

CLUSTER Preparatory Steering Committee I 2024**Thursday 11th April 2024****KU Leuven****Minutes of the meeting / Jules Vanpée****Materials of the meeting / <https://cluster.org/intranet> (Password: Erasmus1999!)****1. Opening of the Meeting and Welcome**

CLUSTER President Luc Sels opens the meeting at 13:36. CLUSTER Secretary-General Jos Vander Sloten starts with an introduction round for the new CLUSTER Members.

The agenda for the Steering Committee I Meeting on the 11th of April 2024 and the minutes of the Steering Committee II of the 8th of September 2023 are approved unanimously. All meeting materials can be found on the CLUSTER website <https://cluster.org/intranet> (Password: Erasmus1999!).

2. Financial Report – CLUSTER Actuals 22-24, Jules Vanpée

Jules Vanpée presents the financial report. No additional remarks were made by the Steering Committee. Jules will present the report during the General Assembly for official approval.

3. CLUSTER Audit System, Jules Vanpée

Jules Vanpée presents the internal audit procedure.

The Steering Committee advises to move all written dates by 1 month to align with the presidential start and end dates. Jules will make the adjustments and present it during the General Assembly for official approval.

4. Recap – CLUSTER-CESAER meeting

Jos Vander Sloten presents the main topics and opens the discussion.

Luc Sels, starts by reflecting on the meeting. It offered the opportunity to understand the distinctiveness of the networks, how they can be complementary and the added value the networks can bring. He believes the future of CLUSTER depends on how it will bridge the gaps between alliances. By members sharing what they learn in the other networks, CLUSTER can become a strong alliance between alliances. Its future success will depend on its effectiveness as a lab for science engineering specific initiatives in education and research.

Concerning CESAER, Luc believes they become a more active network in the field of advocacy. It's a huge advantage for the both networks to collaborate.

Roberto Zanino, wonders if CLUSTER as a lab for broader scale initiatives could also focus on collecting some opinions which can be used to push initiatives in CESAER. Becomes of CLUSTERs size, they can collect opinions more efficiently than CESAER.

Additionally, in alliances there is a decline in rector attendance. Maybe CLUSTER could follow the example of U21, namely involving them in the higher perspective and give topics that are interesting enough to stimulate them.

Luc Sels, remarks that CESAER might become too large to portray the opinion of all members. He suggest to remove the “associated” members term, but get an associated position in networks such as CESAER. The voice that cluster can be within the CESAER community.

Petri Suomala, agrees with what has bee said. He sees a lot of potential in CLUSTER and the ability to learn together. CLUSTER can build a much broader picture of what is happening in the alliances of Europe. The network should consider how to further enhance the co-learning. If CLUSTER manages to become that learning community it would become an important player within the alliances.

Lourdes Reig, explains that CLUSTER has a very trustable environment so members can share a lot of things. It would be very easy to do something that would be beneficial to CESAER and the EU commission.

Klaus Rümmele, it’s an advantage of CLUSTER that we are free from the pressure of the ambitions of the EU alliances. We are free to think and test things.

Jana Freihöfer, suggests to develop CLUSTER more as a learning place. If we consider ourselves as mainly homogenous, trustworthy and are not as depended on funding. We could foster research and use the networks to learn from each other.

Jos Vander Sloten summarises the following:

- Due to the smaller size of CLUSTER, it reaches a decision or agreement regarding topics quickly.
- Learning/Co-learning is possible, because of the openness and trustworthiness, we have a safe space to share experience in an open way. It provides to opportunity to organise open workshops.
- We need to come up with specific topics where we can share experience and create added value

5. Strategic Discussion – CLUSTER International Alliance

The members of the Steering Committee agree that the term “associated” partners should be removed. Regarding the internationalisation of CLUSTER, the suggestion is not to become an international network. Instead, it should be one with primarily EU members with openings for global members.

Additional suggestions made by the Steering Committee:

- Keep the size to a manageable level within manageable time zones
- Grow slowly and targeted
- Expend on the requirements
 - The example given: *institutions who (will) have access to EU funding (Horizon)*
- Maintain the ‘Science and Technology’-focus

6. Strategic Discussion – CLUSTER in the Geopolitical Context

Jos Vander Sloten opens this discussion.

The CLUSTER members explain how they approach geopolitical issues such as research with China and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Some institutions have or are creating committees deciding on each individual case from either a legal, policy or ethical standpoint. Others are required to follow the directions given by their respective parliament or state-ruling bodies.

The Steering Committee comments on the interesting and valuable aspect of these discussions. Jos Vander Sloten suggest to add this topic again in the next Steering Committee agenda.

7. CLUSTER Working Group memberships

Jos Vander Sloten mentions the changes in WG chairs and addresses the problem in maintaining continuity in the CSO leadership.

8. Closing

CLUSTER President Luc Sels and Secretary-General Jos Vander Sloten, thank everyone for their presence and close the Steering Committee at 17:00.