

V4 Leading Clusters
AUTOMOTIVE
Action Plan

Prepared by:	
Name	Kludia Vlčková, Dominika Ďurišová, Martina Homolová
Position	Project managers
Contact – telephone, e-mail	autoklaster@autoklaster.sk
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Introduction

The automotive industry is very important part of economy for the European Union. This industry is a motor of innovation, education, building of knowledge-based society. It is a key employer in EU and contributes to sustainability development. Therefore, it is very important to have strong and flexible open cooperation between car producers, suppliers, R&D institutions, educational institutions and state representatives on local, regional and national level. Cluster organizations are very good strategic point for connection of all those authorities.

To offer better services, information and knowledge, clusters have to closely cooperate with the same foreign organizations in order to keep in progress. It can be achieved by knowing each other, mutual strengths and weaknesses. On the basis of those needs, the Action Plan of V4 Leading Clusters has been created.

I.	Partner Cluster Organizations	
1.	Leading cluster (abbr.)	Automotive Cluster Slovakia
	V4LC Manager, contact	Marián Cipár, cipar@autoklaster.sk
	Cluster organization location, web	Trnava, West Slovakia, www.autoklaster.sk
2.	Partner cluster (CZ)	Moravian-Silesian Automotive Cluster
	Manager, contact	Dominik Kovalčík, d.kovalcik@autoklastr.cz
	Cluster organization location, web	Ostrava, Moravian-Silesian Region, www.autoklastr.cz
3.	Partner cluster (PL)	Silesia Automotive
	Manager, contact	Luk Palmen, l.palmen@silesia-automotive.pl
	Cluster organization location, web	Katowice, www.silesia-automotive.pl
4.	Partner cluster (HU)	North Hungarian Automotive Cluster
	Manager, contact	Tamás Csabai, tamas.csabai@nohac.hu
	Cluster organization location, web	Miskolc, www.nohac.hu

II. Main specialisations and products				
		SK	CZ	HU
Industries/Specializations	Products	P1	P2	P4
Metal manufacturing	Doors systems, Bikes,			X
Plastic manufacturing	Plastic parts,			X
Electronic manufacturing	Engine electronics, Sensors, Lightening, Safety systems, Opto-electronics, PCBs, cables	X	X	
Special materials	Manufacturing of parts from carbon-fibre	X		
Textile industry	Cutting and sewing of upholstery for automotive industry	X		
Simulations	Automation, Optimization	X	X	
Education and training	Courses for all management structure	X	X	
Innovation	Engine development, Lasers development	X		X

		SK	CZ	PL	HU
Industries/Specializations	Products	P1	P2	P3	P4
R&D activities	Product testing, Processes innovation encouraging		X		X
Networking	Of members	X	X	X	
Exchange of experience	Good practice meetings	X	X	X	
EU Project activities	Preparation, Submission, Management, Implementation	X	X		X
Education activities	Education of students and employees in automotive sector	X	X		X
B2B Meetings	Organization and participation	X	X	X	X
Workshops	Organization and participation	X	X	X	X
Benchmarking	Analyses			X	
Business Relation	Promotion, New markets entering		X		X
Consultancy services	Management, Business	X	X		X
Logistic services					X
Fine financing					X

Summary of main specializations and products

Automotive Cluster Slovakia

AUTOMOTIVE CLUSTER WEST SLOVAKIA - founded by City of Trnava and Trnava Municipality Region in 2007, renamed to AUTOMOTIVE CLUSTER SLOVAKIA in 2013.

The main goal is a creation of prestigious and modern base for automotive industry in Slovakia to offer better human resources environment and management, to improve transfer of technological and innovation processes and to generate new and strong sub-suppliers' networks.

The most important activities of Automotive Cluster Slovakia are:

- Networking of members (membership in Automotive Industry Association cross-border cooperation, B2B, longstanding international cooperation)
- Exchange of experience, informing (Education, R&D, Horizon 2020)
- Projects implementation (cross-borders, CE, SEE, preparation for new program)
- Organization of thematic workshops for SMEs and OEMs
- Presentation of cluster members in the framework of cluster activities (international conferences, workshops,)
- Experience with preparation, submission, managing and implementation of projects cofounded by various EU program
- Education activities (Automotive Academy –wide portfolio of professional courses)
- Horizon 2020 (opportunity for new project ideas, partnership and cooperation)

Moravian-Silesian Automotive Cluster

Association established in 2006 to promote innovations, to increase competitiveness and to develop capabilities of its cluster members. There have been 3 main projects comprising of many sub projects dealing with R&D, business and human resource in order to create and develop value chains among the cluster members.

Main focus – mutual enhancement in following areas:

DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

- educating and developing students' as well as employees' competencies

BUSINESS RELATIONS

- money saving and new markets entering

R&D ACTIVITIES

- products testing and processes innovation encouraging

Silesia Automotive

Silesia Automotive is established by a consortium of three organizations: Katowice Special Economic Zone, InnoCo and Landster in 2011. Since 2007 these organizations observed among companies a growing demand for new approaches to tackle challenges related to the international crisis in the automotive sector. Silesia Automotive has the aim to develop a competence region for automotive by way of creating cooperation platforms between companies, research organizations, universities and technical schools. Its activities are directed to more than 230 companies in Opolskie, Śląskie and Małopolskie.

Since 2011, the consortium is responsible for the coordination of the cluster.

- Landster is engaged in activities concerning HR and labor market issues.
- InnoCo is dealing with innovation (new materials and engineering).

Main activities include:

- benchmarking analyses,
- good practice meetings in companies,

- thematic seminars and workshops,
- B2B brokerage services,
- R2B brokerage meetings.

North Hungarian Automotive Cluster

In order to achieve the goals NOHAC applied for the title „Accredited Innovation Cluster”. The evaluation of the application is in progress, in case of positive decision the cluster and its members could get significant funds for the implementation of common investment projects in order to strengthen their competitive edge.

The main activities of the cluster are: to promote business relations, to provide consultancy services, to share business information, to provide business consultancy, to offer logistic services, to establish B2B relationships, to find financing, to provide R&D background, to support marketing activity, to organize events, to provide management consultancy and to handle HR issues organize training and education.

NOHAC was founded at the end of 2006 with the participation of three Manager Suppliers, also the Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, and the Innovation Management Cooperation Research Center of the University of Miskolc. The goal of the cluster is to improve, by the alliance of the automotive suppliers of the region of Northern Hungary, also to improve their competitiveness, their innovation and profit-making ability and thus to bring its members closer to the European car manufacturing and to the partners in the automotive industry. After the foundation, numerous other companies joined NOHAC counting almost 70 members today. Most of the members are metal and plastic processing companies, but there are also organizing offices, certification companies and companies offering other services.

Conclusion:

As the matrix above shows, there are many activities representing a framework to achieve these goals: R&D activities, networking, exchange of experience, EU project activities, education activities, B2B meetings, organization of workshops, consultancy services, etc.

The matrix above shows, that there are two activities, which are common for all V4 clusters: Organization of B2B meetings and workshops.

III.	Plan of common actions	
A	Networking and match-making events	1. Cluster-to-cluster excursions to Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia
		2. Exchange of Best Practices within V4 Automotive Clusters
		3. Continuing communication with the V4 Automotive Clusters
		4. Organization of Matchmaking events for V4 Automotive Clusters Members
		5. Participation in the national cluster events of the V4
B	Joint promotion and marketing	1. Definition of main targets of V4 for common promotion
		2. Definition of marketing tools to reach the targets
		3. Cooperation agreement on joint cooperation of the V4
C	Collaborative projects	1. H2020
		2. Danube strategy
		3. Cross-border activities
		4. Cluster Excellence (Cosme)
		5. R&D activities (Cornet)

Comments on the activities:

Networking, cooperation in project activities and joint promotion of automotive clusters from V4 has a significant impact to development automotive industry in the area of Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic. Automotive industry in V4 countries can build on established companies, structured network of high quality suppliers and availability of skilled workforce. To offer better services, current information and knowledge to cluster members, stakeholders, public, state institutions, it is necessary to cooperate within V4 Clusters to create a solid foundation for implementation common activities.

Current trends in automotive industry pointed to the orientation of development of education, support to R&D activities, networking development, support to cluster and network initiatives. All these mentioned activities should cooperation within V4 clusters includes.

IV. Recommendations for the Visegrád policy		
	Identified issues	Recommended solutions
1	The low transfer of knowledge and cooperation between V4Clusters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing of cooperation based on strengths of V4 clusters - Increasing the transfer of knowledge by change of experience - Common methodology - V4 Cluster networking, linking clusters members
2	Low label of clusters excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To raise the level of excellence of clusters and network management in the Visegrád region namely in Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary by training the clusters managers (with common methodology as for example ECE benchmarking methodology) and organization of study visits for clusters managers in order to share experience
3	Low regional and national support of cluster's organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing a clear policy framework (national targets, plans relative to clusters)
4	Financial instability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial support for R&D activities in clusters main area permanent financial support for providing better free of charge services to clusters member based on the individual requirements
5	Missing common actions and joint promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inter-linking of cluster members - Joint promotion of clusters - Constant flow of information - Common network for better cooperation

Comments on the recommendations:

1. **The low transfer of knowledge and cooperation between V4Clusters** – Although the contacted clusters from Visegrád region have a lot of experience in various areas, they have also weaknesses in some field. Automotive Cluster Slovakia is active in networking, organization of B2B meetings and workshops, preparation and realization of EU projects; also they are experienced in leading the projects. On the other hand they have gaps in R&D activities, active cooperation with his members and in the offering free common services for the cluster members. Therefore there is recommended to increase the cooperation based on strengths of V4 Cluster, for example Moravian – Silesian Automotive Cluster - specialist in R&D activities and providing cluster services for his members could share knowledge by change of experience. Also similar situation is with Silesia Automotive from Poland, which has low experience with preparation, submission and project implementation should be linked to Automotive Cluster Slovakia and Moravian – Silesian AC because both of them have rich experience in this field. The North

Hungarian Automotive Cluster can advise the Silesian Automotive Cluster in consultancy and logistic services.

As seen above, there are dozens of options for the exchange of experience in various fields, and this is one of the most important recommendations of this action plan to prepare the common methodology oriented on possibilities of increasing the transfer of knowledge by change of experience, networking and linking each other.

- 2. Low label of clusters excellence** – as the further step in the V4 Action Plan it is recommended to raise the level of excellence of clusters and network management in the Visegrád region. It is necessary to focus on training of clusters managers and to increase their experience to drive the clusters to success. However, the key of the successful improvement of skills and increased experience is to use the common strategy for all clusters managers in the Visegrád region, to share knowledge and experience. One of the recommended is the *ECEI benchmarking methodology*. The organization of study visits for cluster managers would have strong benefits in order to share experience and at the same time to conduct peer review analyses and to help participating cluster managers identify joint business opportunities.
- 3. Low regional and national supports of clusters organizations** - to increase the regional and national support of clusters it is necessary to define the common targets and specific tools to achieve them in the policy framework of V4Clusters. The policy should focus on the strengths of the clusters' experience and reflected the current requirements of each V4 government in relation with specific measures in the new programming period. It is also very important to involve the support of the government institutions and increase opportunities for cooperation by engaging in joint activities and so, on the one hand, while these institutions will benefit from clusters in the form of professional support for SMEs and on the other hand, a cluster gains the prestige and presentation by close cooperation with the government institutions.
- 4. Financial instability** - the other recommendation is to activate the financial support for R&D activities in clusters' main areas permanently. The common problem of all involved clusters is the financial support. Each cluster is forced to solve the question of funding for providing better free of charge services to clusters member based on the individual requirements, running the common services, presentation activities without charges, etc. Therefore to support the SMEs and let clusters to be helpful for its members it is necessary to set the opportunities of funding system more or less equivalent in all V4Clusters.
- 5. Missing common actions and joint promotions**
 - Inter-linking of cluster members in order to open the possibilities of cooperation between our clusters,

- Joint promotion of clusters from Visegrád region during participation on local, regional, national and also international events as conferences, workshops, congresses, general assembly, etc.
- Creation of common network for better and active cooperation,
- Constant flow of information through common network in two lines – first in relation to all involved clusters as private line and on the second hand as public line open to the wide public due to sharing the activities, events, achieved results and outcomes.

Conclusion of Action Plan for V4Clusters

Based on the identified issues linked in Visegrád policy defined by each V4 Cluster there is recommended solution above to solve the issues.

The V4 region is an important part of the central Europe region and it has a significant role for creating new innovative processes, materials or products in automotive industry. That's why the role of all automotive clusters in V4 region is to support their members in order to boost innovation process. So we recommend strengthening the cooperation between V4 clusters in order to exchange their experiences and best practices. A very interesting field for cooperation is to create together consortium for EU projects.

A joint effort of involvement in EU projects contributes significantly to raise the level of the cooperation within all V4 clusters. Our recommendation identifies numerous EU programs (H2020, Danube Strategy, Cross-border cooperation, COSME, etc.) in which all clusters may be closely involved. V4 Clusters should to initiate a joint process to make an important contribution for Visegrád region. Therefore it makes sense to use existing regional automotive clusters from Visegrád region and their networks and to link them together and focus their efforts in the orientation of development of education, support to R&D activities exchange of experiences, networking development, support to cluster and network initiatives.

To conclude the action plan and its recommendations, we consider the activation of clusters' cooperation as extremely necessary, we can say with respect to the needs of the global car market in the Visegrád region. By analyzing the questioners we have highlighted several main issues, clusters are facing with. The low transfer of knowledge, sharing of experience, low clusters support from the state/region and also financial instability as well as missing common actions has been marked as the biggest gaps. From the clusters' point of view those issues have to be achieved first by implementing the recommendations described above and then the Action plan with its planned activities can be provided.