

# Business Clusters

**The University of Chichester is currently exploring collaborative best practice in business clusters in the maritime industry for an EU INTERREG IV Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy (CAMIS) project in conjunction with France.**

Marinas are of specific interest to the project due to their natural locational and organisational cluster features. Marinas provide a rounded provision of facilities by means of a management team promoting the interests of the site, its inhabitants and visitors. They provide the central hub for potential cluster activities to occur yet the research has shown that organised clustering is not always happening. Clusters need to have trust, leadership, and a purpose, to become successful and productive, and the inability of companies to overcome the fear of losing competitive edge through collaboration is often quoted as a reason for the failure of clusters in the UK.

TransEurope Marinas (TEM) is one marina organisation that does maintain cluster activities, albeit in a small way. TEM is unique because it is not a cluster situated in one location – marinas are not located close together – just the opposite. TEM has been very successful in maintaining and increasing membership and appears to overcome many of the barriers to successful clustering because of the locational differences rather than despite them. Membership of TEM does not interfere with normal working practice and does not take up too much time and cost for the member marinas. In return they can benefit from increased visitors through the membership scheme.

There is the potential for increasing cluster opportunities in this type of setting – additional member benefits such as marketing and branding, insurance, bulk buying etc. can bring in cost and efficiency savings at little extra cost. But there are risks involved – these include increased time and resources, increased demand over supply, and a diluting effect of the TEM brand as it grows larger.

Achieving a balance between increased activities (and potential economic growth for the individual marinas) and the increase in cost (through time and associated marketing) needs to be

matched to the overall aims of the cluster. TEM has managed the potential barriers of language, culture, and distance and any new initiatives need to be simple enough to continue to be translated across borders. TEM is unique and it appears that its limitations are part of why it is successful at what it does in the sense it has found a niche in the

market and a history of growth and sustainability.

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