



## **IDEAM Cluster goes International at the TCI Global Cluster Conference in Kazan, Russia, 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

***'Cities, Collaboration, Circular Economy': [Video](#)***

### **IDEAM Cluster**

Clusters are collaborative engines for driving economic recovery, renewal and resilience whilst supporting business growth opportunities focusing on 'connecting people and connecting communities'. [IDEAM](#) is an industry-driven cluster organisation that brings together industry, academia and government to represent the needs of the advanced manufacturing sector in Ireland. Clusters and cluster initiatives have in the past 20 years become a key component in utilising the strengths of national and regional competitiveness strategies. Cluster programs and initiatives are today established in all developed and in many developing countries.

*"A cluster is a geographical proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and externalities" (Michael E. Porter, On Competition).*

Funded under the Regional Technology Cluster Fund (RTCF), our core mission is to support SMEs to unlock new opportunities with their smart manufacturing journey in Ireland. At an economic level, the impact of the IDEAM Cluster will be the retention and attraction of 2,000 jobs and support more than 75 manufacturing SMEs in digital transformation and Industry 4.0. We aim to enhance the productivity, competitiveness, internationalisation and growth of the companies and organisations which are part of the cluster. 'Alone we can go fast, but together we can go far'.

### **TCI Network**

The [TCI Network](#), which was founded in 1998, is the world's largest global network that connects people and organisations involved in clusters and innovation ecosystems. It is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that facilitates global collaboration, supports cluster development and informs policymakers.



*"Our mission is to inspire and strengthen connections, knowledge and competences for people and organisations working with clusters and innovation ecosystems around the globe".*



The TCI network aims to facilitate the exchange of know-how, benchmarking initiatives, the identification of key policy recommendations as well as the development of best practices for active collaboration in joint projects and activities. In its over 20-year existence, TCI has led a wide spectrum of cluster development activities.



### TCI Global Conferences

The TCI Network organises an annual global conference, the TCI Global Conference, in an outstanding city or region which brings together between 300 and 500 attendees each year. It is a platform for experts in the field to collaborate in order to advance cluster development, regional competitiveness, and innovation support practices. The conferences provide an opportunity for TCI community members as well as non-members to exchange experiences and to build competitive strategies.

### 24<sup>th</sup> TCI Global Conference in Kazan, Russia

The 24<sup>th</sup> TCI Global Conference of 2021 took place from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of September in the idyllic Kazan Palace by Tasigo Hotel providing fascinating heritage stories of the city and region. Kazan, the Republic of Tatarstan is one of the most developed and ambitious economic regions in Russia. The republic is an oil production and petrochemical centre that facilitates various industry clusters such as Petrochemical Clusters, Machinery Building Clusters and IT Clusters.



Tatarstan has set itself apart from other Russian regions by putting a strong emphasis on developing the infrastructure necessary to attract foreign investment. The Kazan Smart City is the region's cutting-edge urban development programme that aims to create an international business

hub. The conference in Kazan was devoted to three main themes; cities, collaboration and circular economy which built the narrative for the 3-day programme that allowed participants to learn first-hand from innovative experiences in Tatarstan clusters, cities and businesses.



**Cities**

*“Cities today are not only a place for people to live. Cities are developing and preserving history, introducing new technologies and promoting an improvement of the quality of life, effective business and development of the economy”.*



**Collaboration**

*“We live in an era of opportunity, in countries where the mechanism of economic development and modernization has been launched. The priority is equal opportunities for business, citizens and investors to participate in them. The future cannot be built alone”.*



**Circular economy**

*“Global environmental challenges are significantly needed to replace an outdated traditional economic model with a sustainable resource-effective model based on socially technological innovations”.*





## Impact for the IDEAM Cluster Community

After much anticipation, we finally got to meet with the international cluster community in person since pre-COVID times. SMEs around the world are still struggling with the economic consequences and challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Companies are also dealing with the challenges associated with the progression of climate change. These challenges are all global! The TCI Global Conference provides a platform for IDEAM to gather ideas and proven solutions from across the world that will allow companies to tackle and overcome these challenges. The three main themes of the conference, (1) cities – (2) collaboration – (3) circular economy, are critical to the design of new innovative strategies and business models that will contribute to the global recovery of economies and help societies become more sustainable.



Furthermore, Kazan provides an example of how cluster policies, as well as the region’s overarching economic development strategy, can support and enhance cluster initiatives. Local examples show how clusters can be used as a vehicle for change, for collaboration and the implementation of a circular economy concept.

### *‘When Collaboration Happens, Growth Happens’*

#### Day 1

The first day of the conference was devoted to the cluster tours which showcased the investment and industrial potential of the Republic of Tatarstan and Kazan. The cluster tours provided the opportunity to visit high-tech companies and to establish business contacts with technology solution providers.

IDEAM took part in the Smart City cluster tour which brought the conference members to [Innopolis](#). Innopolis is a new city in the Republic of Tatarstan that is located at the confluence of two rivers - the Volga and Sviyaga. It is the first Russian city that was built to facilitate the comfortable living and work of IT specialists and their families. The development of this world-scale project was led by Liu Tai Ker, general planner for the redevelopment department of Singapore, and sets an example for most modern cities in the world.





The “Smart City” concept helps Innopolis organise its infrastructure where houses, kindergartens, a school, a university, health and sports facilities have been built to meet the needs of professionals in the industry.



Two key Tech companies that were part of the Innopolis Smart City tour, [Group-IB](#), Mr. Yaroslav Kargalev, Deputy Head of Department and [Bpium](#), Mr. Andrey Finokhin, Commercial Director are now exploring international collaboration opportunities with IDEAM members after speaking with our Cluster Manager, Dr. Jamie Meehan. They have clear ambitions to work closely with

manufacturing SMEs in Ireland. Thus, this will help to support the growth and export of our members whilst understanding how they can potentially get route-to-market access in Kazan, Russia.

## Day 2

The second day allowed for meaningful discussions to take place between the visionary sessions which focused on global cluster frameworks and national objectives for the development of regional economics. Many IDEAM Cluster members were presented on the day to show how they are transforming the manufacturing landscape nationally and internationally through innovative digital and sustainability strategies.



## ‘Innovation through Collaboration’

Setting goals for the development of cluster initiatives through the study of world best practices and organisation of work of project teams were discussed in detail.



**Day 3**

The final day provided the platform for IDEAM Cluster to share our experience of pioneering and building the cluster community virtually over the last 10 months. Our panel session focussed on ‘National and Regional Strategies: Cluster Experience’. Excellent cluster policy and strategy examples were provided from Hungary, Russia, Kazakhstan and Ireland. Moreover, during our session, we got to meet with policymakers, cluster managers, researchers and practitioners that will help to shape the further development of IDEAM. The TCI Network provides the perfect platform for IDEAM to collaborate on an international

scale with cluster experts and organisations. This will help to provide new collaboration opportunities for our cluster members that are looking at internationalisation capabilities for their business. In support, excellent insights into successful cluster policy and economic development strategies were discussed which inspire what can be done in Ireland. This experience allowed IDEAM to establish valuable business contacts and new collaboration opportunities as well as promote our cluster members on a global stage.



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**Merete Daniel Nielsen, CEO of Cluster Excellence Denmark and President of the TCI Network views on IDEAM**

Here from what Mrs. Merete Nielsen, TCI Network President had to say about IDEAM: *“Digitalisation and the progression of Industry 4.0 have been accelerated by the pandemic and companies (SMEs in particular) have been struggling to keep up. The IDEAM Cluster in Ireland, which supports businesses in their digitalisation process, is a great example of how clusters can support businesses to adopt new technologies, avail of digitalisation funding opportunities and upskill their workforce. This will allow them to grow and improve their competitiveness”.*





“The 24<sup>th</sup> TCI Global Cluster Conference in Kazan was a great opportunity for the IDEAM Cluster to gain international exposure and to connect with cluster peers from all over the world. Cluster managers provided strategic insight into their cluster activities and shared, not only their success stories, but also the hardships and challenges they encountered on their cluster building journeys. The ability to exchange these lessons learnt and experiences is extremely valuable to improve cluster capabilities and competences”, stated Ms. Katrin Weittenhiller, IDEAM Research Fellow.

“The power of people coming together has never been so important as technology can be a vital tool, but connecting with people personally builds more trustworthy and impactful relationships. Industry engagement is core to the success of IDEAM and this was one of the main reasons for travelling to the TCI Global Cluster Conference. Connecting with international clusters through the lens of such an open and diverse culture that Russia has to offer helped provide new opportunities for our members. Together we can harness the new opportunities enabled by Industry 4.0 technologies and help Ireland become a global leader in smart and sustainable manufacturing. Our team are very much looking forward to TCI 2022 in Durban, South Africa on 9-11 November”, stated Dr. Jamie Meehan, Cluster Manager, IDEAM.



### What is Next?

The Irish digital technology sector is thriving with annual sales of over €6.5 billion with more than 1,000 companies operating across a wide number of industries. The manufacturing sector in Ireland employs 205,700 people directly and 400,000 people across all skills levels. More than 80% of companies have said that automaton of manufacturing was critical to their future success with robotics, AI & data analytics, additive manufacturing and 3D printing IN4.0 digital technologies being implemented. IDEAM will continue to help the growth of the smart manufacturing sector in Ireland.

