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Collaboration is key to business development

DELEGATES from seven European countries have arrived in Northern Ireland to explore how small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) can collaborate for competitive advantage.

The group are part of over 80 delegates, including representatives from local SMEs, attending the Powering Innovation and Building Capacity conference

organised by Invest Northern Ireland and the Department for the Economy as part of their involvement in a European wide project on cluster development.

Opening the conference held at Titanic Belfast, Permanent Secretary, Department for the Economy, Noel Lavery said: "It is widely recognised that being part of a cluster provides firms with

competitive advantages including economies of scale, increased productivity and better innovation which individually they cannot obtain on their own.

"Given that Northern Ireland is an SME dominated economy, it is important that government promotes an environment which provides the conditions for these business to grow and develop

their products and services working together in successful clusters.

"The CLUSTERS3 project provides a valuable opportunity to learn from other regions, to develop networks and ultimately take forward and better inform a Northern Ireland clusters policy aimed at supporting the development of a globally competitive economy that benefits everyone."

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Pictured at the Powering Innovation and Building Capacity conference are (l-r) Juan Domingo Olabari, SPRI, Business Development Agency, Jo Scott, Conference MC, Kristianne Paasche, Innovation Norway, Line Magnussen, Innovation Norway and Noel Lavery, Permanent Secretary, Department for the Economy.