Interreg Europe

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AccelerateGDT

Pilot Action “Cluster Knowledge for SME Resilience”

Insights and results

Matthew Federico Becker
Project Manager Internationalisation & Interreg Europe
m.becker@duisburg.business

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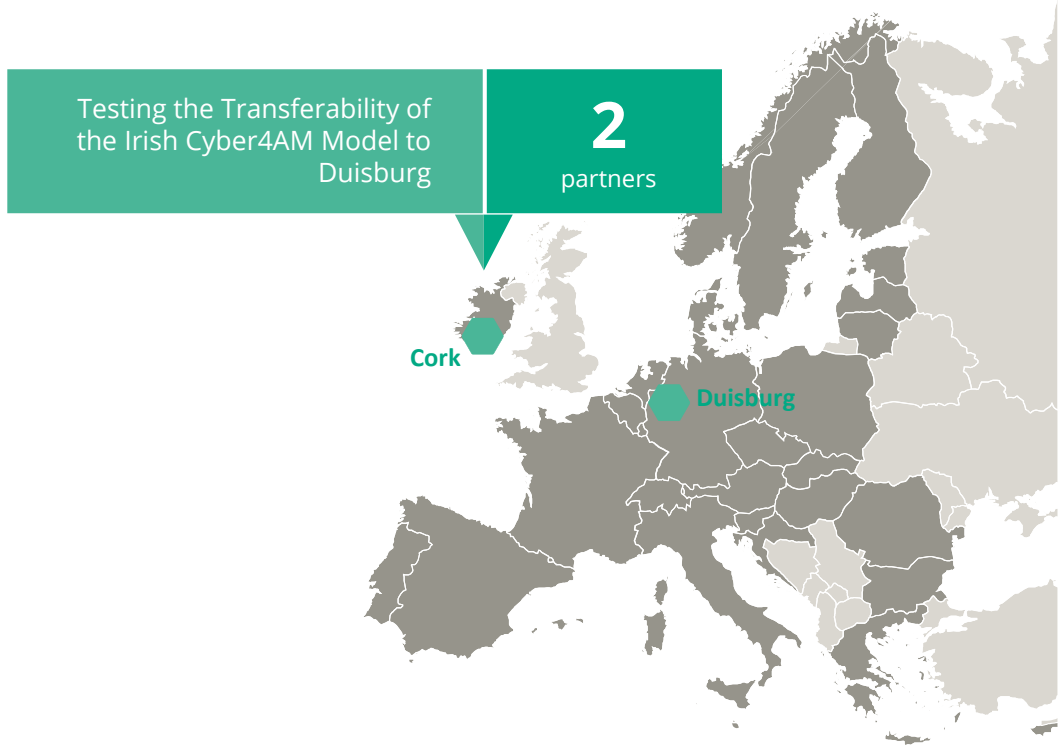
Discussion

1. The policy context

The policy context: What are we trying to improve?

Turning smart specialisation into action

- Accelerate GDT aims to improve regional and national cluster policies in support of the green and digital transition
- Clusters and collaborative ecosystems are used as vehicles for knowledge transfer, innovation and SME resilience
- The project combines interregional learning, good practice exchange and policy experimentation
- For the Ruhr Region, the policy instrument addressed is the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Business Metropole Ruhr (BMR)



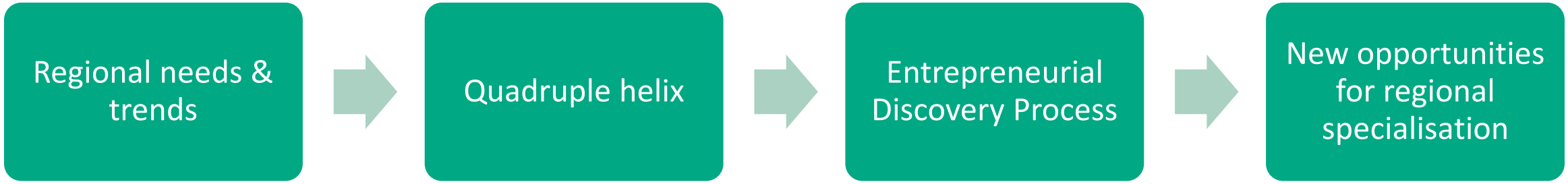
The policy context: Smart specialization in the Ruhr Metropolis

The Ruhr S3 aims to:

- Build on endogenous regional strengths and capabilities,
- Connect those strengths with future market opportunities and external trends,
- Strengthen innovation, resilience and competitiveness, and
- Translate regional priorities into cooperation between the Ruhr's cities, companies, research actors and institutions.

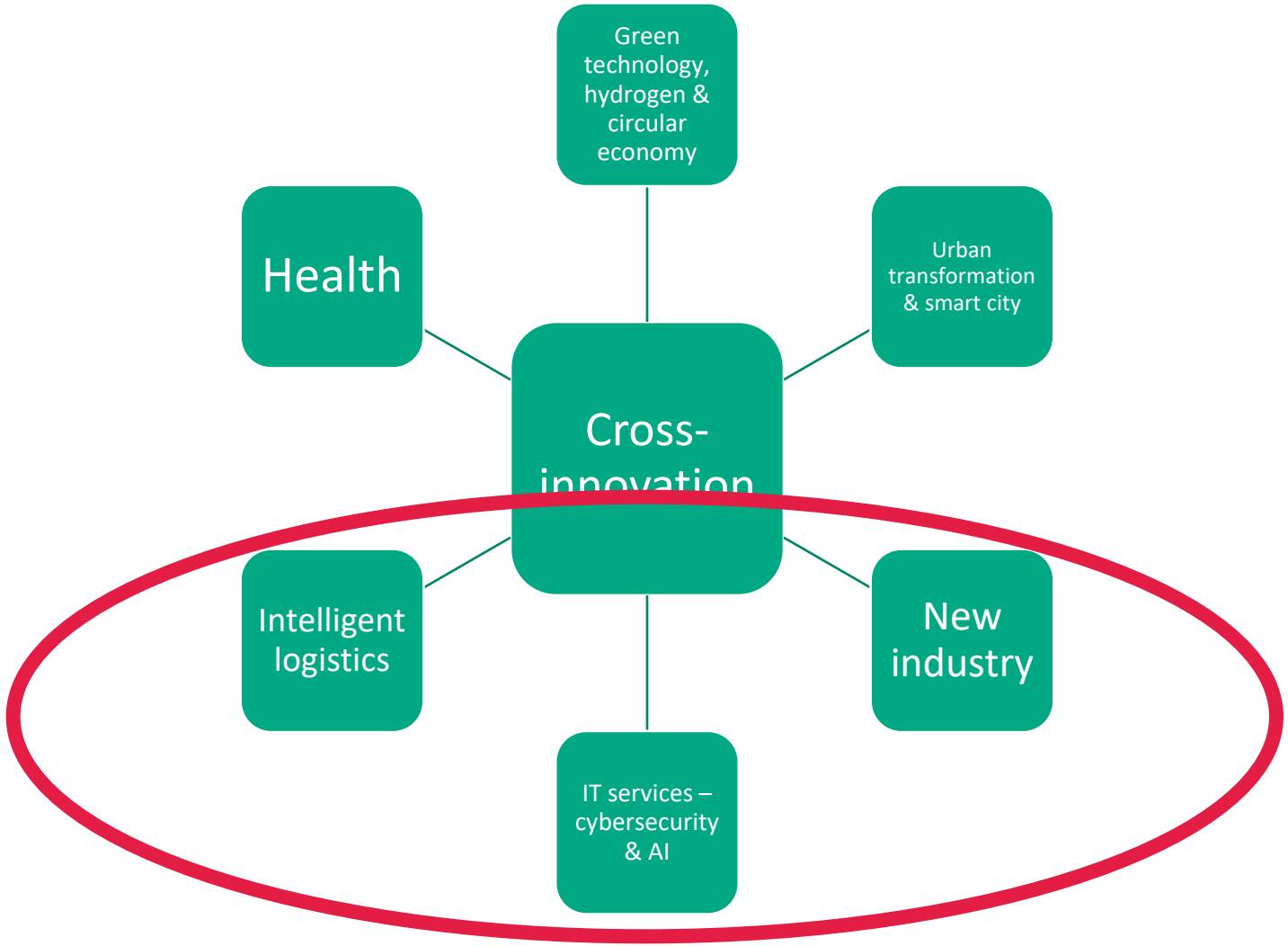


How smart specialization is supposed to work:
A bottom-up discovery process



Six specialisation fields, but not six silos

BMR's S3 provides a framework for cross-innovation



2. The inspiration

The Irish good practice: Cyber Security for Advanced Manufacturing & IN4.0 (Cyber4AM)

- All-island, cross-cluster initiative bringing cybersecurity expertise together with manufacturing
- January – December 2023
- Objectives:
  - Strengthening cybersecurity preparedness of manufacturing SMEs
  - Creating opportunities for cybersecurity providers in advanced manufacturing



Link to good practice

Involved partners

Cybersecurity Clusters

CYBER | IRELAND
IRELAND'S CYBER SECURITY CLUSTER

NI CYBER

University & Research

MTU
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan
Munster Technological University

IRISH MANUFACTURING RESEARCH

Queen's UNIVERSITY

Ulster University

Manufacturing Clusters

atimcluster
advanced technologies in manufacturing
accelerating industry growth together

IDEAM
INDUSTRY CLUSTER

MEGA
Manufacturing & Engineering Growth & Advancement

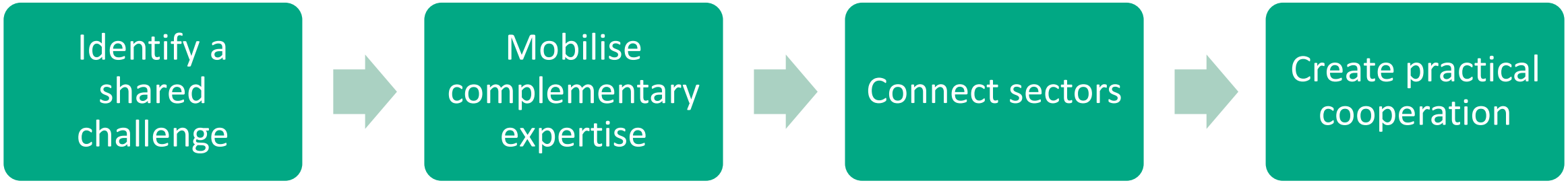
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The crucial learning from Cyber4AM

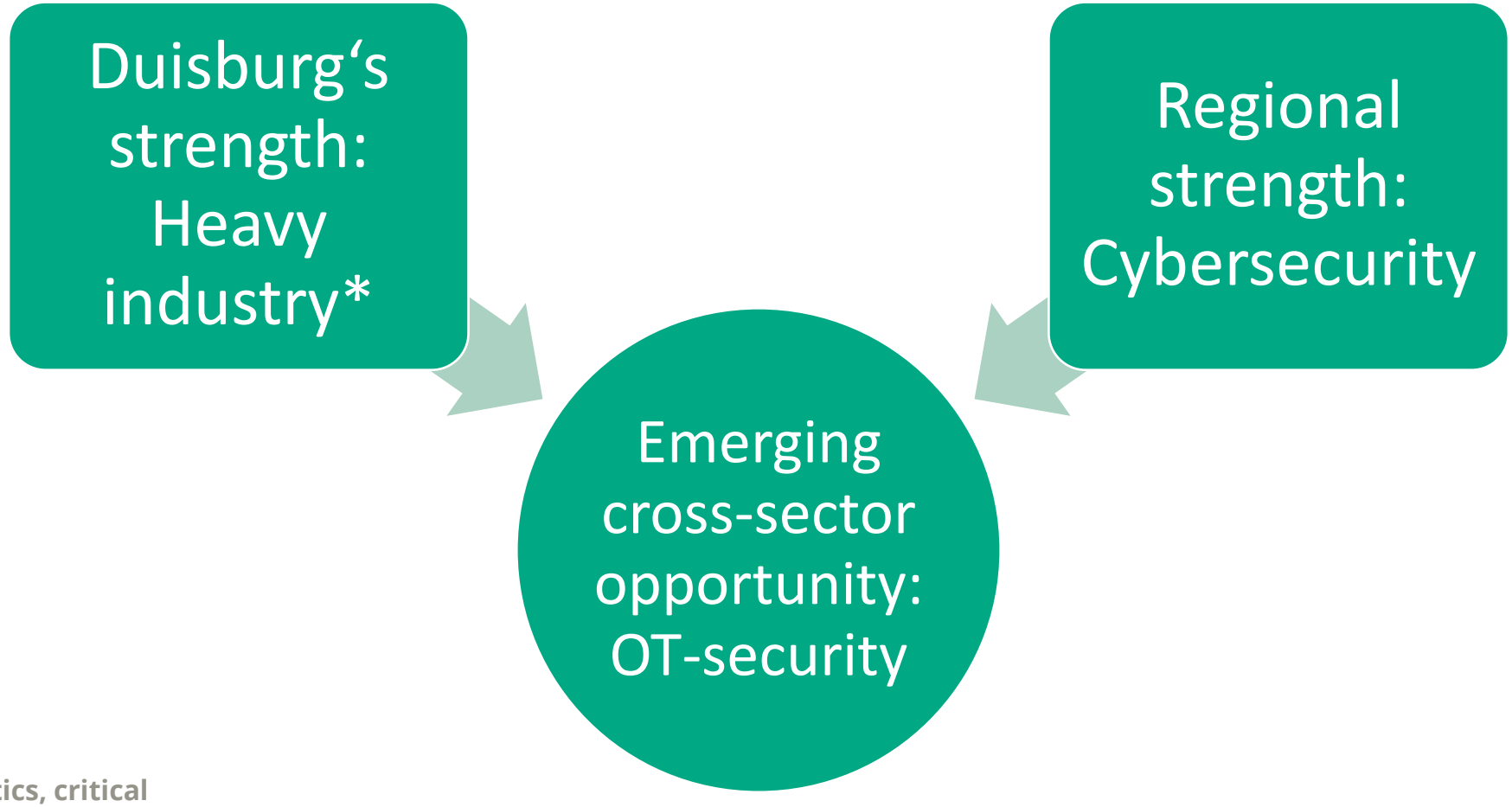
We did not transfer a cybersecurity solution.

The real good practice was the methodology.



3. Duisburg: Local strengths within a polycentric region

Smart specialisation also means territorial differentiation



*Manufacturing, logistics, critical infrastructure

OT-security sits at the intersection of several S3 principles

S3 principle	Duisburg context	Resulting needs/reactions
Respond to external trends	Increasing digitalisation of industrial processes	OT-security
Build on local capabilities	Industry, logistics, critical infrastructure	Industrial OT use cases
Use cross-sector synergies	Cyber expertise + industrial expertise	Cross-cluster cooperation
Strengthen resilience	Digital dependencies create new vulnerabilities	Cyber resilience
Avoid isolated sector thinking	Challenges cross multiple traditional sectors	Pool regional and sector knowledge

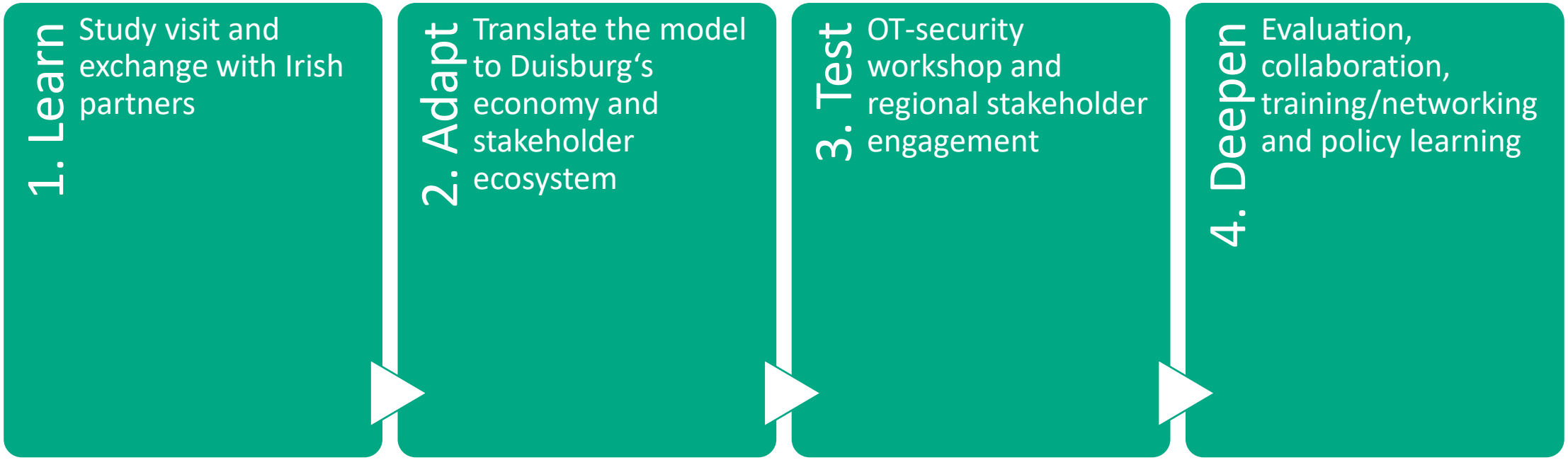
4. Pilot action – the theory

Pilot action research question

Can a cross-cluster methodology developed in Ireland be adapted to Duisburg to mobilise stakeholders around a new cross-industry challenge?

Level 1 – Transferability	• Can Cyber4AM‘s cluster-led approach work in another regional context?
Level 2 – Stakeholder mobilisation	• Can OT-security bring industrial, digital, academic and regional actors together?
Level 3 – Policy relevance	• Can this approach help identify and develop emerging fields within smart specialisation?

Pilot action design



5. Pilot action – the implementation

Timeline

Study visit to Ireland

Mullingar, 17-19 November 2025

Seminar “Clusters Driving Change – A Shared Value Perspective”

Barcelona, 25-27 November 2025

Workshop “OT-Cybersecurity in Practice”

Duisburg, 28 April 2026

Collaboration event

Duisburg, 27 August 2026

1. Learn

Study visit to Ireland |17-19 November 2025

Topics:

- Exchange with MTU and Cyber Ireland
- ISA Ireland OT Cybersecurity Conference
- Exchange on Cyber4AM
- Cluster collaboration and support mechanisms
- Practical discussion of manufacturing cybersecurity needs



Main takeaway: The challenge must be translated into the economic structure, culture, and reality of Duisburg.

1. Learn

Barcelona: “Clusters Driving Change – A Shared Value Perspective” | 25-27 November 2025

The Barcelona seminar reinforced:

- Cluster-based economic development
- Collaborative approaches
- Shared-value thinking
- The role of stakeholder ecosystems in responding to regional challenges



2. Adapt
From cybersecurity to OT-security

Cyber 4AM

Cybersecurity + manufacturing

Regional analysis

Duisburg = logistics + manufacturing + heavy industry + infrastructure

Adaptation

OT-security as a shared cross-sector challenge

Regional complementarity

Complement rather than duplicate existing Ruhr strengths

3. Test

“OT-Cybersecurity in Practice” | Duisburg, 28 April 2026

The introductory workshop included:

- Expert input,
- Practical discussion of OT-security,
- An OT-cyberattack simulation,
- Exchanges among companies, experts and regional actors,
- Feedback and evaluation, and
- Discussion of possible follow-up activities



3. Test

What monitoring told us

The first important lesson: Engagement has to be adaptive

Observation: Initial participants were mainly technical experts already familiar with cybersecurity.

Learning: To involve more SMEs and decision-makers simplify terminology, communicate in terms of business risk and resilience, broaden target groups, use trusted multipliers, and adapt outreach continuously.

4. Deepen
Rethinking impact

1. Traditional measure

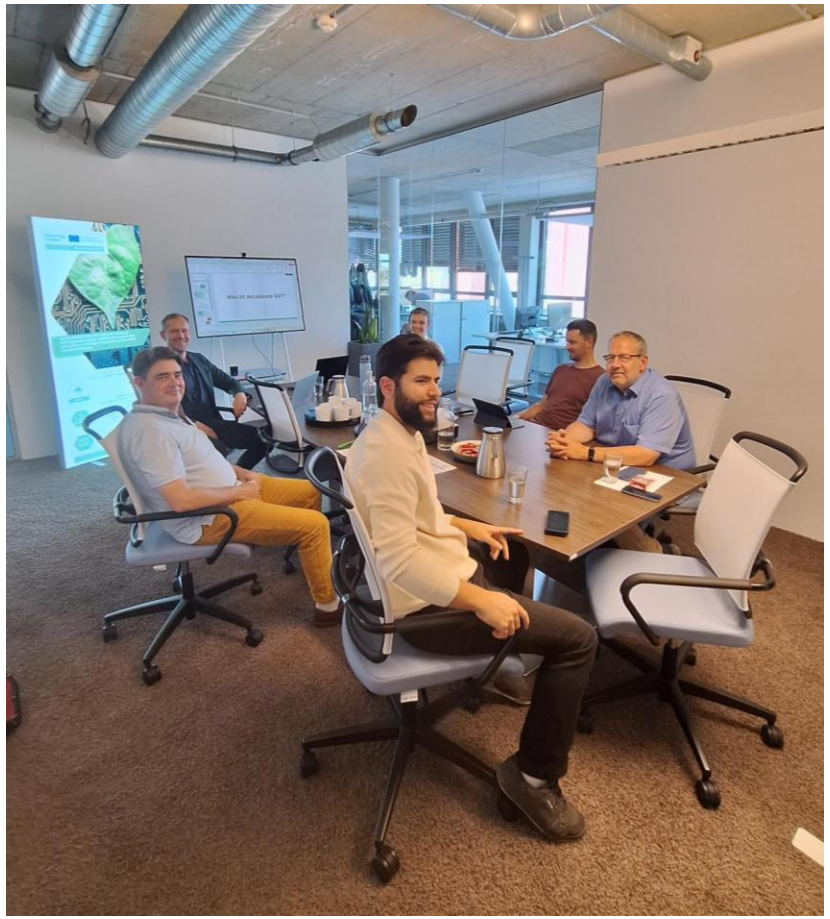
How many companies participated?

2. What we learned to ask



In emerging cross-industry fields, a small number of committed organisations can generate disproportionate effects.

4. Deepen
From event to continued cooperation
Building stakeholder ownership



Collaboration event on 27 August 2026:

- Co-planned and co-organised with stakeholders
- Designed as a low-threshold entry point into OT- and IoT-security
- Community-building

→ Handover of the reins to stakeholders

6. Results and policy improvement

Results on three levels

Stakeholder level

- Increased awareness of OT-security
- New cross-sector relationships → small stakeholder group allows deeper discussions
- Interest in further training and networking
- Increasing stakeholder involvement in follow-up

Regional ecosystem level

- Connection of industrial needs with cybersecurity expertise
- Stronger involvements of multipliers
- Exploration of OT-security as a cooperative regional field

Policy level

- A tested method for identifying cross-industry fields
- Experience in using interregional learning as an input into S3 implementation
- Stronger emphasis on complementarity and stakeholder ownership

The policy improvement

From strategic principles to an operational method

Already embedded in the Ruhr S3

- Entrepreneurial Discovery Process
- Bottom-up stakeholder involvement
- Cross-innovation
- Recogniton of subregional strengths
- Intermunicipal cooperation
- Adaptation to external trends
- Resilience and diversification

What Accelerate GDT added

- A practical method for identifying a concrete emerging cross-industry need
- Structured use of interregional learning to respond to that need
- Testing the opportunity through a Pilot Action
- Mobilisation of stakeholders around a real use case
- Iterative monitoring and adjustment of stakeholder engagement
- Examination of regional complementaries rather than isolated local strengths
- A pathway from experimentation to continued stakeholder ownership

The policy improvement is not a revision of the S3's strategic priorities.

It is a new operational approach for putting several of the S3's core principles into practice.

The wider lesson: Smart specialisation can be dynamic

Traditional question

What are our strongest sectors?

Additional question tested through the pilot action

What emerging challenges connect several sectors, and what capabilities can we combine to address them?

A transferable methodology: From the pilot action to future areas of specialisation

1. • Identify a cross-industry need
2. • Learn from another region
3. • Analyse regional complementarities
4. • Mobilise relevant stakeholders
5. • Test through a concrete activity
6. • Monitor and adapt
7. • Build ownership and integrate the learning into policy implementation

7. Key takeaways

Four lessons from Duisburg

Transfer, don’t copy.	Good practices have to be adapted to local economic structures.
Look across sectors.	Emerging challenges can reveal new opportunities for specialisation.
Think regionally.	Complementarity between locations can be more valuable than duplication.
Build ownership.	Long-term impact depends on committed stakeholders and multipliers.

Time for questions



Discussion

Can this approach work in your region?

1. Which emerging challenge in your region currently cuts across several sectors?
2. Which capabilities already exist elsewhere in your region that could complement it?
3. What would be needed to move from identifying the opportunity to mobilising stakeholders around it?
4. Which good practice from another region could you adapt using this approach?

Thank you!

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