



Report for best practice guide and future Partnership assessment

COS-CLUSTER PROJECT N° 101037928 – BIGINN
Deliverable D4.6 Report for best practice guide and future Partnership assessment

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Executive summary

This deliverable report is related to the WP4 – Task 4.4 Best practices guide and assessment. The purpose of implementing this task is to learn from the partnership that was created and prepare a plan for future collaboration and joint activities. To this effect, a best practice guide has been prepared, to review and evaluate activities that have been undertaken and capture the lessons learned. It looks through the cluster excellence capacity-building activities, implementation of the ClusterXchange scheme and briefly summarizes the outreach and awareness-raising activities, which are described extensively in D4.2 Awareness raising activities and events. Finally, a review on assessment of a future BIGINN Partnership is outlined.

1.2 Introduction and objectives

BIGINN marks a new beginning for business and Big Science Innovation. The project has the overarching objective of exploiting the potential for innovation and international collaboration from the Big Science market by tapping into the huge investments in state-of-the-art technologies in this field. The consortium partners from Denmark, Spain and Lithuania have joined forces for the ClusterXchange programme to address the specific challenges of the sector, namely:

- Strengthen and professionalise the cluster management skills in the new area of Big Science clusters.
- Employ cluster mobility schemes to implement cross-fertilization of innovation opportunities at the different clusters.
- Improve SME global competitiveness by establishing international relations and collaborations.

1.3 Legal notice

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Table 1: BIGINN partnership

Participant Organization Name	Short Name	Country
TEKNOLOGISK INSTITUT	DTI	Denmark
ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE LA INDUSTRIA DE LA CIENCIA	INEUSTAR	Spain
VIESOJI ISTAIGA FIZIKOS INSTITUTO MOKSLO IR TECHNOLOGIJU PARKAS	LITEK	Lithuania

2. BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

In order to set some guidelines and summarize the outcomes of the BIGINN project, a Best Practices Guide is outlined in the following sections. It will tackle how the cluster excellence capacity-building activities have been carried out, as well as the implementation of ClusterXchange procedures and outreach and the awareness-raising activities along the duration of the project.

2.1 Cluster excellence capacity-building activities

In total, eight cluster excellence capacity-building activities have been designed and implemented during the two years of the BIGINN project. They cover the main gaps reported by the BIGINN partners, and were conducted both physically and digitally, depending on the aims and strategies defined:

- 1.- GDPR training. 2022 DEC
- 2.- Knowledge Transfer Training. 2023 MAR (in-person)
- 3.- Cluster Management Tools. 2023 JUN
- 4.- Communication & Marketing training. 2023 JUN
- 5.- Going for Gold label training. 2023 JUN (in-person)
- 6.- Event Execution training. 2023 JUL
- 7.- Benchmarking Cluster Management. 2023 OCT
- 8.- Learning from Gold-labelled clusters: services and support of SMEs. Cluster excellence. 2023 NOV (in-person)



Fig. 1. Knowledge and Technology Transfer event

Counting on specialists to educate the BIGINN partners and the participation of the three Partnerships at the same time in each event, led to a much better understanding of the messages to learn, as many discussions were carried out and the involvement of all partners was always present.

The outcomes of the activities could be summarised in:

- The Partners gained specialized knowledge, and improved their cluster management skills, even upgrading their services and implementing new ones (see new services implemented in Table 1 below)
- The majority, if not all, the clusters rely strongly on personal relationships, which help daily in engaging companies and other actors, who advert the closeness and greet human contact. However, this increases the vulnerability of the IT tools vs personal relationships.
- Thanks to the exchanges of information with other clusters under the umbrella of BIGINN activities, the parallelism between clusters of assorted sizes was assessed: the highlights and issues are the same, just in a different scale.
- The process of Cluster Benchmarking ended up being a wonderful experience to stay focused and keep track of the items where the Partners can improve to match with the rest of the clustering ecosystem within their country and along Europe.

In general, the most unexpected outcome from the learning activities performed was that, even though such activities could have been achieved by each Partnership separately, teamwork, experience sharing, and discussions really makes the difference.

Table 1. New support services implemented by BIGINN Partnerships thanks to the project

DTI/BigScience.dk
Implemented BigScience+ membership for individual strategic sparring
Digital competence catalogue for Big Science facilities
Information service disseminating upcoming tenders
Matchmaking service for companies
Organisation of visits to/from facilities introduced as paid service under BigScience+ membership
Matchmaking service for companies to find international business partners
INEUSTAR
Private section at INEUSTAR's website for associated companies. Access to intelligence from private events, targeted market research documents, etc.
New tool with information on upcoming tenders
Matchmaking CVs of candidates for Big Science sector in Spain and exclusive access from the associated companies.
LITEK
Information service disseminating upcoming tenders

2.2 Implementation of ClusterXchange

The implementation of the ClusterXchange procedures, even with the support of the Project Officer and the rest of her team, was not easy at the beginning. As the BIGINN project went along, the procedures became clearer and the management of the Xchanges within the IT tool, mandatory for the COSME call, improved. Although the change from the previous version of the IT tool to the updated version was a jump that eased the procedures, still many problems persisted, and assistance was needed. The improvements were huge when comparing the last Xchange with the first one, in terms of person-hours needed to encode in the IT tool.

Some key learnings were gathered along the months, leading the BIGINN Partnership to a more active 2023 in comparison with 2022. In short:

- Group Xchanges were found to be much more beneficial when comparing with 1-to-1 Xchanges:
 - o The engagement of the host was much easier, as the involvement of the personnel in the facility was better exploited: the time spent by the experts from the HOs was almost the same, disregarding the number of VOs.
 - o Agendas were easier to fill in with interesting activities when a bigger public was involved: workshop sessions among HO and VOs were much more profitable.

- Networking could be established not only between HO and each visitor, but also among Visiting Organizations, leading to nice knowledge-sharing environments.
- On the other hand, events of 3 or more days (+ 1 or 2 days for traveling) that are not linked to an international Fair or Congress, proved to be of zero interest for the main target group from BIGINN, mainly CEOs, CTOs, and Sales Managers in the Big Science market. These are key people within their own organizations, who extremely value their time, and it is really difficult to get their engagement for agendas that don't maximize the results with respect to the time spent. Moreover, when dealing with small companies, their resources are sparse and they are extremely selective as to how they spend their time.
- For the same small companies, or even start-ups interested in the BIGINN activities, it could have been interesting to be able to access financial support for their participation in a second event, even if they would not have counted for the project's KPIs.
- The new IT tool version allowed the Partnership to be in control of encoding the exchanges. This was a huge improvement.
- Given that the partnership manages the content and successful implementation of the Xchanges, the search for a formal HO sometimes seemed like a redundant task.
- It was also difficult to get the large HO organizations to sign the CTQ, as their legal departments had to evaluate the content, and this took a lot of superfluous time.

Regarding the success rates and participation in each individual event, a Deliverable has been already submitted: D3.1 – List of supported exchanges, broken down by categories.

Success stories

The involvement of the participants in the events organized by BIGINN was smooth during the Xchanges. However, as most of the participants were key persons within their organizations (CEOs, CTOs, Sales Managers...), asking for their time to fill in several formal questionnaires after the event to track the benefits of the Xchanges seemed to be unnecessary bureaucratic.

For this reason, a three-fold approach was put in place by the BIGINN Partnership:

- For the questionnaires required by the COSME call, their involvement was mandatory, so they were requested to fill them in.
- For their insights on the benefits of the Xchanges, several short interviews were recorded (and used for communication purposes as well, posted in LinkedIn for example). Some of the outcomes can be read in Table 2 below.
- For tracking the agreements that were set during or after the Xchanges, a short declaration document was distributed to the participants, so a small summary of the outcomes was gathered.

Table 2. Small selection of insights from the interviews recorded during the Xchanges

SMEs
<p>It has been very fruitful to be on the spot to understand the complexity of these industries. This visit has been an opportunity to meet new customers [...]. We have also met other suppliers who might need us a sup-supplier [...].</p> <p>It has been particularly interesting to see the facilities LIVE.</p> <p>During other events [the company] never gets the opportunity to present to so many people from one BigScience Organization at the same time.</p> <p>These exchanges are a great way to meet new partners and gain new knowledge about potential collaboration opportunities</p>
Big Science Organizations
<p>Very grateful for the large participation at this event.</p> <p>This event has led to the companies not only talking about product, but about technologies that can contribute to building and developing the XFEL facility and provide service.</p> <p>This has been very inspiring for the staff at XFEL, who never had a visit of such a large group before.</p>

2.3 Outreach and awareness-raising activities

The Dissemination, outreach and communication plan (D4.1) available in M6, outlines the strategy to maximise the impact and the strategy to create visibility for the BIGINN project. The D4.1 is a detailed plan for the BIGINN partners could count on to implement and monitor the project's public relations. The document is focused on creating a dissemination, outreach and communication plan as a reference for the whole project, a common identity, specific tools and activities, target groups and channels, key messages, a clear communication policy and an internal assessment procedure.

Also, a clear and straightforward procedure for measuring the performance of posts, events, outreach, presentations, communication platforms, dissemination partners, dissemination events and BIGINN events was set in early stages of the project. Together with an appointed responsible person, this helped to keep track of every activity related to outreach and awareness-raising in an easy and smooth way.

The list of planned activities was of utmost help to maintain the focus on the needs and goals of the project. It included the information indicating their type, estimated date, estimated number of participants and the partner that led the organization. Also, a concise description of the activity, including the main goal, target groups etc, was included. The performance measurements were updated after they finished (e.g. foreseen BIGINN events).

In summary, the key learnings from the outreach and awareness-raising activities performed during BIGINN events are:

- The integral visual design of BIGINN partnership created easy visual recognition aspect.
- The BIGINN webpage and the LinkedIn profile worked as landing points for more broader information or registration to events. The BIGINN partners have gained most visibility by organising the events (round table discussions, open doors, sharing best practices) or by participating in others' events (presentations, brochures, 1-on-1 meetings).
- The BIGINN consortium's wide network of partners has enabled it to reach potential Xchange participants who are not members of the BIGINN partnership.
- To ask for a signed agreement for collaborating on dissemination is redundant. Having it or not having it did not make any difference, as the common dissemination partners from each BIGINN cluster participant kept on supporting the activities (e.g.: DTI – PERIIA; INEUSTAR – INDUCIENCIA; LITEK – Innovative Manufacturing Cluster ...).
- During Xchange (on-spot) the partners made short videos which allowed a quick social interaction with visited participants via LinkedIn, recording of impressions and of key outcomes and allowed to achieve a wider visibility of the Partnership and the ClusterXchange mobility program.

The detailed information on Dissemination and awareness-raising events, as well as on publications, is included in the Deliverable 4.2 Awareness-raising activities and events (public).

3. FUTURE PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT

The development of a joint project like BIGINN, where the communication between partners has been constant, and where practically all the activities have been carried out together, has boosted an environment of open collaboration and mutual support.

The Xchanges have proven to be great tools for the national Big Science clusters to think in synergetic activities across borders. Many synergies have been found within the Partnership, and a common interest in the continuation of some of the BIGINN activities and develop more projects together has arisen due to the great involvement from European companies and other Big Science actors.

The BIGINN COSME Xchanges have created an international connectivity that has led to both innovation and business collaboration between participating companies. The Big Science ecosystem has developed and grown due to these activities, and many of the participants have already asked if this initiative will be continued after the BIGINN project ending.

The BIGINN project has led the partners to discussions about how to scope a formal European collaboration platform or association within Big Science / Science Industry / Quantum. This is an overarching strategy that could be implemented in the following years, similar to what other Pan-European clusters or associations are currently offering (for example, EPIC Association for the Photonics market - <https://epic-assoc.com/>).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the effort and results have proven that EC funding allocated strategically to the ecosystem (through the BIGINN Partnership) can directly benefit innovative and ambitious SMEs.

BIGINN

A new beginning for business and Big Science innovation

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Deliverable D4.1 Dissemination, outreach and communication plan



Strengthening the European economy through collaboration