



Northern Connections

A strategic Transnational Cluster Cooperation
- *Unlocking the potential for regional innovation*



Specific Objective

Enhance regional innovation support capacity to increase long-term innovation levels and support smart specialization strategies.





Northern Connections

The Northern Connections partnership consists of 21 cluster, cities, regions and knowledge institutions.

These creates collaborations between the business life and clusters inside the energy efficiency.





Partners in Northern Connections





Our objective is to get more enterprises
to participate in transnational innovation collaboration
via strengthening transnational cluster and city/region cooperation.



The joint challenge

- Innovation support is mainly applied within narrow geographies.
- Calls to action /innovation challenges and opportunities are not visible transnationally.
- Cities & clusters lack capacity to involve SMEs broadly.





The agenda

- Test the use of domestic innovation transnationally/in another country.
- Transnational innovation support measures.
- Address barriers to competition which exist between clusters and regions.





The approach

- **Strengthen** transnational cluster and city/region cooperation.
- **Bridge** private and public sector on transnational innovation support.
- **Improve** and align innovation support measures.
- **Create** incentives for transnational SME innovation partnerships to collaborate.
- **Establish** a critical mass of innovation activity on a transnational basis.
- **Pilot** joint transnational innovation support measures .
- **(Use NorCon to) Create** coherence in political ambitions and cluster potential for innovation support.



Our WP's

WP1 – Project Management (Aalborg Municipality)

WP2 – Communication (CLEAN Cluster)

WP3 – Knowledge (HafenCity University, OREEC)

WP4 – Cluster Capacity (Gothenburg Municipality)

WP5 – Political & strategic capacity (Schleswig-Holstein)

WP6 – Living Labs (Renewable Energy Hamburg, INNOVATUM)





Our activities

Expanding our knowledge base

- We will support the knowledge transfer between the cities and regions, the clusters and academia. Regional innovation strategies (RIS3) focus on the strengths of a region – they seldom take into account the synergies with neighbouring regions and the potential of transnational cooperation.
- Therefore, we will expand our knowledge on how RIS3 can support internationalisation and how clusters can use this. These findings will provide valuable input to the capacity building on political and strategic level.
- We also intend to dig deeper into how clusters support SME internationalization and innovation participation. This will provide a basis for cluster capacity building.



Our activities

Building cluster capacity for innovation

- The participating clusters will jointly develop and test tools to improve SME's innovation skills – and in doing so also build their own capacity for regional innovation support.
- Activities entail identification of existing innovation support measures – specified per renewable energy technology (RET) value chain and covering each step of the innovation chain on Technology Readiness Level 5-9.
- The activities will also lead to an understanding of how to develop and carry out interregional innovation activities for SMEs around innovation support measures already tied into regional RET value and innovation chains.
- A model for synergetic interregional cooperation, where SMEs can profit from innovation and business opportunities through the alignment of interregional innovation and value chains is unique. It will contribute significantly to existing projects and initiatives.



Our activities

Building political and strategic capacity

- By bringing together regions, cities and clusters, we can create the basis for discussing how smart specialisation strategies can be optimised to support SME innovation across borders.
- Our aim is to stimulate the international competitiveness of the region and extend the innovation collaboration between clusters, regions and cities.
- We will develop and test new practices for building an international dimension into regional smart specialisation strategies, with a particular focus on living labs and how a coordinated effort from clusters and cities play a key role in this.



Our activities

A Cluster Toolbox

- The Northern Connections Toolbox is a best practice collection across the implicated clusters in the Northern Connections project.
- The purpose of the Toolbox is to create a setup of practical and manageable tools about matchmaking, knowledge sharing and idea creation.
- These tools will describe how to make certain event set-ups, how to estimate the resource consumption and indicate what kind of actors should participate.
- The overall aim of creating this toolbox is to inspire and learn from each other and the Northern Connections Toolbox should take act as a component of knowledge sharing.



Our activities

Living Labs

- We are working with setting practises on involving SMEs in solving the energy challenges of cities and regions. This we are doing through what we call Living Labs.
- A sustainable energy Living Lab is a real demonstration project with actual industry investments, technologies and experts - it is not merely a demonstration project, that is static and limited to its existing partners.
- In this project, SMEs receive access to an early phase of developing a pool of solutions towards these often public, but also private challenges. They are made accessible in open-solution pitches i.e. world-café workshops starting 2018.
- These workshops to be carried out throughout the North-Sea region will create a true market place. There will be joint learning effects in the public partners, the clusters and enterprises for cross-sectoral projects and future Living Labs.



What are Living Labs?

Living Labs are concrete projects and real demonstrators for sustainable energy applications.

Living Labs are uniting pre-commercially experts from the NSR to stimulate B2B-partnerships.

Living Labs are demand driven, **are the buyer**, inviting in solutions from project area SMEs.

Living Labs are governed to facilitate fruitful and successful, **open solution**, workshops.

Living Labs have following basic requirements:

- Strong backup by your local politics and civil servants
- Critical mass of companies and general private sector engagement
- Market perceptive shown by first investments with significant investment volume



Northern Connections plan with Living Labs

- Carry out one-day workshop in 2018/19
- Invite transnational stakeholders
- Open up a hot topic/challenge
- Present the hot topic/challenge
- Collect ideas/solutions of other regions and transnational SMEs
- Match challenges with solutions to leverage joint opportunities
- Connect related stakeholders for new projects, feasibility studies and funding



Transnational Working Days (TWD) – and conferences

2018: June in Edinburgh, Scotland

2018: December in Oslo, Norway

2019: June in Hamburg, Germany

2019: December in Belgium

2020: March in Gothenburg, Sweden





Northern Connections' output

- **Build** capacity and transnational relations of sustainable energy clusters to provide demand-led innovation support.
- **Develop** broader political backing.
- **Support** innovation in SMEs.
- **Create** a model for synergetic interregional cooperation, where SMEs profit from innovation and business opportunities.
- **Contribute** to existing projects and initiatives like Enterprise Europe Network and European Cluster of Excellence Initiative.



Thank you! 😊

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www.northsearegion.eu/northern-connections

Northern Connections is a partnership of 21 clusters, cities, regions and knowledge institutions working together transnationally to create North Sea Region innovation in the energy sector

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