



## Political-Strategic Working Group Clusters of Excellence EUSDR Priority Area 8 “Competitiveness”

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ecoplus / Palais Niederösterreich, Herrengasse 13, 1010 Vienna

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# Workshop: Cluster Optimization

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The Danube Region includes a unique platform of 7 National Cluster Associations (NCAs). These important integrators and facilitators of cluster organisations play a substantial role in the promotion and implementation of cluster policies in their countries. Furthermore, they reflect the shift towards better performance of cluster organisations and cluster management quality that has been launched by the European Cluster Excellence Initiative and related activities of the European Commission. As the NCAs are non-governmental non-for-profit organisations, they represent independent expert bodies that have the potential of optimising the performance of cluster organisations in a large scale and serve for the next level of fact-based cluster policies in the new countries (and beyond) of the European Union.

NCAs support the cluster development processes methodologically, act as cluster-knowledge hubs, nurse the quality of cluster governance and facilitate the cross-cluster cooperation on the national and international/European level to contribute to the growth of competitiveness of all stakeholders involved. Thus, NCAs are highly relevant to serve as the national guarantors of the establishment and operation of the cluster optimisation system represented by the Integrated National Cluster Accreditation Scheme.

The cluster performance is a complex issue due to the fact that clusters are individuals. However, there are commonalities that can be measured by set of indicators, evaluated, compared and benchmarked for the benefit of the cluster management and cluster governance efficiency improvements. Thus, the monitoring and evaluation of cluster performance is the subject of a proposed project as a result of the DanuClus workshop on Cluster Optimisation.

The project named **Cluster Performance and Impact Evaluation** consists of three main work packages:

1. **MONITORING** which refers to the set-up of performance indicators, systematic collection of data and their analysis concerning the activities of cluster organisations and also of its



members. An independent set of indicators will be created to enable measuring and evaluation of the cluster policy impacts and thus the public funding effectiveness.

2. **EVALUATION** includes both formative (performance measurement) and summative (improving of cluster development and regional impacts) methods. It will allow for the validation and review of cluster objectives, accountability and decision making concerning cluster policy priorities and necessary changes in both cluster governance and management strategies. The evaluation will serve all the stakeholders involved and will be the backbone of the Integrated National Cluster Accreditation Scheme.
3. **JUSTIFICATION** will consist of awareness and capacity building of the NCAs, learning and training processes within the cluster governance and management target groups and the embedment of the cluster performance issue in cluster policies and cluster funding programmes.

**Partners:** The Association of Business Clusters ABC in Bulgaria, The Affiliation of Croatian Clusters within CEE, The National Cluster Association of the Czech Republic, Clustero - The Romanian Cluster Association, The Cluster House in Serbia, The Union of Slovak Clusters, The Hungarian Cluster Association (to be founded by WestPannon) and The Tomas Bata University in Zlin (representing the research organisation).

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