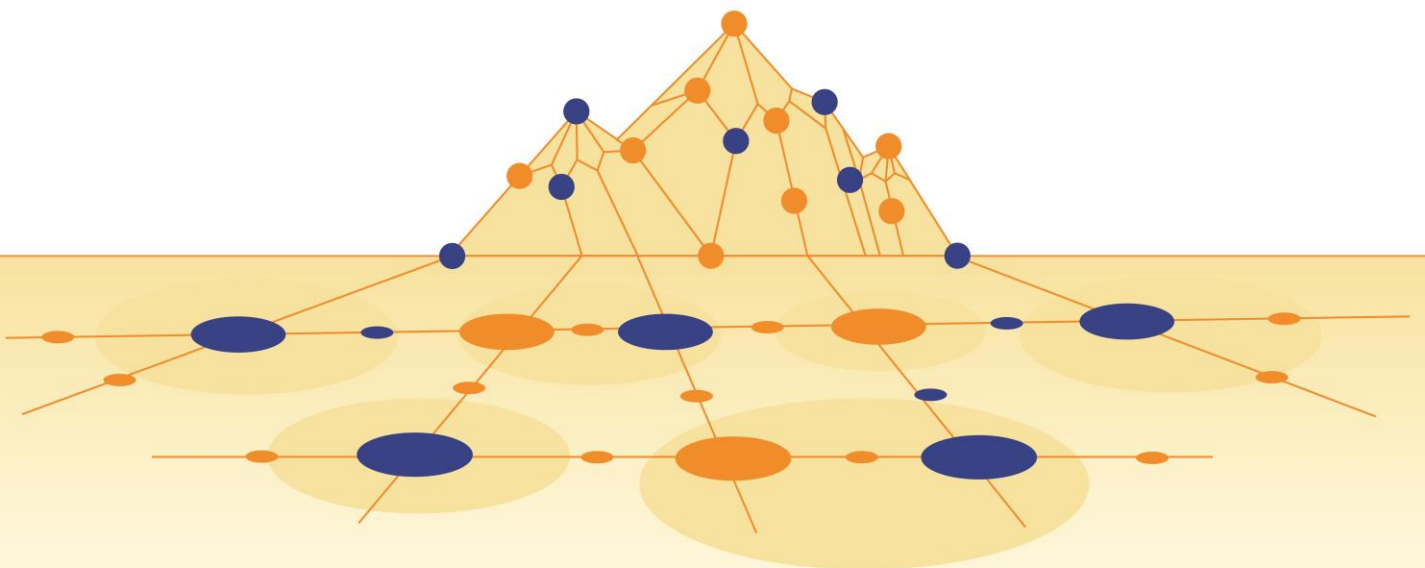


# Evaluation of the interplay between S3 and Clusters

## Evaluation Toolbox

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## Introduction

The TA Evaluation Toolbox (TAET), developed by ITG Salzburg, convelop, Anteja - ECG, and CABW is a methodological approach for the assessment of the interplay between S3 and clusters: This assessment builds on the proposition that the Innovation Model, developed within the project S3-4AlpClusters is an effective approach for promoting transformative activities to support the emergence of new industries in the Alpine Region. The innovation model was used to develop a cluster-based policy model which can be applied in future S3 developments and updates. Coinciding with the period during which the European regions are deliberating the continuation, revision and improvements of S3 approaches, the Evaluation Tool examines key aspects of S3 innovation models and offers guidance for next generation of S3.

The Evaluation Toolbox is based on desk research, the participation in a workshop in Ljubljana (Impact of cluster management, SRIP in the implementation of S3) and expert discussions. Feedback from all project partners was gathered at the PSG5-Meeting in Ljubljana.

## Background

The project S3-4AlpClusters aims at enhancing smart industrial transition in the regions of the Alpine Space by making use of the interplay between clusters and S3. It offers a set of tools for cluster initiatives and regions to explore capacities and opportunities for transformation and to facilitate the identification and development of transformative activities based on need-based interregional cooperation.

Smart Specialization Strategies (S3) are a common policy lever at regional level within the EU. They aim at supporting regions in achieving structural change in order to generate the innovation and growth needed to harness globalization. However, recent experiences show that the identification and development of Transformative Activities<sup>1</sup> remain a significant challenge in the practical implementation of S3<sup>2</sup>. The S3-4AlpClusters project tackles the two identified roots of this challenge. Firstly, there is a lack of experience among regions on how to use clusters to implement S3. Secondly, real transformative activities could often be developed more successfully in a joint effort across regional borders.

### S3- Innovation model

The S3-Innovation model was created to enhance innovation and jobs creation by active involvement of clusters for the identification and development of transformative activities. **Tools** are provided for each phase (“Action Line”) of the process:

- **Action Line Base of Evidence:** StressTest and Synergy-Diamonds are used as an innovative way of depicting existing capacities and detecting opportunities for structural transformation, both within and across regions.
- **Action Line Identification:** Entrepreneurial discovery workshops (EDW) build on this base of evidence in order to identify real transformative activities.
- **Action Line Development:** Action development workshops (ADW) allow working out concrete actions - such as R&D projects, networking or development of critical skills - in order to gain critical mass for the identified transformative activities.
- **Action Line Implementation:** The implementation of these actions is supported by a collection of best practices of cluster services covering transversal fields such as education, technology, growth, research or collaboration.
- **Action Line Monitoring:** An evaluation toolbox (TAET) supports the formative evaluation and monitoring of the process, emphasising the roles and contributions of cluster initiatives.

Particular focus is on facilitating the **cross-regional implementation** of actions, with the initiation of an interregional cooperation scheme (Alpine Cluster Innovation Express – ACIE). It is funded via existing regional programmes and is aligning existing funds and launching joint calls for the implementation of cross-regional actions.

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<sup>1</sup> TA: Transformative Activities can be understood as a collection of innovation capacities and actions of a group of actors, derived from an innovative combination of existing structures, targeting related areas and having the potential to significantly transform existing industries.

<sup>2</sup> Keller, M.; Reingruber, I.; Dermasita, M.; Bersier, J.; Meier zu Köcker, G. (2018), Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and Clusters; An Innovation Model for Transformative Activities, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne

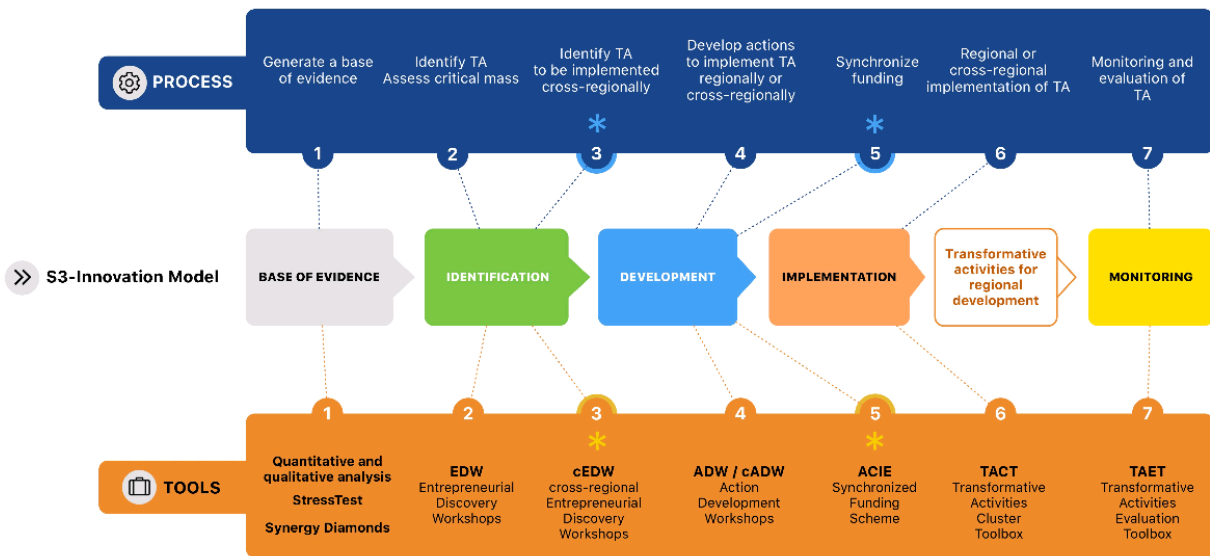


Figure 1: Innovation Model – Systematic approach for the development of Transformative Activities

The Innovation model consists of two parallel and cross linked processes: Cluster level and policy level (Figure 1). The Innovation Model follows five action lines aligned with the policy life cycle<sup>3</sup>. In each stage cluster initiatives play an active role and provide beneficial input which result in required outputs and desirable outcomes at each stage. Hence, the Evaluation Toolbox contributes to a better understanding of the interplay between S3 and clusters and supports the targeted use of clusters for regional development. It furthermore increases awareness about the high potential of clusters in regional development processes.

<sup>3</sup> Thus policy-making is a set of routines (can be perceived as a learning circle) where each stage is not just a linear continuation of the previous phase, but it links back into iterative(ed) cycles of future policy development. Basic four stages are: (1) an initial analysis of a problem, determination of needs and an audit of existing policies that address those needs; (2) development of a policy response to those needs and definition of key policy objectives, resource view and policy tool investigation; (3) preparation of procedures, selection process, budgets and timetable for the implementation of the program; (4) an assessment of the performance of the program, evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the policy after an appropriate operating period.

# Evaluation of the interplay between S3 and Clusters

With the Evaluation Toolbox, the Innovation Model also includes a methodology contributing to the evaluation and monitoring of the process.

The Evaluation Toolbox addresses the roles and contributions of cluster initiatives during the implementation of the Innovation Model along the action lines, focusing on the linkages between the two parallel processes on cluster and policy level. The assessment builds on the proposition that the Innovation Model is an effective approach for promoting transformative activities to build a critical mass in the Alpine Space.

## Objectives

The aim of the Evaluation Toolbox is to **demonstrate and assess the role and contributions of cluster initiatives** in the different action lines.

The Evaluation Toolbox provides a general framework that supports a **formative evaluation**<sup>4</sup> during the implementation of the innovation model that facilitates necessary adaptations and learning throughout the process (Figure 2). It will provide feasible elements for monitoring and evaluation efforts for each stage related to clusters and will increase the visibility of cluster activities to support regional development and structural transition processes.

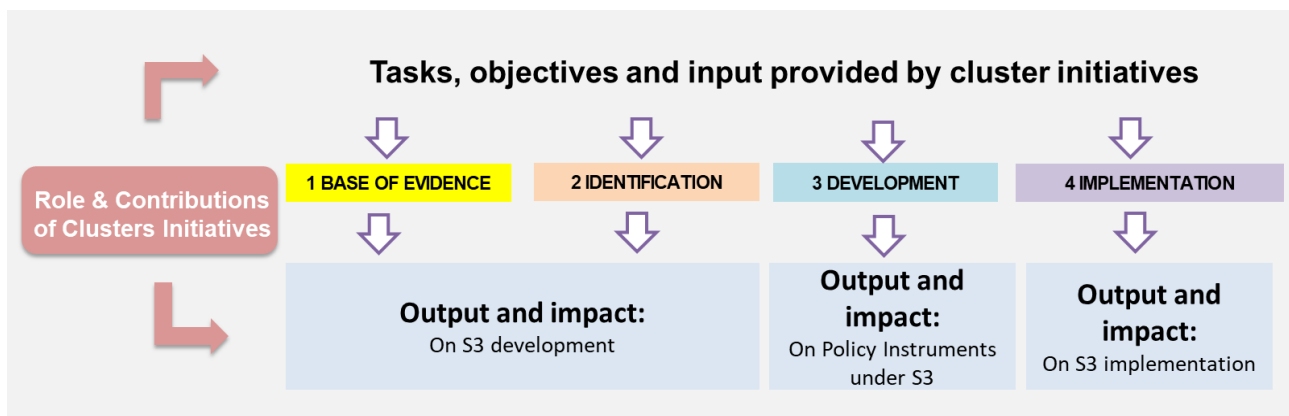


Figure 2: Scope of the Evaluation Toolbox: Role and contributions of cluster initiatives

<sup>4</sup> A formative evaluation is implemented during the conception and implementation phase of an intervention. The aim is to assess the components and processes of the intervention to improve its implementation with respect to the objectives.

## How to use the TA Evaluation Toolbox

The Evaluation Toolbox offers **guidelines for a formative evaluation** focusing on the interplay between cluster initiatives and policy level (Box 1). It consists of an assessment table with a comprehensive list of instruments that support the implementation of the Innovation Model in each action line.

Besides the tools included in the Innovation Model, additional instruments are proposed. For each of these instruments, possible contributions of cluster initiatives are described. The table facilitates a thorough assessment that comprises a qualitative review as well as a quantitative assessment of the intensity of the cluster initiatives' involvement.

### Box 1: Elements of the Evaluation Toolbox:

The Evaluation Toolbox will provide for each Action Line:

- List of tools/instruments to support the action line (including the tools proposed in the Innovation Model and additional instruments)
- Description of the output of the tools/instruments
- Checklist of contributions of cluster initiatives for each tool/instrument (input by cluster initiatives)
- **Assessment of the role and contributions of the clusters initiatives** comprises
  - a checkbox, whether this task was performed (yes/no),
  - a quantitative assessment of the intensity of involvement (rating scale 1/2/3/4),
  - a qualitative review of cluster involvement and their contributions that enables adaptations and learning, and
  - a composite indicator for each Action Line (based on the quantitative assessment of each tool performed)

A **dashboard** will present the overall results of the assessment as a summary of the interplay of S3 and clusters in the region.

In the quantitative assessment of each instrument applied in the process, the intensity of the involvement of clusters is measured with a rating scale from 1 (no involvement) to 4 (strong involvement). The quantitative score can then be summarized in a composite indicator, by calculating the means of the scores for all tools that have been implemented in each action line. The qualitative review complements the assessment. This facilitates gaining a deeper understanding about the involvement of cluster initiatives in the process and enables to identify possible adaptations and continuous learning. It is proposed to summarize the overall results for the entire process in a dashboard. This overview displays a snap-shot of how clusters are used as a tool in implementing the Innovation Model. It also serves to identify areas to further strengthen the interplay of S3 and clusters.

### Considerations on how to use the Evaluation Toolbox:

- When **planning the implementation** of the Innovation Model the Evaluation Toolbox supports the identification of useful instruments and provides information **on how clusters can best be involved in the process**.
- It supports a **continuous reflection** throughout the process whether the potential of cluster contributions has been satisfactorily exploited. As an ex-post assessment, it gives an overview about the current state of the interplay between policy and cluster level.
- The assessment is best done as a **dialogue** involving both policy and cluster level. In a joint reflection, framework conditions, success factors and barriers that influence the interplay can be considered and possibilities for further improvement can be identified.



# TA Evaluation Toolbox

## Action Line - Base of Evidence

Tool/Instrument	Output	Contribution of cluster initiatives / cluster management	Tool/Instrument implemented (yes/no)	Intensity of involvement of cluster initiatives (1/2/3/4)	Qualitative review of involvement of cluster initiatives
<b>Regional quantitative and qualitative analysis*</b>	Comprehensive data and information about regional entrepreneurial basis and economic development is collected and analysed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of cluster related data that supports the creation of a base of evidence for the region (e.g. mapping/number of cluster related companies and organisations, employment data, overview of current cooperation/innovation projects ... )</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Synergy Diamond*</b>	Current regional strengths and priorities as well as relevant trends and challenges for the region are identified; they are mapped on the synergy diamond and facilitate the identification of transformative activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of information regarding relevant trends and challenges perceived by cluster initiatives and cluster related companies and organisations</li> <li>Provision of in depth input from the perspective of cluster initiatives for the identification of transformative processes (e.g. current research endeavours and needs of cluster members)</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Surveys among entrepreneurial basis in the region</b>	Relevant primary data is available concerning e.g. trends, challenges, requirements and needs for support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of and mobilisation of cluster related companies and organisations to participate in the survey</li> <li>Active participation in a follow-up workshop and/or the discussion of the results of the survey</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	

Tool/Instrument	Output	Contribution of cluster initiatives / cluster management	Tool/Instrument implemented (yes/no)	Intensity of involvement of cluster initiatives (1/2/3/4)	Qualitative review of involvement of cluster initiatives
<b>StressTest*</b>	Status quo of involvement of cluster initiatives in current S3-policy is assessed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in StressTest survey</li> <li>• Active mobilisation of other stakeholders to participate in StressTest</li> <li>• Active participation in follow-up workshop to discuss results</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement <sup>5</sup> 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Analysis of regional cluster portfolio</b>	Overview of the regional cluster portfolio is developed (assessment of capacity of cluster initiatives and potential of regional clusters).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of information regarding potential of the regional cluster and capacity of cluster initiatives</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Cluster Strategies</b>	Cluster strategies are available for policy makers as reference documents for S3 development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of strategy documents as references for the S3-development</li> <li>• Alternative: development of cluster strategies in line with the development of S3</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Relevant strategy / discussion papers and studies</b>	In depth knowledge about specific topics is available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation/commission of specific strategy papers and studies and making it available for other relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Other [...]</b>			yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Composite Indicator</b>				<b>1-4</b>	

\*Tools proposed by the Innovation Model

<sup>5</sup> Proposition for the quantitative assessment: 3 aspects of potential contribution of cluster initiatives fulfilled: 4 - strong involvement, 2 aspects fulfilled: 3 - medium involvement, 1 aspect fulfilled: little involvement, no aspect fulfilled: no involvement

## Action Line - Identification of Transformative Activities

Tool/Instrument	Output	Contribution of cluster initiatives / cluster management	Tool/Instrument implemented (yes/no)	Intensity of involvement of cluster initiatives (1/2/3/4)	Qualitative review of involvement of cluster initiatives
<b>Entrepreneurial Discovery Workshop: regional / cross-regional*</b>	Transformative activities are identified, and critical mass is assessed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and mobilisation of stakeholders for EDW-participation</li> <li>• Active participation (cluster management) in the EDW for identification of TAs (based on current challenges and activities within the cluster) and for the assessment of critical mass (based on overview about cluster related companies and organisation active/interested in the TA-development)</li> <li>• Provision of input regarding potential twin-regions if cross-regional cooperation is needed to develop the TAs</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement <sup>6</sup> 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Analysis of R&amp;D projects in the region (data by funding agencies)</b>	Evidence about the current R&D activities in the region is available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of additional information about ongoing R&amp;D projects of cluster related companies and organisations</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Other [...]</b>			yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Composite Indicator</b>				<b>1-4</b>	

\*Tools proposed by the Innovation Model

<sup>6</sup> Proposition for the quantitative assessment: 3 aspects of potential contribution of cluster initiatives fulfilled: 4 - strong involvement, 2 aspects fulfilled: 3 - medium involvement, 1 aspect fulfilled: little involvement, no aspect fulfilled: no involvement

## Action Line - Development of Transformative Activities

Tool/Instrument	Output	Contribution of cluster initiatives / cluster management	Tool/Instrument implemented (yes/no)	Intensity of involvement of cluster initiatives (1/2/3/4)	Qualitative review of involvement of cluster initiatives
<b>Action Development Workshop: regional / cross-regional *</b>	Concrete actions to further develop the TAs activities are identified (roadmap).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and mobilisation of stakeholders for ADW-participation</li> <li>• Active participation and input regarding potential actions supporting the development of TAs</li> <li>• Provision of input regarding potential twin-regions if cross-regional actions are needed to develop the TAs</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement <sup>7</sup> 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>TA-Task forces</b>	Specific working groups are in charge of developing TAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation in task forces of relevance for the cluster initiatives</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Other [...]</b>			yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Composite Indicator</b>				<b>1-4</b>	

\*Tools proposed by the Innovation Model

<sup>7</sup> Proposition for the quantitative assessment: 3 aspects of potential contribution of cluster initiatives fulfilled: 4 - strong involvement, 2 aspects fulfilled: 3 - medium involvement, 1 aspect fulfilled: little involvement, no aspect fulfilled: no involvement

## Action Line - Implementation of Transformative Activities

Tool/Instrument	Output	Contribution of cluster initiatives / cluster management	Tool/Instrument implemented (yes/no)	Intensity of involvement of cluster initiatives (1/2/3/4)	Qualitative review of involvement of cluster initiatives
<b>Clusters in charge of implementing TAs with a mandate and assigned budget</b>	Different types of activities and services targeted at the implementation of TAs are carried out by cluster initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of targeted activities to implement TAs</li> <li>Monitoring of the cluster measures to implement TAs</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Regional Scheme</b>	Regional call to develop TAs is implemented and cross-sectoral projects to develop TAs are implemented. Projects are carried out supporting the implementation of TAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Input for call development (agenda setting)</li> <li>Support in communication and advertisement of the regional scheme on stakeholder level</li> <li>Support in advertisement and mobilisation of cluster related companies and organisations to submit proposals</li> <li>Support for matchmaking</li> <li>Support in preparation of research/innovation projects and proposal writing</li> <li>Support for the cluster related companies and organisations in implementing research/innovation projects</li> <li>Collection of information about the project results</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement <sup>8</sup> 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	

<sup>8</sup> Proposition for the quantitative assessment: 6-7 aspects of potential contribution of cluster initiatives fulfilled: 4 - strong involvement, 4-5 aspects fulfilled: 3 - medium involvement, 1-3 aspects fulfilled: little involvement, no aspect fulfilled: no involvement

Tool/Instrument	Output	Contribution of cluster initiatives / cluster management	Tool/Instrument implemented (yes/no)	Intensity of involvement of cluster initiatives (1/2/3/4)	Qualitative review of involvement of cluster initiatives
<b>Synchronized Scheme*</b>	Joint cross-regional call to develop TAs is implemented and cross-sectoral/regional projects to develop TAs are implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input for call development (agenda setting, identification of regions)</li> <li>• Support in communication and advertisement of the synchronized scheme on stakeholder level</li> <li>• Support in advertisement and mobilisation of cluster related companies and organisations to submit proposals</li> <li>• Support for matchmaking</li> <li>• Support in preparation of research/innovation projects and proposal writing</li> <li>• Support for the cluster related companies and organisations in implementing research/innovation projects</li> <li>• Collection of information about the project results</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement <sup>9</sup> 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Other policy / supporting Instruments</b>	[...]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and feedback for the development of other targeted policy instruments</li> <li>• Support in communicating instruments</li> <li>• Mobilisation of actors to use instruments</li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement <sup>10</sup> 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	

<sup>9</sup> Proposition for the quantitative assessment: 6-7 aspects of potential contribution of cluster initiatives fulfilled: 4 – strong involvement, 4-5 aspects fulfilled: 3 – medium involvement, 1-3 aspects fulfilled: little involvement, no aspect fulfilled: no involvement

<sup>10</sup> Proposition for the quantitative assessment: 3 aspects of potential contribution of cluster initiatives fulfilled: 4 – strong involvement, 2 aspects fulfilled: 3 – medium involvement, 1 aspect fulfilled: little involvement, no aspect fulfilled: no involvement

Tool/Instrument	Output	Contribution of cluster initiatives / cluster management	Tool/Instrument implemented (yes/no)	Intensity of involvement of cluster initiatives (1/2/3/4)	Qualitative review of involvement of cluster initiatives
<b>Cluster Services to support TA development*</b>	Different types of services with relevance to regional economic development are implemented by the cluster initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of actions and services related to the development of the TAs (ref. action development workshop / best practice report): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster expansion</li> <li>Innovation and technology</li> <li>Education and training</li> <li>Commercial cooperation</li> <li>Policy action</li> <li>Research and networking</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Other [...]</b>	[...]		yes/no	1 no involvement 2 little involvement 3 medium involvement 4 strong involvement	
<b>Composite Indicator</b>				<b>1-4</b>	

\*Tools proposed by the Innovation Model

## Dashboard - Reviewing the interplay between S3 and Clusters

To show the **overall results** of the assessment a dashboard (“one-pager”) should be created as a summary.

This overview should include the results of the quantitative assessment of each action line: This could be done by presenting the results of the calculated composite indicators of each action line by means of a graph or other simple illustrations. The figurative example in Figure 3 depicts the results of the quantitative assessment as a spider graph. Complementary, main insights of the qualitative assessment should also be included to convey a deeper understanding of the results.

The dashboard displays a snap-shot of **how clusters are used as a tool** in implementing the Innovation Model and serves to identify areas to further strengthen the interplay of S3 and clusters in the region.

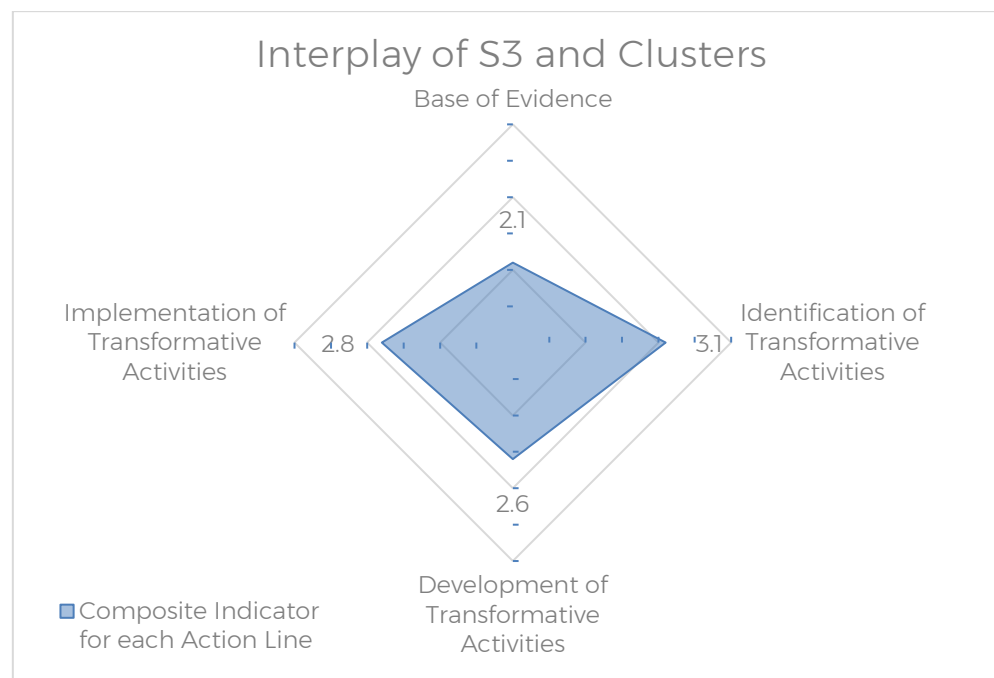


Figure 3: Results of the Assessment of the Interplay between S3 and Clusters in each Action Line (figurative example)



# S3-4AlpClusters in a nutshell

## Smart Specialisation with Smart Clusters

Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) are a lever of EU Cohesion Policy. One of the biggest challenges is to make use of the interplay between S3 and clusters. How can S3 be used to foster innovation processes and spark entrepreneurship within clusters? How can S3 be implemented through clusters to gain sustainable and inclusive growth? There is a lack of experience among regions on how to use clusters in the implementation of S3 and how to develop implementation tools to fully benefit SMEs. In addition, alignment between and knowledge about other regions' strategies are very limited.



This is exactly the focus of the S3-4AlpClusters project, which believes that the interplay between S3 and clusters is an innovative approach that could spread innovation in the whole Alpine Space. S3-4AlpClusters will launch cross-regional coordinated actions between the different sectors/regions involved and enhance transnational cluster cooperation. The final aim is to generate critical mass for SMEs and to improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space.

S3-4AlpClusters will develop:

- A joint transnational cluster action plan to improve transnational, cluster-based cooperation
- An S3-based innovation model for cluster development
- A fully synchronized call scheme
- New services validated by pilot clusters

The S3-4AlpClusters community includes cluster managers, entrepreneurs, academics and policymakers, and is supported by public authorities and S3 experts.

### The NUMBERS of S3-4ALPCLUSTERS

**15** Partners

**35** decision makers

**9** Observers

**11** Alpine Regions

**830** SME

**10** pilot clusters to be involved

FOLLOW S3-4AlpClusters

[www.alpine-space.eu/projects/s3-4alpclusters/en/home](http://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/s3-4alpclusters/en/home)



## S3-4ALPCLUSTERS Partners

HES-SO // FR-HEIA-FR INNOSQUARE CLUSTERS



Haute école d'ingénierie et d'architecture Fribourg  
Hochschule für Technik und Architektur Freiburg

Business Upper Austria - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH



ClusterAgentur Baden-Württemberg



Veneto Region - Research Clusters and Networks Unit



Poly4EMI hosts by Anteja ECG d.o.o



Innovation and Technology Transfer Salzburg GmbH



University of Franche-Comté - FEMTO-ST



PROPLAST - Consortium for the Plastic Culture Promotion



Cluster Technologies for Smart Cities & Communities  
Lombardy Foundation



Autonomous Province of Trento (PAT)



Trentino Innovation Hub



Lombardy Region Government



Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH



Government Office for Development and European  
Cohesion Policy



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR DEVELOPMENT  
AND EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY

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