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**INCENTIVE PROGRAMMES TO ENHANCE CLUSTER  
PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE EU COUNTRIES**

*The lack of normative regulation for the procedures of creating cluster partnerships in Ukraine, their organizational and legal forms as well as the government support instruments triggers a critical need to explore successful international experience, of the EU countries in particular. The purpose of this article is to provide insights into the best European practices in developing initiatives, programmes and platforms to support cluster partnership schemes. The study employs general scientific research methods, in particular, the method of logical generalization and statistical analysis to investigate the neighbouring countries of Ukraine that were awarded with the ECEI Label by the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA). It is emphasized that most European countries have developed and continue to develop and improve their cluster policies and programmes to support their national economy competitiveness and create new jobs. At the level of the European Union, methodology and tools for national innovation development were introduced in the early 1980s. Cluster policy support programmes have been launched since the late 1990s. Currently, to ensure the core principles of the cluster partnership development, the EU policy is focused on improving the environment for the effective cluster operation in all member states, as well as on supporting their internationalization. Although country-specific programmes to enhance cluster partnerships have different priorities and implement a vast range of diverse tools, they all pursue the same goals: they seek to provide appropriate support and meet the needs of all cluster partnership actors along with improving the environment for sustainable national development. Among the analysed programmes and platforms, this paper is focused on the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA) which contributes to the improvement of skills, competencies and practices in cluster management within the cluster partnership framework. The information presented on the ESCA platform demonstrates that currently more than 1100 cluster partnerships from 45 countries have been tested for and / or awarded with the BRONZE quality mark, about 130 gained SILVER and over 100 were awarded with GOLD quality mark. The study also provides cluster analysis of Ukraine's neighbouring countries that quality marks for effective cluster partnership management. Among such countries the leader is Romania – 81 clusters have received quality marks. To date, the European Initiative has recognized three ECEI quality marks as a reliable International Standard for Cluster Partnership Management. The findings reveal that the EU experience in supporting cluster partnerships is relevant for other countries seeking to boost their innovative development, this also refers to Ukraine in particular, where, to a great disappointment, there are yet no legal regulations to support and develop cluster partnerships.*

**Keywords:** cluster partnerships; cluster partnership systems; cluster partnership development platforms; European Strategic Cluster Partnerships; European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA); European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP); European Cluster Observatory (ECO).

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**ЗАХОДИ СТИМУЛЮВАННЯ РОЗВИТКУ СИСТЕМ  
КЛАСТЕРНОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА В КРАЇНАХ ЄС**

*Відсутність в Україні на рівні закону регламентації створення, організаційно-правових форм і важелів державної підтримки кластерного партнерства зумовлює*

актуальність аналізу відповідного закордонного досвіду, зокрема, країн ЄС. Метою цієї статті є дослідження кращих практик країн ЄС щодо розвитку ініціатив, програм та платформ підтримки систем кластерного партнерства. У роботі використано загальнонаукові методи дослідження, зокрема, метод логічного узагальнення, методи статистичного аналізу – при здійсненні аналізу країн-сусідів України, які отримали ECEI Label Європейського секретаріату з кластерного аналізу (ESCA). В цій статті зазначається, що більшість країн Європи розробили та продовжують розробляти й вдосконалювати кластерну політику та програми розвитку систем кластерного партнерства для підтримки конкурентоспроможності економіки, а також створення нових робочих місць. На рівні Європейського Союзу політичні інструменти для національного інноваційного розвитку були введені ще на початку 1980-х років. Програми підтримки кластерної політики існують ще з кінця 1990-х. Сьогодні, для забезпечення загальних принципів щодо розвитку систем кластерного партнерства політика ЄС сконцентрована на вдосконаленні умов для функціонування кластерів у всіх державах-членах, а також щодо підтримки їх інтернаціоналізації. Хоча спеціальні програми підтримки розвитку систем кластерного партнерства для окремих країн зосереджені на різних пріоритетах та використовують різні інструменти, всі переслідують однакові цілі: вони прагнуть забезпечити належну підтримку та потреби учасників кластерного партнерства та сприяти поліпшенню умов для сталого національного розвитку. Серед проаналізованих програм та платформ сконцентровано увагу на Європейському секретаріаті з кластерного аналізу (ESCA), що сприяє вдосконаленню навичок, досвіду та практики управління кластерами в системі кластерного партнерства. Інформація, представлена на платформі ESCA, засвідчує, що на теперішній час понад 1100 кластерних партнерств із 45 країн світу пройшли тестування та / або отримали знак якості «БРОНЗА», близько 130 – «СРІБНИЙ» знак якості і більше 100 – «ЗОЛОТИЙ» знак якості. Проаналізовано кластери країн-сусідів України, що отримали знак якості за ефективне управління в системі кластерного партнерства. Серед країн-сусідів лідером є Румунія – 81 кластер отримав відповідний знак якості. На сьогодні, Європейською ініціативою визнано три знаки якості ECEI як надійний "Міжнародний стандарт управління кластерним партнерством". Проведений аналіз показав, що досвід ЄС щодо підтримки систем кластерного партнерства є актуальним і для інших держав, які прагнуть стимулювати свій інноваційний розвиток, зокрема і для України, де дотепер, на жаль, немає законодавчо врегульованих нормативних документів для підтримки та розвитку систем кластерного партнерства.

**Ключові слова:** кластерне партнерство; системи кластерного партнерства; платформи розвитку кластерного партнерства; Європейське стратегічне кластерне партнерство; Європейський секретаріат з кластерного аналізу (ESCA); Європейська платформа для кластерної співпраці (ECCP); Європейська кластерна обсерваторія (ECO).

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#### **МЕРЫ СТИМУЛИРОВАНИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ СИСТЕМ КЛАСТЕРНОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА В СТРАНАХ ЕС**

Отсутствие в Украине на уровне закона регламентации создания, организационно-правовых форм и рычагов государственной поддержки кластерного партнерства обуславливает актуальность анализа соответствующего зарубежного опыта, в частности, стран ЕС. Целью данной статьи является исследовать опыт стран ЕС по развитию инициатив, программ и платформ поддержки систем кластерного партнерства.

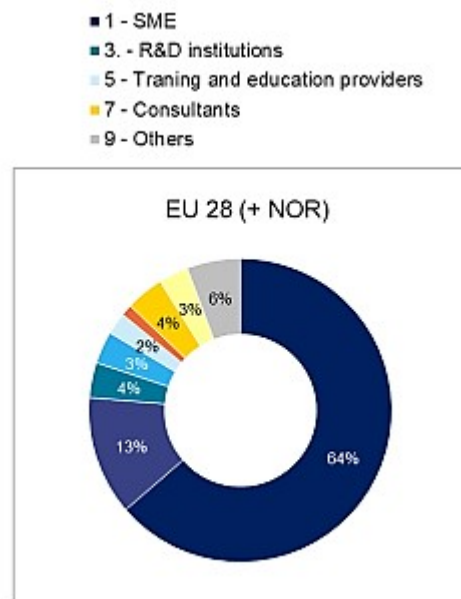
*В работе использованы общенаучные методы исследования, в частности, метод логического обобщения, методы статистического анализа – при осуществлении анализа стран-соседей Украины, которые получили ECEI Label Европейского секретариата кластерного анализа (ESCA). В данной статье отмечается, что большинство стран Европы разработали и продолжают разрабатывать и совершенствовать кластерную политику и программы развития систем кластерного партнерства для поддержки конкурентоспособности экономики и создание новых рабочих мест. На уровне Европейского Союза политические инструменты для национального инновационного развития были введены ещё в начале 1980-х годов. Программы поддержки кластерной политики существуют ещё с конца 1990-х. Сегодня, для обеспечения общих принципов развития систем кластерного партнерства политика ЕС сконцентрирована на совершенствовании условий для функционирования кластеров во всех государствах-членах, а также по поддержке их интернационализации. Хотя специальные программы поддержки развития систем кластерного партнерства для отдельных стран сосредоточены на разных приоритетах и используют различные инструменты, все преследуют одинаковые цели: они стремятся обеспечить надлежащую поддержку и потребности участников кластерного партнерства и способствовать улучшению условий для устойчивого национального развития. Среди проанализированных программ и платформ внимание сосредоточено на Европейском секретариате кластерного анализа (ESCA), который способствует совершенствованию навыков, опыта и практики управлению кластерами в системе кластерного партнерства. Информация, представленная на платформе ESCA, свидетельствует, что в настоящее время более 1100 кластерных партнёрств из 45 стран мира прошли тестирование и / или получили знак качества «БРОНЗА», около 130 – «СЕРЕБРЯНЫЙ» знак качества и более 100 – «ЗОЛОТОЙ» знак качества. Проанализированы кластеры стран-соседей Украины, получивших данный знак качества за эффективное управление в системе кластерного партнерства. Среди стран-соседей лидером является Румыния – 81 кластер получил соответствующий знак качества. На современном этапе Европейской инициативой признано три знака качества ECEI как надёжный "Международный стандарт управления кластерным партнёрством". Проведённый анализ показал, что опыт ЕС в части поддержки систем кластерного партнерства является актуальным и для других государств, которые стремятся стимулировать свое инновационное развитие, в том числе и для Украины, где на сегодняшний момент, к сожалению, нет законодательно урегулированных нормативных документов для поддержки и развития систем кластерного партнерства.*

**Ключевые слова:** кластерное партнёрство; системы кластерного партнерства; платформы развития кластерного партнерства; Европейское стратегическое кластерное партнёрство; Европейский секретариат кластерного анализа (ESCA); Европейская платформа для кластерного сотрудничества (ЕССР); Европейская кластерная обсерватория (ЕСО).

**Formulation of the problem.** The absence in Ukraine at the level of the law regulating the establishment, organizational forms, leverage government support cluster partnership relevance analysis leads to relevant international experience, including the EU. European politicians have started to use cluster initiatives since the late 1990s. Today in Europe you can find about 3500 cluster initiatives and similar approaches (Fig. 1).

Other regions of the world have also fully applied and continue to adopt a cluster approach to enhance the competitiveness of national economies. In recent years, clusters have played a new and increasingly important role in sustainable development and sustainability in the economies of

EU. Cluster Partnership is a perfect "tool" to be used in the development and implementation of national innovation strategy and therefore undoubtedly contributes to the development of the economy. In this context, cluster partnership is the vehicle, that transfers innovative processes, regional strategies to the level of business contributes to the creation of jobs in new innovative areas. The composition of the cluster partners is key for successful cooperation within the framework of the cluster partnerships. Different competencies are required to facilitate the work and competitiveness of the entire cluster partnerships. If certain key actors (partners) and key competencies are not available, this may harm the innovative capabilities of cluster partnerships in general.



Source: author constructed on the basis [9].

Figure 1. Membership of cluster partnerships and initiatives in the European Union

Therefore, today is vital to form a single pan-European approach to the development of cluster partnership policy. It can be done by individual support institutions or information and analytical platforms in the EU. The information on existing clusters, cluster initiatives, and partnerships from 36 European countries (including Ukraine) are collected and classified.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** It is believed that the ancestor of the clusters is Michael Porter, when he introduced the concept of cluster education to the world through his book "Competitiveness of Nations" in 1990, since then more than 1,500 scientific articles by the author are focused on the study of clusters and cluster partnerships. Porter, sees the cluster as a geographically close group of interconnected companies and related institutions in a certain area that are connected by common and external factors [10, 11]. According to other sources [12], the term "cluster" was used back in the seventies, 20th Century, L. Ablas and S. Chamansky. In their work, researchers study industrial complexes and clusters. The concept of "industrial complex" is broader and with not such close ties, in clusters. The general is a set of industries, territorial proximity [5]. The ideas in the cluster definition are not new. In the first half of the XIX century cluster theory originates in works on the economics of agglomeration I. von Tunen, in the articles V. Launhardta, M. Weber and others [16]. Tunen notes the impact of transport costs on the prices of goods, the distance to the city on the intensity of management. Launhardta's contribution is to simulate the optimal location of the plant relative to raw materials and describe it as a method for solving practical problems. Weber has established new factors for placing production in the form of labor and raw materials costs, economic benefits, agglomeration. Research by a Swedish scientist

Christian Ketels (he is considered a follower M. Porter) aimed at solving the problems of clustering the economy. In the community of European scientists, C. Ketels is considered a leading specialist in the development of cluster partnerships. In his works, he notes that in the development of state assistance programs for the development of clusters, the greatest risk is the duration of the cluster project and the high cost of state cluster initiatives. He considers the most effective measure to support cluster partnerships "cluster activation" and explains that the role of the state should be to remove barriers to cluster evolution, primarily by improving the economic environment of the business by creating an infrastructure where the cluster can develop on its own [9].

In 2003, a group of authors, including A. Solwell, G. Lindqvist (Stockholm School of Economics), as well as C. Ketels, published the book "Green Book of Cluster Initiatives," which conducted a comprehensive analysis – about 250 programs around the world and proposed a model for evaluating their work (Cluster Initiative Performance Model) [9]. After that, a group of authors from Lund University created the "White Book of Cluster Policy" with a focus on what kind of cluster partnership should have [1].

Much of the green and white papers focus on the positive aspects of cluster development. Similar views are held by groups of scientists who conducted a more detailed analysis [2]. As a result, the cluster approach was supported at higher national level, such organizations (institutions providing a coordination function within the cluster) gained access to the support of specialized institutions.

At the same time, works should be noted that contains a more critical approach to the active development of cluster initiatives. Some materials note the paradoxical nature of the cluster partnerships or questioning the very need for state participation in cluster formation [7]. Instead, it is more prudent to stimulate the growth of strong, more pro-active private investment organizations, since it is impossible to predict in advance which technologies and regions will be beneficial in the future [3]. Some researchers believe that the state should concentrate on the implementation of its traditional tasks, for example, the creation of infrastructure, the provision of social services, environmental planning, and not engage in innovative systems [8].

However, in the policy documents of the European Commission and the EU Council, clusters were identified as an effective means to strengthen regional innovations and reduce the gap between business, research and resources, and were also included in the EU regional policy programs for the period 2007–2013. Therefore, it is important to study the implementation of the experience of these platforms in the European Union and their impact on the development of cluster partnerships.

**The purpose of the article** to explore the experience of the EU on development initiatives, programs and platforms cluster partnerships.

**Statement of the main material.** Most European countries have developed and continue to develop cluster policies and programs to support economic competitiveness and create new jobs. At the European Union level, policy tools for the development of national innovative development were chosen and introduced in the early 1980s. There have been clear cluster policy programs since the late 1990s. To ensure common principles in these approaches, EU policy focused on improving cluster conditions in all member States, as well as on supporting internationalization. In addition to the European Commission, in recent years EU member countries have been developing further policies for the development of cluster partnerships. Although ad hoc cluster partnerships support programs for individual countries focus on different priorities and use different tools, all have the same goals: they seek to provide support needs for cluster partnership participants and help improve conditions for sustainable national development. Therefore, the EU has established relevant departments to support and develop cluster partnerships, among them should be highlighted:

▪ *European Cluster Observatory (ECO)* – was created in 2007, headed by A. Solwell and R. Tigland. In 2012, the Cluster Observatory was separated from the European Cluster Observatory and managed by the Stockholm School of Economics – Centre for Strategy and Competitiveness.

- *European strategic cluster partnership and a mission of B2B (ESCP)* are directed to internationalization of cluster partnerships,
- *The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA)* promotes cluster management excellence in cluster partnerships,
- *The European Cluster Cooperation Platform (ECCP)* facilitates knowledge sharing among cluster partners. More than 1,000 cluster organizations and partnerships registered on the platform from Europe and elsewhere in the world have the opportunity to compare the results of their activities with others, participate in special events that make it possible to establish mutually beneficial business relations with the necessary partners and find important intersection points. According to the Executive Decision of the European Commission, among the total funds of Euro 397 600 000 allocated to COSME (Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and SME Program) in 2018, 5900,000 euros were allocated to "create an updated ECCP, which will become the main online hub for cluster participants in Europe through the merger of the European Observatory for Clusters and the European Knowledge Center for Resource Efficiency" [13]. A more detailed description of key EU cluster partnership institutions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

EU Cluster Partnership Platforms

Name	Specialization	Organization	Participants
<b>The European Cluster Observatory</b>	Gathering information about clusters and cluster initiatives and partnerships. It is an online, free and convenient platform that provides a single point of access to data and cluster analysis. It also offers a cluster library and classroom for cluster education.	2007, Directorate General of Internal Market, industry, entrepreneurship and small and European Commission Medium Business, Center for Strategy and Competitiveness.	Contains information, annual reports on the development of cluster partnerships in more than 36 countries.
<b>European Strategic Cluster Partnership (ESCP)</b>	Internationalization of cluster partnerships. Organization provides support international growth companies.	2008, Eurocommission.	First generation (2016–2017): 15 jointly funded partnerships and 10 voluntary partnerships. Second generation (2018-2019): 25 jointly funded partnerships, including 2 partnerships for the application of Earth observation data and 2 partnerships in the defense and security sector. Third generation (2020–2022): 24 jointly funded partnerships, including 2 partnerships for the application of Earth observation data.

*End of Table 1*

Name	Specialization	Organization	Participants
<b>The European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)</b>	Facilitates knowledge sharing among European cluster managers. Conducts information collection, organization of specialized events, promoting international communication between partners. Clusters ECCP's Anti-COVID-19 Response Portal allows organizations to find each other and share knowledge.	2016 founded. COSME launched by the Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and the European Commission ICPs.	Provides cluster information, cluster partnerships European cluster partnerships and initiatives, National cluster associations, cluster networks, national policies, cluster partnership development worldwide.
<b>The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA)</b>	Benchmarking and certification of clusters and cluster management organizations. In addition, ESCA provides practical advice to cluster managers on cluster development and supports cluster policy makers and program owners with advice on cluster program development and partnerships.	2009, one of the participants European Cluster Excellence Initiative – VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH.	Approximately 200 experts from more than 30 countries.
<b>The European Network for Social and Economic Research (ENSR)</b>	ENSR covers all types of issues related to the business sector: entrepreneurship, labor, production, innovation, internationalization, CSR, impact assessment, social affairs.	Since 2004 the Network has an office in Brussels. Co-financed by EU SME Competitiveness Programs – COSME.	The network consists of members of all 27 EU member countries, as well as members of Norway, Iceland, Switzerland (also covering Liechtenstein), Turkey and the UK. As a result, ENSR covers 33 countries.

Source: classified by data [6, 13–15].

These platforms help in cluster management and are critical to maximizing the benefits that can be achieved through a cluster partnerships of their systemic support for industry, research and education in regions of countries. In parallel, these strategic cluster activities are supported by state authorities to stimulate regional development, focused on improving the competitiveness of regions of countries.

Among the analyzed cluster partnerships development platforms in Europe, the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA) is a universal center for promoting the excellence of cluster management through benchmarking and marking the quality of cluster partnerships around the world. The Berlin-based organization coordinates a network of about 200 experts from clusters with more than 30 countries that offer comparative analysis and labeling services on behalf of ESCA. In addition, ESCA provides practical advice to cluster managers on cluster development and supports cluster policy makers and program owners with cluster partnerships development tips.

The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis awards three different quality marks to qualified cluster management organizations. We investigated the awarding of this kind of quality mark on the effective management of cluster partnerships in the neighboring countries of Ukraine (Table 2).

Table 2

**Quality system of cluster partnerships management in Ukraine's neighboring countries at the initiative of the European Cluster Excellence (ECEI)**

Quality mark	Characteristic	Number of CPs in Ukraine's neighbors, which have been awarded the ECEI Label		
		Poland	Total	53
<b>ECEI Bronze Label</b> The list includes 1196 clusters from 47 countries.	The ECEI BRONZE Quality Label for Cluster Excellence characterizes cluster partnerships as those that seek to improve their management capabilities and productivity levels. ECEI BRONZE quality mark "Striving for cluster excellence" when at least two conditions are met: 1) the applicant cluster partnership was identified by one of the ESCA experts; 2) the cluster partnership that submitted the application meets the set of "Eligibility Criteria for Cluster Management Excellence Signs". Each cluster partnership is analyzed based on an interview with the cluster manager conducted by an independent ESCA evaluation expert. The interview covers 36 indicators, including: cluster structure, cluster management and cluster partnership management, cluster financing system, analysis of cluster services, contacts and interactions in the cluster and achievements of the respective cluster. The results are presented in the form of a report and are transmitted directly to the cluster management and also contain recommendations for further improvement of the cluster. When a cluster organization first receives the ECEI BRONZE brand, it is valid for two years from the month in which the analysis was performed. Within one year after the expiration of valid BRONZE	Poland	Are active	2
			Romania	Total
		Slovakia		Are active
			Hungary	Total
		Hungary		Are active
			Hungary	Total
		Hungary		Are active



*Continuation of Table 2*

Quality mark	Characteristic	Number of CPs in Ukraine's neighbors, which have been awarded the ECEI Label		
	quality mark, it can be renewed by repeating the same comparative testing process. Then the validity of the quality mark is extended for three years from the previous validity period.			
<p><b><i>ECEI Silver Label</i></b>  <b>The list includes 146 clusters from 23 countries.</b></p>	<p>Silver Label benchmarking analysis includes four stages:                      1. Clusters and cluster partnerships can pass the second stage of testing after receiving the bronze quality mark in 1.5–2 years.                      2. During the second stage, the auditor arrives at the site to verify these areas of improvement, using the criteria of the Golden Quality Mark as a benchmark for verification. This audit will verify that the cluster and cluster partnership meet the minimum requirements of the GOLD Cluster Management Excellence Label. These requirements are described in the document "European cluster excellence – minimum requirements for cluster organizations". Therefore, if a cluster partnership does not meet one of these criteria, the Silver Label cannot be awarded. Subsequently, the auditor develops a report detailing the results and including individual recommendations for improving the management of the relevant cluster partnership.                      When a cluster partnership first receives the ECEI SILVER quality mark, it is valid for two years from the month in which the audit was conducted. One year after the expiration of the valid SILVER quality mark, it can be renewed by repeating the verification process. Then the validity of the quality mark is extended for three years from the previous validity period.</p>	Poland	Total	6
			Are active	1
		Romania	Total	18
			Are active	4
		Slovakia	Total	0
			Are active	0
		Hungary	Total	6
			Are active	3
<p><b><i>ECEI Gold Label "Excel in Cluster Excellence"</i></b>  <b>The list includes 119 clusters from 18 countries.</b></p>	<p>In order to receive the ECEI GOLD label in a cluster partnership, the cluster management organization must meet certain criteria, such as the structure of the cluster partnership, cluster partnership management, funding system, strategy and services provided. The audit is conducted by two independent ESCA experts, over two days and evaluates 31 key quality indicators.                      When a cluster partnership first receives the ECEI GOLD quality label, it is valid for two years from the month in which the audit was conducted. One year after the expiration of this GOLD quality</p>	Poland	Total	1
			Are active	0
		Romania	Total	4
			Are active	1 – Cluster Mobilier Transylvania 2 – PRO WOOD Regional Wood Cluster

*End of Table 2*

Quality mark	Characteristic	Number of CPs in Ukraine's neighbors, which have been awarded the ECEI Label		
	mark, it can be renewed after passing this benchmarking analysis. Then the validity of this quality mark is extended for three years from the previous validity period.	Slovakia	Total	1
			Are active	Kosice IT Valley
		Hungary	Total	0
			Are active	0

*Source: analyzed and systematized by the author based on [6].*

Therefore, from this study we see that Romania is the leader among the countries of Ukraine's neighbors in obtaining ECEI Label, where 81 clusters received their recognition in the success of cluster management. Among the active clusters, Slovakia is the leader, where at the moment 23 cluster partnerships have received recognition of the highest level of professionalism in cluster management (Table 3).

*Table 3*

**Quantitative characteristics of the received and operating ECEI Label in the neighboring countries of Ukraine**

Country	<i>ECEI Bronze Label</i>	<i>ECEI Silver Label</i>	<i>ECEI Gold Label</i>	<i>Total / are active</i>
	<i>Total / are active</i>	<i>Total / are active</i>	<i>Total / are active</i>	
<i>Poland</i>	53/2	6/1	1/1	60/4
<i>Romania</i>	59/3	18/4	4/2	81/9
<i>Slovakia</i>	32/22	0/0	1/1	33/23
<i>Hungary</i>	33/5	6/3	0/0	39/8

*Source: analyzed and systematized by the author based on [6].*

Having examined the information presented on the ESCA platform, to date, more than 1,100 cluster partnerships from 45 countries have been tested and/or labeled BRONZE, about 130 SILVER labels and more than 100 GOLD, respectively. Today, cluster managers and policymakers define three ECEI quality signs as a reliable "International Cluster Management Standard."

A review of the entire marking system within the framework of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative – Phase II (2017-2019), which was again supported by the European Commission, led to the further development of the management system and management of the marking scheme. The main features of the new marking system are increased transparency, efficiency and strengthening of the European measurement of cluster marking.

Another new feature is the introduction of a new set of so-called selection criteria: organizations that are interested in obtaining a quality mark must confirm their status as "Cluster Organizations," as defined by the European Commission, by fulfilling the set of "Selection Criteria for the Cluster Management Excellence Label".

Unfortunately, today in Ukraine there are no cluster partnerships that would be tested or apply for participation in benchmarking analysis on this platform.

Together, these initiatives and platforms cover a range of tools needed to coordinate cluster partnerships, from gathering information to helping European enterprises enter world markets. Not all organizations have been preserved in their original form, which indicates the evolutionary nature of cluster development institutions in the EU and approaches to the implementation of cluster partnerships in general.

Thus, the European approach to the development of this sphere and the creation of institutions for its support is quite consistent. Conditionally, the implementation of a supranational cluster partnerships policy in the EU can be divided into four phases [13], to which a fifth should be added:

1. Phase 1 (2000–2006) – The European Commission has launched various cluster support pilot initiatives through the PHARE program.

2. Phase 2 (2007–2009) – signing of the European Cluster Memorandum, creation of cluster observatories, development of information and analytical materials.

3. Phase 3 (2010–2012) – focus on improving the quality of cluster programs, creating assessment and ranking tools, training "cluster managers."

4. Phase 4 (2013–2017) – integration of clusters into regional programs through the principles of "reasonable specialization" to promote structural changes in parallel with the development of regional strengths.

5. Phase 5 (2017-present) – clusters as objects of the new EU industrial policy, the development and strengthening of cluster partnerships, the creation of a working group on clusters.

The last phase is characterized by the end of the seven-year cycle of the budget plan until 2020, which most of the programs are committed, and the need to create a new vision of economic development priorities and agree on a budget for 2021-2027.

**Conclusions.** The analysis showed that the cluster partnerships in EU is an integral part of the new industrial policy, which is aimed at supporting innovation and technological development.

In its policy documents, the European Commission has repeatedly noted the potential of clusters in the formation of favorable innovative regional ecosystems for the mutual strengthening of SME groups. The focus is not only on the industrial sector but also on cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation and innovation. It should be noted that the cluster partnerships in EU is not considered as a unified document for all member countries, but it is a set of best/good practices, approaches, initiatives, and recommendations both for representatives of such organizations and for national and regional authorities. The EU experience in supporting clusters is also relevant for other countries that seek to stimulate their innovative development. While in Ukraine, there is no legal and regulatory legislation to support the development of cluster partnerships.

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