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POLICY INNOVATION DESIGN

Case Studies in Design Policy & Programmes

This case study was developed as part of the SEE project. SEE is a network of eleven European partners sharing experience and stimulating debate on how to integrate design into innovation policies at regional, national and European levels.

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Catalan Textile Clusters

Spain

This case study has a slightly different format to the others in the SEE Library, as it is drawn from the first SEE Policy Booklet: Integrating Design into Regional Innovation Policy (November 2009).



Over the last two decades, significant importance has been attributed to nurturing the interconnectivity of industry (particularly SMEs) and research through collaborative clusters and networks in order to respond to the growing climate of competitiveness.

In the early 1990s, the Catalan Government recognised that in order for the region's textile industry to remain competitive, an initiative needed to be implemented to link all the players in the supply chain (from yarn, through design, to final product). Between 1993 and 1997, three textile clusters were set up in order to prevent the fragmentation of the sector by harnessing traditional industry with a channel control strategy. Within two years, the 'Programa de Marques de Canal' enabled over fifty companies from related sectors to internationalise their products by facilitating strategic reflection including market intelligence, total branding, design, retailing, supply chain management and logistics in order to secure high margins, speed up time to market and integrate customer-centric business thinking. Although manufacturing has been outsourced abroad, the region has retained the higher value-added activities such as design, research, marketing, retail, distribution and logistics. From this initiative has emerged the second largest textile exporter from Spain, Mango, which has opened 900 stores in 72 countries. The region's textile industry has transformed from being production driven to being market driven, as the cluster companies have been able to share information in order to react to consumer demands, market fluctuations and evolving distribution channels.

As design and creativity are key components of innovation, integrating these sectors into innovation clusters will enhance entrepreneurial dynamism and contribute to building a knowledge-based economy in Europe. Representatives from these sectors will facilitate the flow of expertise by broadening the scope of the innovation process. The Commission Communication Towards world-class clusters in the EU stresses that 'Europe does not lack clusters'. However, 'persistent market fragmentation, weak industry-research linkages and insufficient cooperation within the EU mean that clusters in the EU do not always have the necessary critical mass and innovation capacity to sustainably face global competition and to be world-class'.^[1] During the SEE project, the notion of incorporating industry (SMEs as well as the design and creativity sectors) and academia (universities and research institutes) into collaborative clusters emerged as an important issue. 'The – often unplanned – intense formal and informal contacts and exchange of business information, know-how, and technical expertise within clusters can lead to technological spill-overs and the development of new and often unexpected ideas and

new creative designs, products, services and business concepts that improve the innovation performance of businesses. [2]

For more information see the Catalan Clothing Industry Report 'European Cluster Mapping Project: Identification, analysis and monitoring of business clusters in Europe', 18 January 2008, in the European Cluster Observatory.

[1] Commission Communication, 'Towards world-class clusters in the European Union: Implementing the broad-base innovation strategy', 17 October 2008, COM(2008)352, p. 5.

[2] Commission Staff Working Document 'The Concept of Clusters & Cluster Policies & their Role for Competitiveness & Innovation', EuropeINNOVA / PRO INNO Europe paper N° 9, SEC(2008)2637, p. 14.