



# Northern Connections

## A strategic Transnational Cluster Cooperation

- *Unlocking the potential for regional innovation*



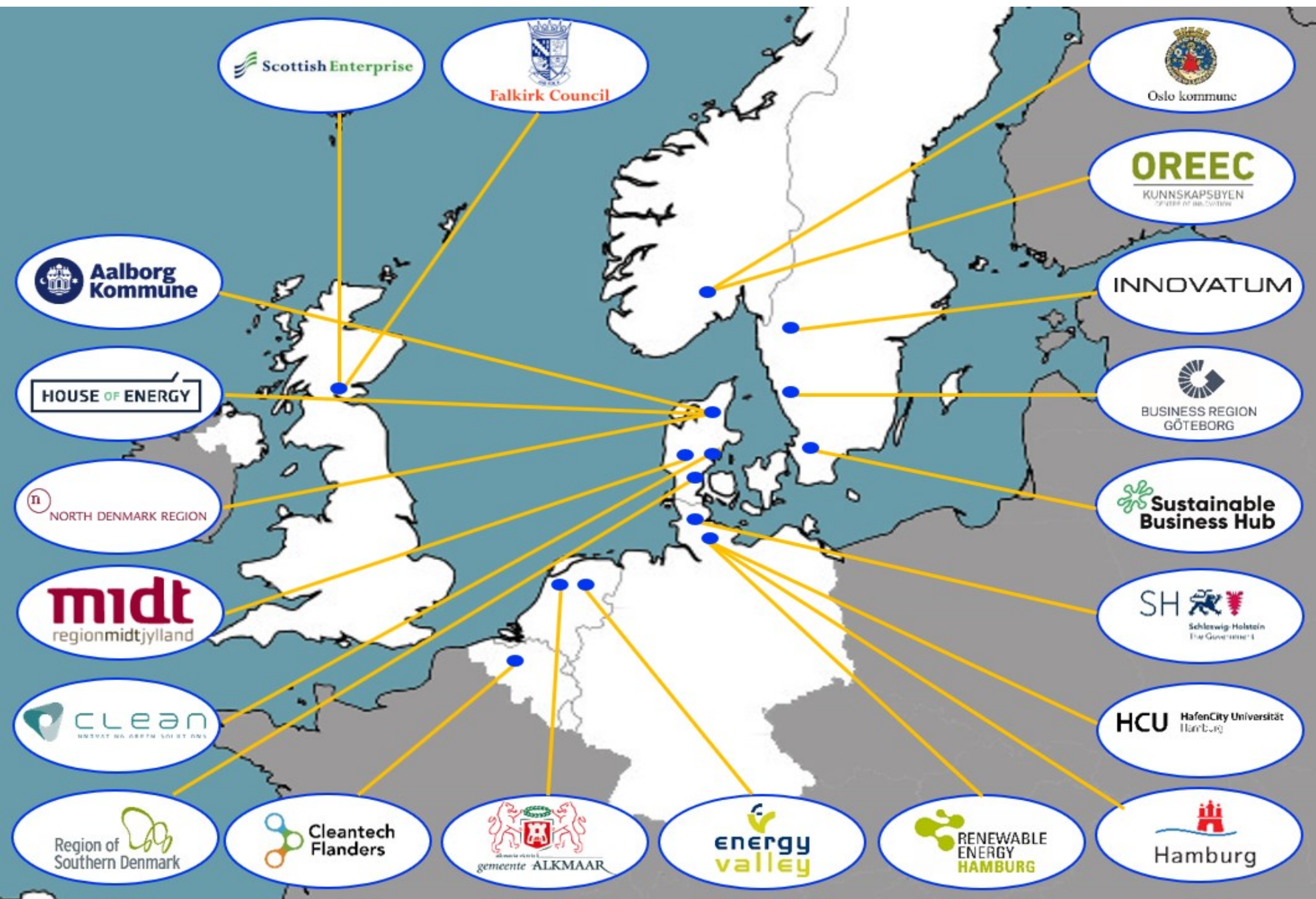
# Northern Connections

The Northern Connections partnership consists of 21 clusters, cities, regions and knowledge institutions.

Creating collaborations between cities, clusters and enterprises within the energy sector.









# Why Northern Connections

*To tackle observed huge difficulties for clusters to work together across borders.*

The lack of cooperation due to lack of awareness of opportunities as well as competition. The clusters saw each other as fierce competitors and were afraid to share information about their member companies and how they help them.

And cities were reluctant to invite foreign companies into their “backyard” – potentially taking business from local companies.





# Ethos

*Through city and cluster cooperation create a common approach on how to work together and enable our SMEs to work together – unlocking the potential for transnational collaboration.*





# Best practise

Toolboxes:  
Toolbox for clusters

Toolbox for cities



**Toolbox v 1.0 – Innovation Support Measures**



# Best practise – Living Lab concept

*We have held LivingLab events in Denmark, Oslo, Gothenburg and Hamburg with great success.*

*The drive for participating has been overwhelming – showing trust on a cluster level and willingness to engage our SMEs. The LivingLab Event in Gothenburg had more than 40 SME applicants, representing all partner countries*





# What are Living Labs?

**Living Labs** are **concrete** projects and real demonstrators for sustainable energy applications.

**Living Labs** are demand driven, **are the challenge owner**, inviting in potential solutions from project area SMEs.

**Living Labs** are **governed** to facilitate fruitful and successful, **open solution**, workshops.

*Living Labs have following basic requirements:*

- Strong backup by your local politics
- Critical mass of companies and a dedicated challenge owner (public or private)





## CONCEPT for Living Lab Event

- Balance the needs of the Living Labs with the needs of the buyer/owner (city or large company)
- Creates an event to benefit the plans of the buyer/owner (Living Lab Level) by introducing them to potential new partners and product innovators
- [Living Lab Gothenburg](#)

### **Vision**

(Overall vision and coherence of the living lab)

### **Owners**

(Regional, National, public, private etc.)

### **Buyer(s)**

(Who wants to invest and has the burning platform)



# How do we use the LL approach

## Cities

- Knowledge of possibilities of a living lab
- Knowledge of connection to innovative public procurement – distinction, rules, possibilities
- Makes city challenges visible for themselves and for solution providers (ex district heating, building a sustainable kinder garden)
- *The Living lab owners experienced added values* that we had not seen coming: Not only did they get the opportunity to see various solutions to their challenges - they even gained new input on challenges or angles which they were not aware of, adding new value and input to their visions



# How do we use the LL approach

## Clusters:

- Opportunity to bring their companies to new markets
- New innovation dialogue with companies
- Companies – many small ones, have solutions, parts of the solution, but they need market, need visibility, etc.





***Knowledge sharing and cooperation***  
**=**  
***The key challenge AND the solution***



# Challenges ahead – changing habits, youth as frontrunners

- Cities: major role to play in climate change / energy challenges – cities can drive the change if ask for innovative solutions.
- We need to dare work differently. Change habits and usual ways of procurement. Cities need to dare use innovative procurement and living labs to drive innovation and sustainable change.
- Clusters: Involve SMEs to learn from and through international collaboration in order to speed up the green transition both in buildings, transport and overall energy system in the North Sea Region



# Scale-up – roll out options. Real actions

- The Cities need knowledge and examples.
- Living labs – rolled out or scaled up to innovative public procurement. Strategic innovative procurement.
- Need the extra money – especially to "get the hang of it".
- EU projects and funding can be the boost





# Thank you! 😊

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