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European Clusters Excellence Labelling Structure

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Cluster Management Excellence and its Benefits for Cluster Internationalisation

Second National Cluster Conference Slovakia

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Agenda

- Cluster Management and Cluster Management Excellence
- Labelling of Cluster Management Excellence
- Clusters and Cluster Management Excellence – Slovakia in Comparison
- Cluster Internationalisation
- ECEI Cluster Labelling vs. National Mapping and Monitoring Approaches

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The rationale behind “Cluster Management Excellence”

- Successful regional agglomerations (Clusters in the “Porter-definition”) in Europe are Cluster Initiatives managed by a (strong and active) Cluster Management Organisation.
- Cluster Management Organisations have proven to be important institutions to bridge the gap between different industries and to broker contacts among cluster participants and with external parties.
- Based on a clear strategy, targeted and demand-oriented services offered by the Cluster Management Organisation are a key issue for generating added value for the participants within the cluster.
- **As management matters, improving and strengthening Cluster Management leads to increased benefits**.
- Improvement of Cluster Management by addressing (peer) learning effects.

Assessing and Improving Cluster Management

- *Kompetenznetze Deutschland* (2007-2012)
- *European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI1)* 2009-2012
- *Cluster Excellence in the Nordic Countries, Germany and Poland (NGPExcellence)* 2010-2011
- *European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA)* www.cluster-analysis.org since 2011
- *European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI2) 2017-2019*
- *European Clusters Labelling Structure (EUCLES) www.eucles.be since 2021*

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ESCA - European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (www.cluster-analysis.org)

The “one-stop-shop” for benchmarking and labelling of cluster organisations regarding the maturity/quality of operating their work:

- Founded 2011, hosted by *VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik Gmbh* (Berlin-based consulting company with long experience in cluster [policy] development and regional economic development)
- ESCA consists of a back-office and an international network of around 200 trained cluster experts worldwide
- ESCA organises and/or conducts the various labeling activities (> 2,300 assessments in ≈ 50 countries)
- As of January 2022: reports to EUCLES (European Clusters Excellence Labelling Structure, www.eucles.be) based on a partnership agreement

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European Clusters Labelling Excellence Structure (www.eucles.be)

- **Based on a partnership agreement, EUCLES will step-by-step take over the responsibility from ESCA regarding the ECEI Labelling.**
- EUCLES is a non-profit association in charge of the promotion of cluster management excellence based on a coordinated European approach, as well as the delivery of quality Labels to qualified cluster management organisations.
- The EUCLES association has been created in December 2020 with the objective to gradually take over the labelling system currently operated by ESCA.
- The Association brings together national and regional clusters networks/associations which are involved in the implementation of the ECEI labelling scheme at national or regional levels.

Source: www.eucles.be

ECEI-Labelling processes implemented by ESCA

BRONZE Cluster Management Excellence
STRIVING FOR CLUSTER EXCELLENCE

> 1250

Benchmarking

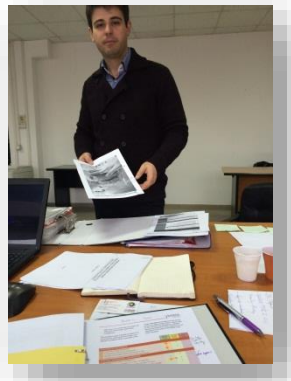
1) Interview of 3-4 hours (videoconference)
2) Report by ESCA
3) Award by ESCA

SILVER Cluster Management Excellence
DEDICATED TO CLUSTER EXCELLENCE

> 190

Audit of three (two) selected improvement areas

1) Benchmarking and description of three improvement areas, both in self-assessment
2) Audit on-site (improvements and minimum criteria) 1 experienced expert, 4-6 hours
3) Report by expert and check by ESCA
4) Award by ESCA

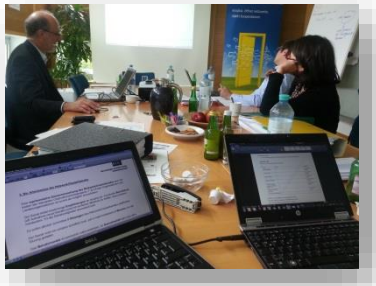


GOLD Cluster Management Excellence
PROVEN FOR CLUSTER EXCELLENCE

> 150

Quality audit of 31 indicators

1) Initial self-assessment by the cluster
2) Audit on-site (interview and check of proofs/documents), 2 experts, 2 days
3) Report by experts and check by ESCA
4) Decision for Label Award by CEEG
5) Award by ESCA



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ECEI Labels worldwide – from 2010-2024

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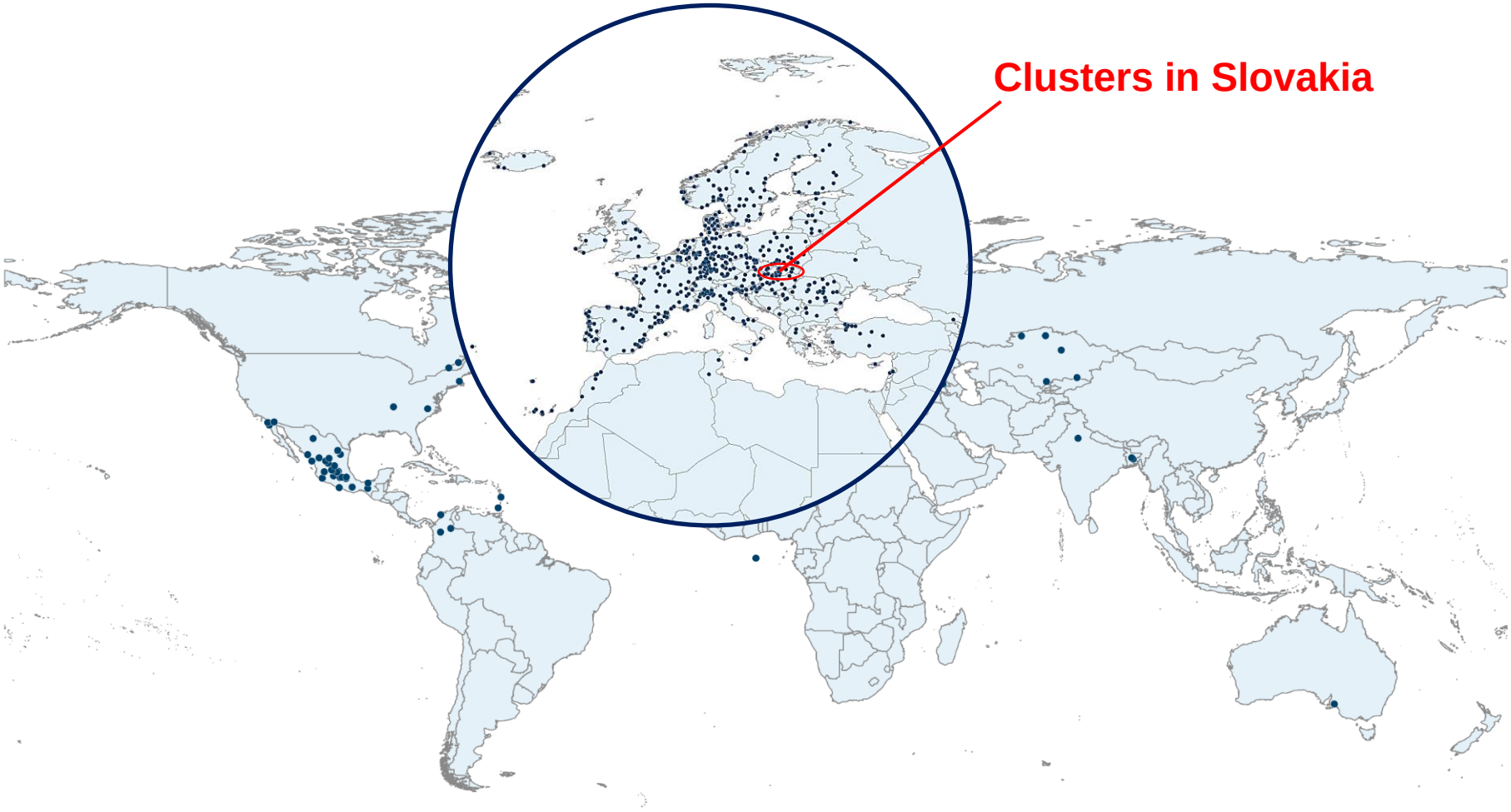
ECEI Labels worldwide – from 2010-2024



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Clusters in Slovakia

Clusters included in the following surveys / data: Jun20-Aug23

- IPEEK - Energy Environmental Cluster from Ipel Region (August 2023)
- Potravinárska komora Slovenska (August 2023)
- Slovak National Hydrogen Association Cluster (August 2023)
- Cyber Security Cluster (August 2023)
- SAPI - renewable energy cluster (June 2023)
- Fintech Insurtech Slovenska (March 2022)
- Združenie inteligentného priemyslu - Industry4UM (November 2021)
- Hemp Cluster (November 2021)
- SME Booster and Innovations Cluster (November 2021)
- INOVATO CLUSTER (October 2021)
- Council of Slovak Exporters (September 2021)
- Slovak Electric Vehicle Association – SEVA (September 2021)
- Slovak Plastic Cluster (August 2021)
- Industry Innovation Cluster (August 2021)
- Cluster of Regional Development (July 2021)
- House of Events Innovation (June 2021)
- SBaA - Slovak Battery Alliance (June 2021)
- REGIONÁLNY INOVAČNÝ PRIEMYSLENÝ KLASTER RIMAVSKÁ KOTLINA REPRIK (February 2021)
- BITERAP (December 2020)
- Košice IT Valley (October 2020)
- Národný energetický klaster (August 2020)
- Z@ict (July 2020)
- Slovak Smart City Cluster (July 2020)
- Klaster automatizačnej techniky a robotiky – AT+R (June 2020)

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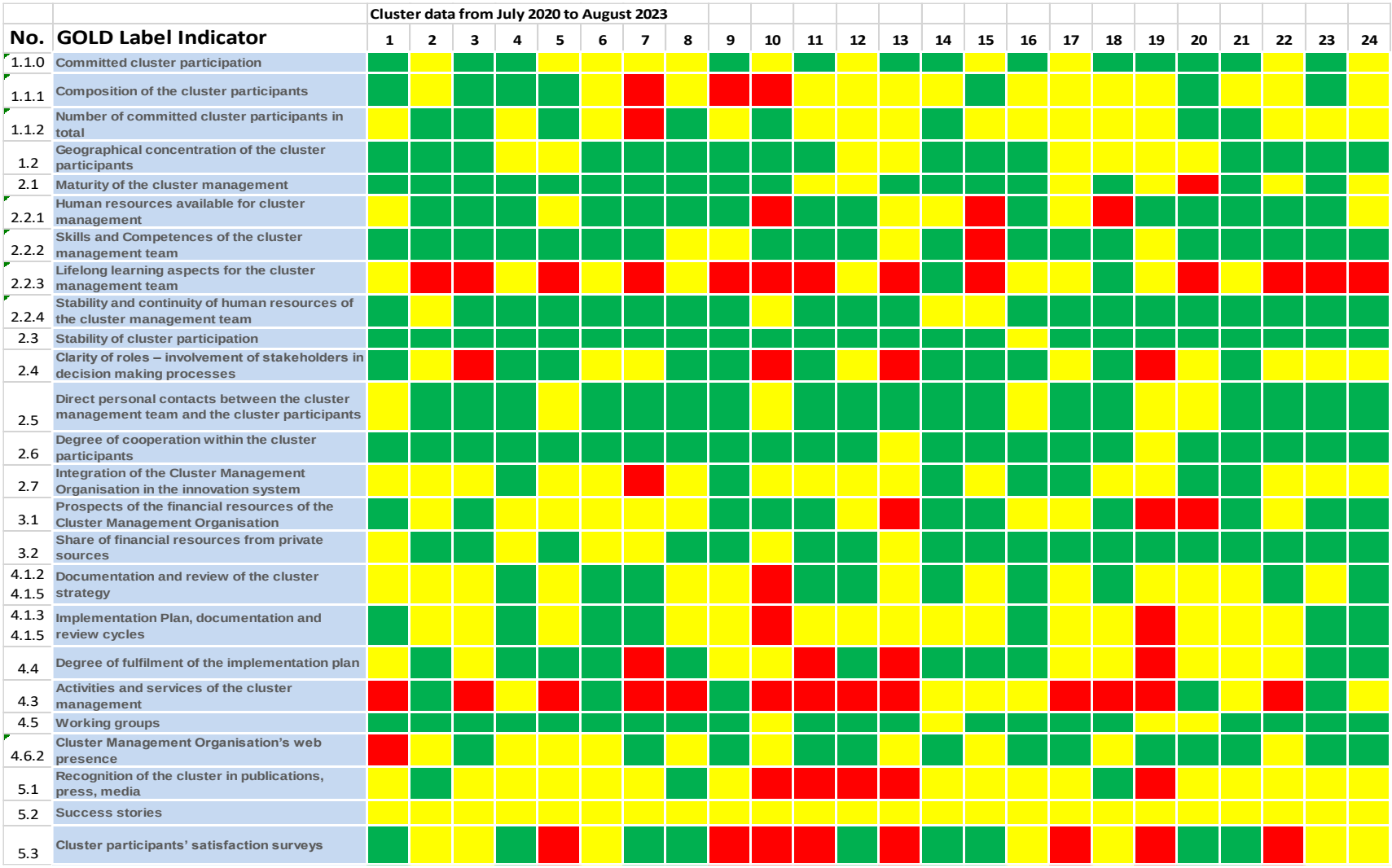
Cluster Management Excellence – "Slovakia Heatmap"



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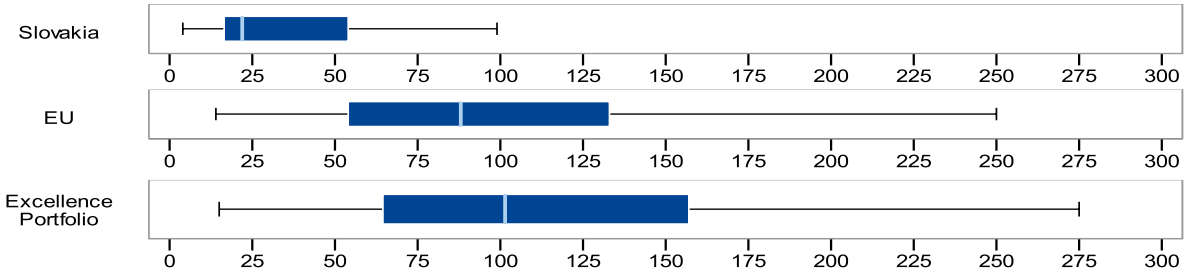
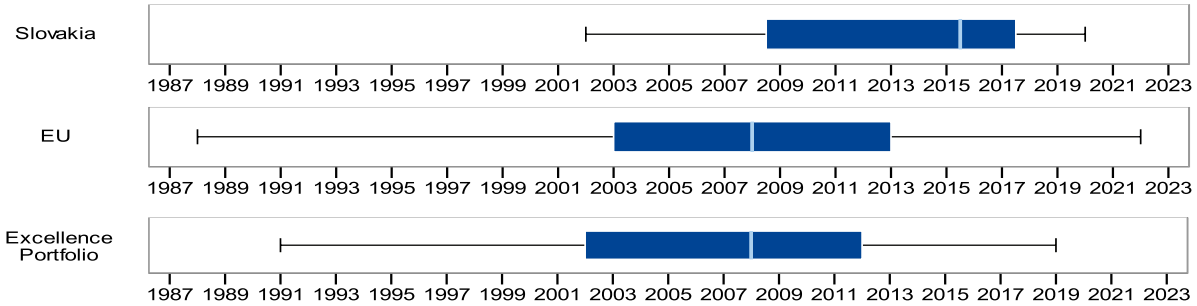
Clusters in Slovakia (I)

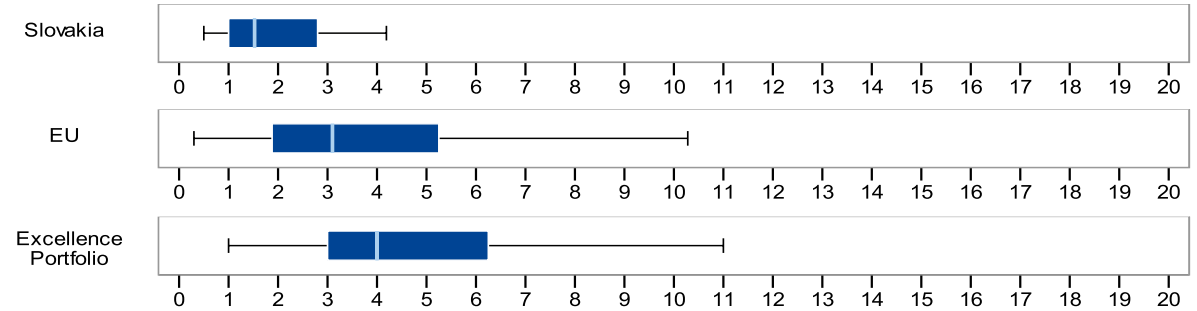
Small and Less Mature



Number of committed cluster participants in the cluster initiative



Year of initiating the first clustering activities



Number of employees (FTE) in the cluster organisation

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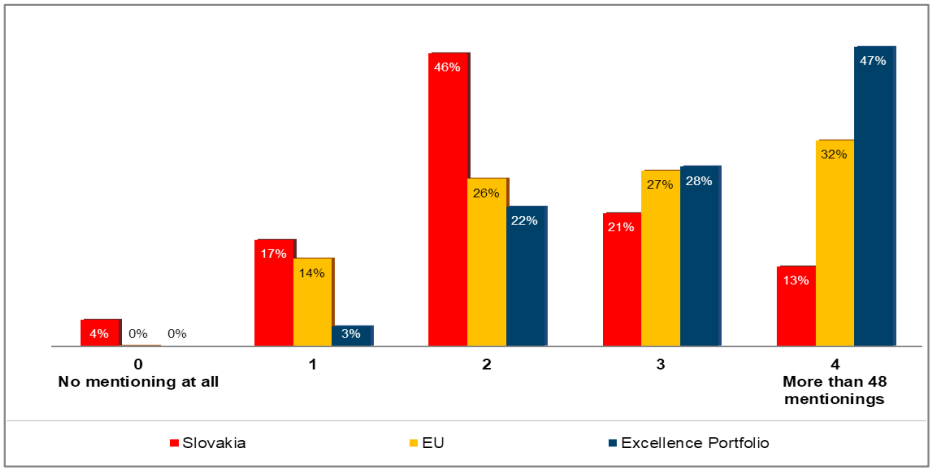
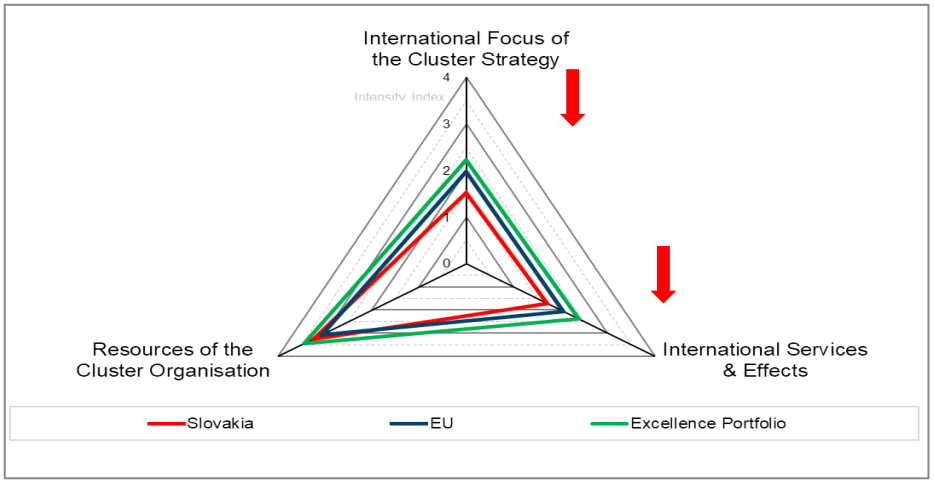
Clusters in Slovakia (II)

Limited Visibility, Less Prepared for Internationalisation



Appearance in Press, media, etc.



Readiness for internationalisation:

- Resources available
- International focus of the cluster strategy
- International Services and Effects achieved

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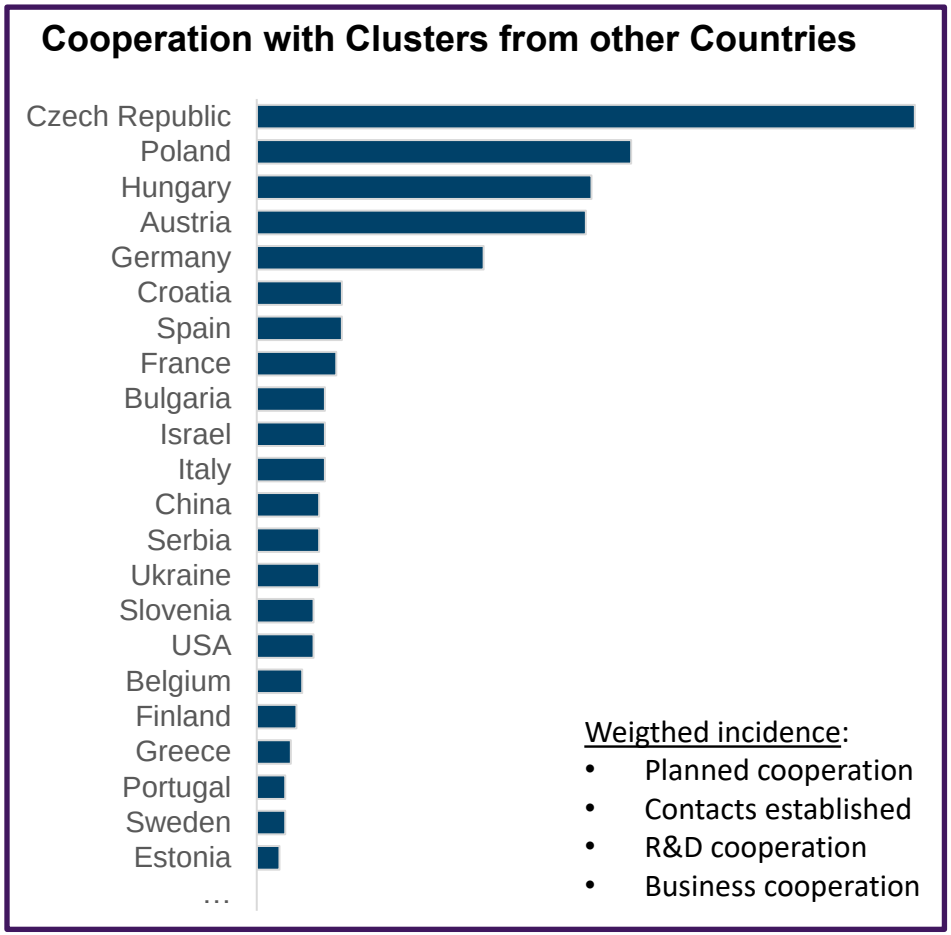
Clusters in Slovakia (III)

Internationalisation implemented by Slovak clusters



- Internationalisation mainly regarding neighboring countries seems to be implemented
- More challenging objectives for addressing internationalisation could be imagined

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Requirements for initiating and implementing internationalisation activities

- Clear distinction necessary: individual member interests vs. common interests of members (the latter should be the guideline to cluster internationalisation)
- National and international recognition and visibility, based on an unique selling point of the cluster initiative (“smart specialisation”)
  → ECEI GOLD and ECEI SILVER Labels significantly improve visibility!
- Branding being compliant to international use
- Critical Mass (size matters) within the specific cluster domain
- Internationalisation is marathon rather than a sprint: People, Money, Time, Persistency, pertinent intercultural/language experiences
- An internationalisation strategy, well developed together with the members being interested, setting and monitoring specific quantitative targets, regional focus of internationalisation to be specified

→ **Learn from peers!**

→ **Build up a foreign local network!**

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ECEI Labelling vs. National Mapping and Monitoring Approaches

- Several regions and countries have adopted the ECEI methodology for their own mapping and monitoring purposes:
  - Germany: SILVER (GOLD) Label to be achieved/financed in the national programme “go-cluster”
  - Catalonia/Spain: BRONZE Label mandatory for clusters being part of the Catalan cluster programme
  - Norway: GOLD Label mandatory for GCEs (Global Centres of Expertise)
  - Baden-Württemberg/Germany: Funding support for GOLD Labels
  - … Estonia, Walloonie/Belgium, Denmark, Slovakia, … organised local efforts
- Other countries introduced own approaches:
  - Poland, Hungary, …?

- Advantage ECEI:
  - Comparability to foreign countries/regions
  - The resulting (well-established) label can be used as a marketing tool
  - ECEI processes can be conducted locally, only data analysis is being done centrally, respective conditions need to be negotiated

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