

# Cluster- Panorama NRW

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# 1

## NRW Cluster Community: Central topics for the further development of the innovation location with the help of the clusters

The new networking initiative „**Cluster-Dialog.NRW**“ of the NRW.innovativ competence centre was launched at the beginning of 2022. Around 25 clusters and networks active throughout the state are currently involved in this initiative. The initiative is designed as an open format. It is planned to involve further actors as needed. Various events were held in the first half of 2022.

Based on the findings from talks with clusters and the discussions at the first Cluster-Dialog.NRW events, unused **potential and future focus topics for the Cluster-Dialog.NRW** were discussed and derived. Within the framework of these activities, general fields of action as well as five topic areas from a bottom-up process could be crystallised, in which the NRW clusters and networks so far see the greatest short- or medium-term potential and starting points for the NRW innovation ecosystem.

### 1.1 Promoting knowledge and technology transfer with the help of the NRW clusters

In the area of knowledge and technology transfer (KTT), the NRW clusters see potential with regard to the better integration of clusters and networks as intermediaries of the innovation ecosystem. Findings from the Cluster Dialogue.NRW show that the clusters classify the topic as important overall. Some clusters emphasise that a focused target group orientation and the integration of central stakeholders are relevant. In addition, the NRW clusters emphasise that KTT should not be viewed as a science push model, but with a focus on market pull and returns to the higher education sector. In the context of the Cluster Dialogue.NRW, clusters and networks see the need to focus KTT in interdisciplinary areas, as this requires coordination of interactions between different clusters. As part of the Cluster Dialogue, interested clusters therefore came together on 3 May 2022 for a first joint exchange to discuss strengths and weaknesses, as well as good practices of KTT with the help of clusters in NRW.

### 1.2 Support for cross-clustering and cross-innovation between NRW clusters

Within the Cluster-Dialog.NRW, the NRW clusters emphasise the lack of networking and coordination between the various clusters. In order to strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation between clusters, the Cluster Dialogue will in future push for more systematic networking of the players in technological, non-technological and social topics. According to some NRW clusters, cross-sectional technologies such as AI or cyber security should play an important role here. In this way, the cluster dialogue can support the identification of topic areas and concrete ideas to establish NRW as an international pioneer and stimulate cooperation in the innovation ecosystem. In addition, some NRW clusters currently see potential in the more transparent presentation of actors and activities, for example in the form of overviews of successful projects. In this way, the visibility of existing offers could be strengthened in the future and existing activities of general interest could be presented more transparently.



### 1.3 Participation of NRW clusters in federal and EU funding programmes

The findings of the inventory show that the NRW clusters have not yet fully exploited all opportunities for federal and EU cluster funding in the 2014-2020 EU funding period. For example, the NRW clusters have so far participated to a lesser extent in funding programmes such as the Horizon 2020 programme „INNOSUP-1“<sup>1</sup> or the COSME programme „European Strategic Cluster Partnerships“<sup>2</sup>. Feedback during the kick-off meeting and the cluster talks shows that the NRW clusters would like better support in initiating and implementing funding projects. In addition, some NRW clusters emphasise that there are various challenges in participating in federal and EU funding. To inform interested NRW clusters about the activities of the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#) and the [go-cluster programme](#), a digital information event with Nina Hoppmann and Theresa Gerdes from the two initiatives was held on 9 May 2022 for interested clusters.

### 1.4 Use of the European cluster labelling

A look at the presence of NRW clusters in [cluster labelling](#) shows that around 23 labels have been awarded to NRW clusters between 2012-2022<sup>3</sup>. However, a field report by the [it's OWL](#) cluster at the strategy meeting of Cluster-Dialog.NRW shows that the label can be used as an internal optimisation tool and as a quality feature for European platforms/funding programmes. Overall, the it's OWL cluster estimates the effort to be worthwhile. In order to inform interested NRW clusters about the possibilities of cluster labelling within the framework of the [federal programme go-cluster](#), Cluster Dialogue has organised a digital information event with a representative of the programme for interested clusters on 9 May 2022.

### 1.5 Participation in the European Cluster Conference 2022

The strengthening of the presence and networking of NRW clusters with international partners is to be further strengthened in the future through cluster dialogue. Various European exchange formats offer a good opportunity. For example, the eighth edition of the [European Cluster Conference](#) will take place in Prague in September 2022, which will bring together cluster policy, cluster managers and other interests and provide opportunities to exchange ideas with experts and learn more about European cluster initiatives.

1 For more information on the INNOSUP-1 programme see: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c78ffa46-1a66-11eb-b57e-01aa75ed71a1> (last accessed 18.05.2022).

2 For more information on the European Strategic Cluster Partnerships see: <https://clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships> (last accessed 18.05.2022).

3 Further information on cluster labelling on the website of the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA): <https://www.cluster-analysis.org/> (last accessed on 18.05.2022); now active as the European Clusters Labelling Excellence Structure (EUCLES): <https://eucles.be/> (last accessed on 18.05.2022).

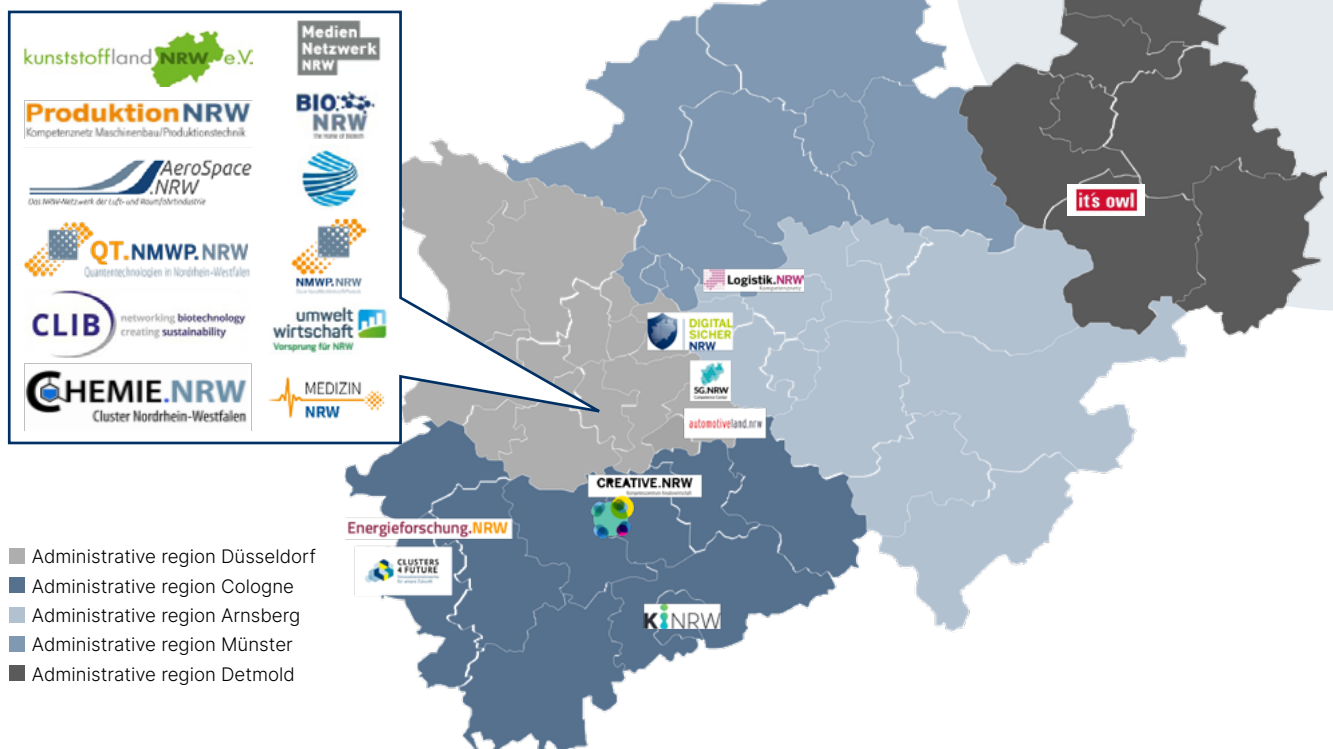
## 2 Background: Cluster landscape in NRW – an overview

In the coming years, the [Regional Innovation Strategy for North Rhine-Westphalia \(2021-2027\)](#) will set the strategic framework for future research and innovation funding activities in NRW. <sup>4</sup> With regard to cluster policy, both the innovation strategy and the NRW Innovation Report (2020/2021) emphasise that the transparency of the actor landscape should be strengthened in the coming years and cluster activities should be more strongly aligned with the needs of the target groups. The NRW Innovation Report (2020) in particular makes it clear that NRW already has a **large number of active and successful clusters and networks** in the various innovation fields of the NRW Regional Innovation Strategy (2021-2027).<sup>4</sup> The clusters that are active throughout NRW represent a large number of companies, universities, non-university research institutions and other actors in the seven innovation fields of the regional innovation strategy. Overall, the cluster landscape comprises around 14 state clusters and many other clusters and networks, such as the two future clusters **Neurosys** and **Hydrogen**, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the top cluster **it's OWL**.

### Illustration 1:

#### Regional distribution of clusters and networks in NRW

Source: NRW.innovativ (April 2022).



<sup>4</sup> Ministry for Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitalisation and Energy North Rhine-Westphalia (2021): Regional Innovation Strategy North Rhine-Westphalia. Available at: <https://www.wirtschaft.nrw/innovationsstrategie> (last accessed on 08.04.2022).

The cluster landscape largely reflects NRW's historical industrial focus. For example, the broad facets of the **innovation field „Innovative Materials and Smart Production“** are represented by various networks such as *Chemie.NRW*, *SPIN NRW*, *it's OWL*, *NMWP.NRW*, *Kunststoffland.NRW* and *Produktion.NRW*. In addition, the cluster landscape in the fields of **environmental economy and circular economy, networked mobility/logistics and energy/innovative construction** is well positioned with clusters and competence networks such as *Umweltwirtschaft.NRW*, *the industrial biotechnology cluster*, *BIO.NRW*, *Logistik.NRW*, *automotiveland.NRW*, *AeroSpace.NRW* and *innocam.NRW*, *Energieforschung.NRW* and *NRW.Energy4Climate*. The innovation field **„Innovative Medicine, Health and Life Science“** includes *the Medizin.NRW cluster* and the *BIO.NRW cluster*, which deal in particular with the topics of innovative medicine and the bioeconomy, industrial biotechnology and red biotechnology. The *industrial biotechnology cluster (CLIB)* also works on similar topics in NRW. In the **innovation field „culture, media and creative industries and innovative services“**, the networks *CREATIVE.NRW* and *Mediennetzwerk.NRW* are particularly active. In addition to the thematic innovation fields, the field **„Key Technologies of the Future, ICT“** functions as a cross-cutting theme. Central clusters are, for example, the *AI.NRW competence platform*, the *QT.NRW coordination office* and the *5G.NRW Competence Centre*. Discussions with clusters make it clear that the area of innovative services in particular offers a lot of potential, but it is also apparent that the current cluster landscape is strongly focused on product innovations.

## Illustration 2:

### Brief presentation of the Cluster Dialogue.NRW



The Cluster Dialogue.NRW was launched in January 2022 in order to strengthen networking between the clusters and networks active throughout North Rhine-Westphalia as part of the activities of the NRW.innovativ competence centre and thus improve cooperation between the stakeholders. The Cluster Dialogue is a new networking initiative with which the future exchange of information and experience between the clusters and networks in NRW is specifically supported and coordinated through a demand-oriented bottom-up approach. In addition to the further development of the existing clusters and networks, the Cluster Dialogue will focus on new thematic, technological and innovation fields that have so far been located on the periphery and overlapping areas of the existing clusters and networks (cross-cluster innovation) and are capable of further development. The Cluster Dialogue takes on the role of a moderator and networker between the individual actors. In addition to individual, demand-oriented and thematic matchings and discussion rounds (e.g. knowledge and technology transfer), plenary events are also organised at regular intervals with a majority of the clusters active throughout the state in order to build up a sustainable structure of different clusters and networks.



