

Emiliano Duch

The Environmental Industries Cluster in Västra Götaland Region (Case A – Government)

The presence of environmental industries in the region

The Västra Götaland Region (in Southwest Sweden) started in 2002 a support program to identify the interest in common services (in particular in the export promotion services) among companies in the environmental industries in their region.

The results of the study, carried out by a local environmental consulting firm, were very encouraging, with more than 165 companies identified, of which 63 showed interest, within the following sub-sectors:

- Energy optimization
- Renewable energy
- Air
- Soil
- Environmentally adapted products
- Transportation
- Water
- Recycling

A short summary of the study is attached at the end of this case.

The same consultant carried out a similar investigation for the companies in 13 communities in the Gothenburg region, for Business Region Gothenburg. That investigation covered some 170 companies, of which 87 showed interest in export supporting activities created by Business Region Gothenburg.

How to make “the environment” generate business?

The Region was interested in generating business opportunities out of the environment, and was looking at ways in which it could encourage the local companies serving the environmental sector to grow. Having a very demanding environmental policy should not be seen as a cost to business, but as opportunity to generate business in itself. At this time, several other areas of the region had been following the so-called cluster approach, and many others had recently participated in a nation-wide competition for substantial funds to be awarded to *innovative cluster initiatives*. The project leaders for the environmental industries were asking themselves if they should follow that path as well.

The high interest in common services by the companies in the Environmental Industries could make them a possible ground for a cluster-wide initiative, which could look at their market opportunities and define some common action lines?

Even though they were already late for the large nationwide contest; they could probably still get funds from another national source that was funding as well cluster initiatives

In any case, being the environmental industry so wide, maybe a first step should be to have a better definition of the cluster? But under what criteria?

And how should they proceed, where to start? With the companies in the area? Or should it start by the research institutions?

Annex: Excerpts from the study “Kartläggning av miljöföretag och deras exportvilja för Västra Götalands Regionen”

2.2 Project goal

To investigate the interest from the “environmental” companies in export supporting activities created by Västra Götalandsregionen. The area covered by the first investigation was excluded.

2.3 Fulfilling of goal

In 100 hours some 165 companies were interviewed and classified according to plan.

3.3 Branches

- Energy optimization
- Renewable energy
- Air
- Soil
- Environmentally adapted products
- Transportation
- Environmental companies acc to their own statement
- Water Recycling
- Others

3.4 Result

63 companies showed interest in export activities created by Västra Götalandsregionen.

4 Conclusions

Branch specific activities – as opposed to general environmental export activities.

Concrete projects – like partly funded projects in e.g. FP 6

Cluster – E.g. the new national program

Export advisors – with specific branch knowledge

