

Clusters Partnership for Ukraine

Join Statements

We, the undersigned National clusters association from Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine, and supported by European Cluster Alliance hereby declare our shared commitment to promoting and supporting the national cluster movement in Ukraine. Our long term goals consider faster integration of Ukrainian clusters and SMEs into European value chains and innovation space. Recognizing the importance of these goals for our countries and the broader international community during war times in Ukraine, we have come together to affirm our mutual intentions for advancing sustainable and inclusive cluster growth across our regions.

So far, these 'Join Statements' target **the creation of the new program of cluster support, centered on inter-regional collaboration of Eastern European countries with Ukraine** and it is addressed for consideration to the European commission. Such a program should significantly accelerate the development of cluster movement in Ukraine with regard to current and future challenges & opportunities in the Ukrainian economy in the perspective of integration into the European Union.

Program reasoning

The war in Ukraine caused drastic changes in the geo-political arena in Europe and worldwide, provoking loss of eastern markets and worldwide turbulence. After COVID-19 the strategic issues of resilience of values chains and ecosystems have been raised again in Europe. But they rise today with an unprecedented amplitude of political, social and humanitarian crises that Europe has not known since 2d World War.

Regarding economic aspects, It has been proved during COVID-19 that European clusters play a major role in the resilience of industrial ecosystems targeted by the Industrial policy of the EU. Facing these new challenges of the Ukrainian crisis it becomes crucial to integrate as fast as possible Ukrainian value chains into European industrial ecosystems. In this context, it becomes obvious the importance of the strong and consolidated clusters movement in Ukraine.

Resuming results of 2022 we can state that Ukraine clusters did not get the necessary support from international or local State institutions. Being quite young and united into Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA) only in 2022, Ukrainian clusters lack many kinds of dedicated support policies and programs typically available for EU clusters, including the existing EU program of the Eastern neighborhood.

On the contrary, 2022 showed how productive and fruitful inter-regional collaboration can be between Ukraine and Eastern Europe / Baltic countries, when supported by the central EU institutions. The initiatives such as the marketplace on ECCP, Supply chain resilience platform, Solidarity lane and similar are just some of examples of such support in 2022. Special meetings and conferences, supported by the European commission and by the European cluster Alliance, dedicated to Ukraine, have been closely linked with the support from Eastern European countries. In 2022 Ukrainian Cluster Alliance started its first productive collaboration with cluster associations and clusters from Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Lithuania.

These countries are in the best position to develop new collaboration with Ukraine in cluster development and overall SMEs support programs. The coordination by the European Cluster Alliance can ensure the involvement of other EU countries depending on direction or priority. So, the necessity of the special program dedicated for cluster and SMEs support looks obvious for UCA and we, undersigned national clusters associations, kindly ask the European commission to support this proposal.

Among others, UCA raises the issue of faster internationalization, creation of local State support and maximizing the potential of inter-regional cooperation. All these issues of cluster and SMEs growth are well known and, to a large extent, resolved by Eastern European and Baltic countries during the last 10+ years.

Therefore, we are looking for holistic, mid-term (3-5 years) programs with a clear focus on Ukrainian cluster development and its integration into the European cluster family. Ukraine needs the right program of support, which can ensure the true effectiveness, much faster reaction to cluster demands and the clear impact on the resilience of clusters and SMEs in Ukraine and Eastern Europe.

Program proposal

The proposed program (work name, **CP4U**, means 'Cluster Partnership for Ukraine') should be oriented to close inter-regional collaboration of Ukraine with all neighbors, mainly targeting Poland, Slovakia, Czech republic, Romania and Lithuania, as countries with the biggest potential in inter-regional economic cooperation. Limitation in the number of countries as 'curators' is obvious as UCA is not be able to manage too many relationships. It was also an important lesson from multiple MoU and activities, UCA experienced in 2022 (see [the annual report](#)). It does not mean refusing to collaborate with other countries, but **the right focus and well thought targeting is obvious in such a program.**

The new CP4U program should be focused on 5 main broad goals facing the mentioned about challenges

1. The building of a long term, effective strategy of SMEs development where clusters are a key instrument of SMEs internationalization.
2. The support and growth of 6 UCA's Common Resource Centers (CRC) with respect to clusters by target industries (Agri-food, EAM (Engineering - Automation - Machinery), Medical, Textile, Utilities, and Dual-Use).
3. The growth of inter-regional cooperation with clear focus on clusters / SMEs resilience and the future Recovery projects
4. Better alignment and integration of Ukrainian clusters into all major, existing EU programs of clusters / SMEs development.
5. Acceleration of Ukrainian clusters and their members in twin digital and green transition.

We propose next supported mechanisms / measures for such a program

- Development and support of bi - and multilateral programs with the focus on Resilience and Recovery of Ukraine.
- Set-up of the regular clusters exchanges in the area of best practices and improving skills in cluster management / governance
- The alignment in policy-making and increasing the cluster's role as important policy-makers of national levels.
- Fostering of Innovative ecosystems in Ukraine / increasing integration processes between all 6 countries

These methods have been proven as the most effective and recognized by their effectiveness in previous years. Other new mechanisms or adoptions of existing ones are welcome. The best practices and experience of the Vishegrad program, as well as other existing program of inter-regional collaboration should be as well analyzed and brought into Ukraine.

Such program can bring many benefit to 5 target European countries and to overall cluster collaborations in EU

- 1) Being well familiar with EU norms and standards, 5 target cluster associations, coordinated at the level of European cluster alliance, will ensure much faster integration of Ukrainian clusters into EU industrial ecosystems.
- 2) These country will have access to all Recovery programs and projects and will able to better involve their members
- 3) Regarding other European clusters, we can consider many aspects of better resilience, improving current programs and clarifying / profiling for all clusters future opportunities on Ukrainian markets, better connected to their neighbors.

This document should be considered as a pure Declaration, or Join Statement of the National clusters association, as representative of the local SMEs and their business communities, addressed to their local government and to European commission. It has no legal impact or relationship with mentioned countries and European legislation. However, these Join Statement demonstrate the common positions of 6 countries with regard to economic integration of Ukraine into European Union. They can be considered as well as act / declaration of solidarity of Eastern European business communities with Ukraine in war times.

Signed by

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