

Slovak National Analysis of the cooperation opportunities of the V4 cluster organisations

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1. Current projects and existing cooperation of the V4 cluster organisations

a) Assessment of the most important projects

Total number of cluster organisations in the national V4 database: 22

Total number of responses (question No. 10 of the V4 questionnaire): 13

I. Assessment of the most important projects				
	Sector of project	Type of activity	No. of clusters	No. of projects
1.	Energy	R&D	3	2
		Demonstration and testing	2	3
2.	ICT	Technology transfer	1	1
		Education and training	2	2
3.	Automotive	Networking	1	5
4.	Materials	Manufacturing	1	1
		Education and training	2	3
5.	Tourism	Promotion and marketing	1	4
6.	Innovation and development	Networking	5	6

Comments on the most important projects:

Some of the Slovak clusters are very active and implement numerous projects using various programmes and financing schemes. In general, most of the projects of Slovak clusters are aimed at networking activities and exchange of knowledge and experience. These include strategic and other projects focused on clusters and cluster policies, their mapping, linking and cooperation. Other projects involving Slovak clusters as partners or even coordinators, are aimed at vocational education and training. Education activities are important mostly for the sectors where qualified labour force is needed and where the demand for qualified workers is increasing, such as automotive industry, manufacturing and processing of materials, etc.

The projects in the area of tourism are focused mostly on the development of regions through well targeted marketing and promotion activities, development of local brands, cross-border cooperation and joint development of products and services.

Taking into consideration the number of clusters dealing with energy issues, many projects are implemented in this sector. These are aimed at energy efficiency, support and utilisation of renewable energy sources, development of intelligent energy concepts, energy concepts of towns and villages and industrial innovations. The activities include R&D and testing of new concepts and approaches.

b) Assessment of the existing cooperation within V4

Total number of cluster organisations in the national V4 database: 22

Total number of responses (question No. 11 of the V4 questionnaire): 9

II. Assessment of the existing cooperation within V4						
	No. of clusters	No. of responses	CZ	HU	PL	SK
Contacts with organisations within V4	4	6 contacts	3	0	4	x
Existing projects within V4	5	8 projects	6	6	3	x

Comments on the existing cooperation within V4:

Slovak clusters have established various types of contacts with organisations within V4. These include not only joint implementation of projects but also other forms of cooperation. Regarding the non-project contacts, the following forms prevail:

- the institutions and organisations from other V4 countries are members or associated partners of Slovak clusters,
- clusters from V4 countries have created partnerships based on the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience,
- clusters were established as a result of a cross-border cooperation,
- clusters in the border areas implement joint activities aimed at the development of border regions and joint products and services (mostly in the area of tourism).

Regarding the existing projects within V4, these include numerous cross-border cooperation projects, mainly with Czech and Hungarian clusters and partners. One of the most active clusters in this regard is the Automotive Cluster Slovakia implementing 3 CBC projects. Additional to this, Slovak clusters are involved in the projects with wide participation of other partners from V4 countries. These are mostly larger consortia involving partners from all V4 countries (e.g. CluStrat, CNCB, etc.).

2. Assessment of areas of possible cooperation within V4 in the future

Total number of cluster organisations in the national V4 database: 22

Total number of responses (question No. 12 of the V4 questionnaire): 22

III. Assessment of areas of possible cooperation within V4 in the future				
	Sector of possible cooperation	Type of activity	No. of clusters	No. of topics
1.	Energy	Technology transfer	1	1
		Renewable energy	2	2
		R&D	2	2
2.	ICT	Innovations, software and hardware solutions	3	3
		Education and training	2	2
3.	Materials	Education and training	2	2
4.	Automotive	Innovations, technology transfer, education	1	1
5.	Tourism	Promotion and marketing	8	8
6.	Innovative and green technologies	Promotion and marketing	1	1
7.	Engineering	Networking	2	2

Comments on areas of possible cooperation:

The main areas of possible cooperation identified by Slovak clusters include:

- *Knowledge and technology transfer* – exchange of best practice examples and experience, information flow, development of centres for the transfer of R&D into practice.
- *Education and training* – improving the management skills and competences of cluster managers, organisation of training programmes and courses.
- *Promotion and marketing* – definition of the main goals of V4 for joint promotion and identification of marketing tools to reach the goals.
- *Networking* – organisation of joint matchmaking events, participation in the national cluster events, establishment of common networks for better and active cooperation.

Among the main areas are also: the support of R&D and innovation, business cooperation, support of triple helix cooperation, etc. Following the smart specialisation strategies and trends in Europe, the clusters are becoming interested also in the support of inter-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation linked with the emerging industries.

The general interest of almost all clusters regarding the cooperation activities lies in the internationalisation and joint projects. EU projects can be used as a tool for strengthening the cooperation within all V4 countries. The new programming period brings a lot of opportunities for cooperation on EU projects, e.g. Horizon 2020, COSME, cross-border cooperation, Danube Programme, etc.

Conclusions:

The V4 may play an important role in the Central Europe region since it has a potential to create new innovative processes and products and to establish strong collaborations. Clusters are anything else but cooperation of various entities. The activation of cooperation of clusters within V4 is becoming necessary since it brings various benefits. These can be visible through joint projects and other forms of contacts between clusters that already exist.

The best potential for cooperation within V4 and for internationalisation exists in case of bronze label clusters. These are among the best performing clusters and have a potential to further develop in the future. Up to now, 9 Slovak clusters have been benchmarked and hold this label. The cooperation activities within V4 may help to better achieve cluster excellence which is one of the goals of all clusters. The cooperation should be based on the strengths of V4 clusters what may lead to the higher level of excellence.

Slovak clusters are aware of the opportunities that stem from the cooperation with other V4 clusters mainly in the form of joint projects, networking activities and mutual transfer of knowledge and experience. However, they should initiate a process of more intense cooperation to make a significant contribution to the Visegrad region towards further development.