cluster policy. This requires an appropriate support infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Provision of professional and accredited Training, Education and Career Progression Opportunities for Cluster Managers and practitioners operating within cluster ecosystems.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Develop a centralised hub to connect and inform clusters across the island of Ireland and promote them nationally and internationally.