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CLUSTER MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Version two, updated

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Version two, updated

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1. PREFACE

This report presents cluster management standards that should be understood as the code setting basic requirements for coordinators' practice and conduct in running a cluster while taking into account, *inter alia*, the best practices identified in Poland and abroad.

Most recent knowledge about the methods and systems for evaluation of cluster management processes has been used to provide cluster coordinators with a tool for effective improvement of their management activities, and with necessary guidance to implement the standards. A desk research carried out prior to the development of cluster management standards, made it possible to acquire extensive knowledge on the quality requirements towards cluster organisations providing a basis for standard setting.

The group of recipients of the proposed standards includes cluster coordinators (organisations which manage clusters and undertake actions for their development) and institutions responsible for the cluster policy at central and regional levels. For cluster constituents such as enterprises (in particular, SMEs), implementation of the standards means access to improved quality services.

Below, there are basic definitions used for the purpose of developing cluster management standards.

Cluster – geographical group of independent entities representing a specific economic specialisation, cooperating and competing with each other in a value chain. Collaboration in the cluster is formalised and implemented both vertically and horizontally and oriented towards achieving jointly established objectives. Cluster offers certain benefits and creates a new value for all types of participating entities, such as enterprises, universities and other scientific institutions, business support institutions, public administration and other supporting organisations.[1]

Cluster initiative — organisational form bringing together key players of the cluster for the sake of its development[2], including also a certain partnership formula which is used for agreeing and then implementing activities relevant to development of the agglomeration of companies and other organisations.[3]

Cluster coordinator (or cluster management organisation, cluster organisation) – legal person organising and animating interactions, links, knowledge flows and collaboration within the cluster, and also providing specialised services to companies and other cluster members. Coordinator represents the cluster in external relations, administers cluster operations on an ongoing basis and performs other functions necessary to its proper operation. When collaboration is initiated, these functions are often performed not by an organisation but by a particular person referred to as a cluster facilitator. At a later stage, on the operational level we should also talk about a person who is referred to as the cluster coordinator or cluster manager.[4]

Three basic models of organising collaboration within the cluster initiative may be identified, different from each other particularly in terms of role and responsibilities of cluster coordinator:
- no formal coordinator (in particular, no single legal person acting as coordinator), informal collaboration of a group of enterprises and other entities;

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[1] J. Hołub-Iwan, Ł. Wielec, *Developing the selection system for National Key Clusters (Report I „Characteristics of the national key cluster based on the analysis of secondary sources"*, PARP, Warsaw 2014, p. 9.

[2] M. Dzierżanowski (ed.), *Directions and assumptions of the cluster policy in Poland by 2020. Recommendations of the working group for cluster policy*, PARP, Warsaw 2012, p. 16. For detail, cf.: L. Palmen, M. Baron, *Guide for cluster initiative facilitators in Poland*, PARP, Warsaw 2011. Some authors define the cluster initiative also as the *„organised activities for the development of and improvement in the competitiveness of the cluster in the region, including enterprises, administration and/or academic community"* (Ö. Sölvell, G. Lindqvist, Ch. Ketels, *The Cluster Initiative Greenbook*, Stockholm 2003; translated as *Zielona księga inicjatyw klastrowych,* made by PARP, available in electronic version on the Innovation Portal: www.pi.gov.pl).

[3] M. Dzierżanowski (ed.), *ibid.*

[4] J. Hołub–Iwan, Ł. Wielec, *Developing the selection system for National Key Clusters (Report I „Characteristics of the national key cluster based on the analysis of secondary sources"*, PARP, Warsaw 2014, p. 8.

- coordinator (acting for example as an association) focuses on soft activities (networking, promotion, representation, collaboration arrangements), while the implementation part of specific projects (e.g. education and/or joint investment projects) is taken care by other entities (existing or newly created);
- coordinator is a financially strong organisation (newly created or existing), which carries out coordination and implementation tasks, such as joint investment projects.[5]

Cluster Development stages

Observation of cluster initiatives in various parts of the world allowed to distinguish several stages of their life cycle. **The first (incubation) stage** takes place when several entities start cooperating in the primary industry, around which a collaboration is organised, to achieve joint objectives. In **the growth stage** other enterprises join the cluster, including also those from the so-called related and supporting sectors, encouraged by successes of companies already operating in the cluster. In **the maturity stage**, the cluster reaches critical mass gathering a significant number of enterprises and having strong external links. At the same time new entities are established in the cluster while existing participants merge and transform. In **the decline stage** of the cluster, the links among its participants become weaker and cluster competitiveness declines, e.g. as a result of primary industry „aging". Clusters able to adapt to changes in the environment (related to market, technology, etc.) may reverse the decrease trends by transforming their structures and relations among their participants towards new areas of growth.

Since Polish clusters are relatively young, the standards in question do not take the maturity phase into account.

Examples of activities undertaken in the embryonic/incubation stage:
- Creating framework conditions necessary for the development of clusters (lobbying for the cluster, contacts with public authorities).
- Facilitating contacts with research centres in the sector.
- Developing own organisational structure and brand image.
- Preparing a strategic action and collaboration plan.
- Identifying leaders to act as a „driving force" for the cluster development.

Examples of activities undertaken in the growth stage:
- Creating relations of partnership and confidence among partners.
- Creating and developing own projects.
- Shaping stable financing foundation for the development of the cluster activity.
- Implementing the joint market activity (joint orders, marketing, etc.).

Characteristic and features of a cluster in maturity stage:
- New products resulting from collaboration between cluster participants.
- Own patents and innovations.
- New investments attracted to the region.
- International activities.[6]

Clusters in Poland are relatively young, still developing and shaping their structures and business models[7], which translate into the role and activities undertaken by cluster coordinators. This is confirmed by, *inter alia*, the outcomes of benchmarking studies carried out by PARP, which showed that the analysed cluster populations represented two development stages: incubation and growth/maturity stage.

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[5] S. Szultka (ed.), *Clusters in Poland – report on the series of discussion panels,* PARP, Warsaw 2012, p. 29.
[6] A Nowakowska (ed.), *Cluster benchmarking: development and description of the cluster benchmarking methodology in Poland*, PARP, Warsaw 2010, p. 32.
[7] B. Plawgo, *Cluster benchmarking in Poland – edition 2014*, PARP, Warsaw 2014, p. 19.

2.   INTRODUCTION

Clusters in Poland represent *different stages* of cluster life cycle. Along with their growth, the need to improve the quality of management processes in clusters is growing. In order to meet this challenge, the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) has developed cluster management standards (2014)[8] as a response to the problem of poor cluster management in Poland and the absence of a systemic approach to the issue of developing professional coordinators, who are a key factor to cluster success and effectiveness of public intervention. The standards should be understood as the rules defining the desirable characteristics of cluster management and their operation, taking into account, *inter alia*, the best Polish and foreign practices.

From October to November 2015, PARP undertook the task of country-wide assessment of selected cluster organisations against cluster management standards. In total, 64 clusters have been evaluated, representing embryonic, growth and maturity phases (5 clusters, 58 and 1 respectively in each phase). 30 clusters (47%), all being in the growth phase, have fully satisfied the standards while 34 clusters failed to meet the requirements. Assessment against cluster management standards, based on the ready available self-evaluation tool, has been carried out on the cluster premises to involve an external expert as well as at least two persons representing the cluster organisation itself and cluster constituents.

The overall level of compliance to the standards was as high as 92% on average. Scores in individual sections were similar with the highest scoring being *external collaboration* (96%), then *cluster setup* (93%) and *processes* (91%). The least scoring were *services for cluster members* and *resources* (89% each).

Among the most frequently unsatisfied standards, the first one worth to mention is *having multilingual information about the cluster* (webpage and promotional materials in English). Others include *transparency of financial operations, financial planning, quality management certification of the cluster coordinator, support in bidding for public procurement and monitoring and evaluation of the cluster strategy*. Other important drawbacks include lack of strategy for cluster development, non-existent or weak involvement in CSR-type activities and no sustainable financial resources.

Compliance verification on a broader scale indicated the need to revise some of the standards, *inter alia*, for the better adaptation to the specific nature of clusters (e.g. the requirement to have a financial plan was not always reasonable). Updated version of cluster management standards takes into account not only the outcomes of compliance verification, but also the lessons learned from the pilot application of the self-evaluation tool by a large group of clusters. The structure and total number of the standards remained unchanged, only the standard 2.1.1 *Financial plan* was combined with the standard 2.1.3 *Transparency of financial operations* and the new standard 3.5.2 *Dissemination of environmental-friendly activities* was introduced. The final version of the standards (Chapter 4) consists of 78 indicators under 36 standards, organised into 19 subareas and 5 areas.

In this report, the presentation of the standards is preceded by the introduction which synthetically describes the method of reaching the formulation of their final shape. We would like the reader to analyse the standards with awareness that both their origin and use in practice have been thoroughly examined.

Analysis of the project outcomes, especially with regard to the unsatisfied standards, allows for drafting a conclusion that support for clusters should be continued, especially for cluster organisations in order to help them solve the key problems in managing their clusters. It is worth to undertake joint efforts aimed at overcoming weaknesses in cluster management, since well performing and professionally managed clusters can bring more benefits to the economy. The cluster management standards presented below may, in this case, constitute a sort of signpost for their further effective development.

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[8] M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Cluster management standards*, PARP, Warsaw 2015; publication also available in electronic version in the Innovation Portal www.pi.gov.pl

## 3. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF CLUSTER MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

3.1. OBJECTIVES

This part synthetically describes the process of defining sections, subsections and indicators for the cluster management standards. To this end, we used the results of the analysis of existing data, good practices and case studies (described in a separate document[9]). The most important sources were existing studies (e.g. benchmarking) of clusters and their coordinators. It should be stressed that some of the identified evaluation systems refer to a cluster, and not directly to management and actions taken by cluster coordinator. One of the exceptions in this regard is the system quality certificates granted by the *European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis,* which concerns the quality of cluster management. In the process of defining indicators for the standards, inadequate sources, i.e. not relating to methods and models of operations, have been ignored, in particular, the indicators that would be largely dependent on the industry sector, as well as those which are not directly dependent on the activities implemented by the coordinator (e.g. resulting from the economic situation of cluster members, group of indicators on employment, sales, participation of various types of organisations in the cluster, etc.).

For the process of defining sections, subsections and then indicators, the following has been assumed:

1. Sections and subsections of the management standards should result from analysis of key documents at the European and national levels. At the stage of creating an draft version of the standards, optional subsections and requirements appeared (their adequacy in the context of building the standards was subject to discussion during the consultation meetings and testing workshops).

Figure 1. Adopted structure of the standards
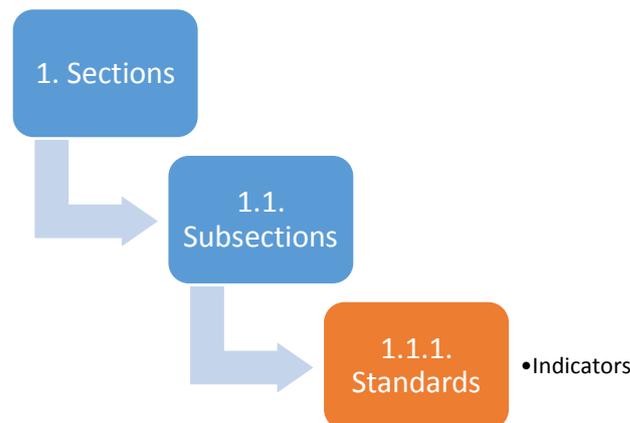
Source: M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Cluster management standards*, PARP, Warsaw 2015, p. 7

 The standards aggregate into subsections, and these, in turn, aggregate into sections. Each standard has indicators to determine if it is complied with or not.
2. In reasonable cases, at the stage of creating an draft version of the management standards, alternative standards can be identified (in the process of consultation and testing, the cluster management standards had 5 sections divided into 19 subsections and 37 standards).
3. In order to evaluate compliance with standards, the zero-one evaluation system („meets" or „does not meet") has been adopted, with three scenarios possible:
    a. one indicator is defined for a given standard – compliance with the requirements set out in the indicator means compliance with the standard;
    b. two or more alternative indicators are defined to a given standard – compliance with any of them means compliance with the standard;

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[9] M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Analysis of selected sources of information and development of good practices, proposals of the cluster management standards and indicators of meeting the standards as well as instructions on how to apply the standards. Diagnostic part,* PARP, Warsaw 2014.

c. two or more indicators are obligatory – they must be met collectively to prove compliance with the standard.

4. Standards should be characterised by the high versatility of applicability, i.e. compliance with a given indicator and then with the standard must be independent of the economy sector represented by the cluster.

5. Depending on the cluster development stage, a given standard may be obligatory or optional. Three Development stages have been distinguished:
   a. Emerging stage
   b. Growth stage
   c. Maturity stage

6. The rules of aggregation into subsections and sections are as follows: a given subsection is complied with only if all obligatory standards for certain cluster development stage are met collectively. The same rule applies in aggregating subsections to sections.

3.2. DEFINING SECTIONS AND SUBSECTIONS OF CLUSTER MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

In the process of defining sections and subsections, an unstructured list of the most important functions performed by cluster coordinators has been developed. In this process, an important role was played by the analysis of case studies, good practices and relevant literature. Then, the structure of the sections and subsections has been developed, using examples from benchmarking and cluster evaluation systems. At this stage, one of the challenges for creating the clear and unambiguous structure of the management standards was the complexity of some sections subject to evaluation. An example may be the role of the cluster coordinator with regard to cluster internationalisation.

The standards related to internationalisation processes may be included in various sections, e.g.:

1. Human resources – e.g. when the cluster managerial staff has the necessary language, cultural and interpersonal skills to represent the cluster in international relations.

2. Marketing and public relations – e.g. having at least bilingual versions of website and promotional materials.

3. Services rendered for cluster members – e.g. organising joint trips to international fairs, representing members in international contacts, providing information needed to launch operations on a given foreign market.

4. External collaboration – e.g. establishing contacts with other clusters internationally, finding foreign partners for implementing joint projects.

As a result of those analyses, proposed structure of cluster management standards has been developed, containing 5 major sections, each of them divided into 2 to 6 subsections (19 subsections in total).

Table 1. Proposal of areas and subareas of the cluster management standards

Section	Subsection
1. Organisation	1.1. Organisational foundations of activity
	1.2. Strategy
2. Resources	
	2.1. Financial resources
	2.2. Infrastructures
	2.3. Human resources and know-how
3. Processes	
	3.1. Marketing and public relations
	3.2. Internal communication
	3.3. Cluster development
	3.4. Principle of sustainable development
4. Services for cluster members	
	4.1. External financing
	4.2. R+D and innovation activity, technology transfer

Section	Subsection
	4.3. Market activity
	4.4. Exchange of experience and networking/matchmaking
	4.5. Human capital development
	4.6. Internationalisation
5. External collaboration	
	5.1. Collaboration with local governments
	5.2. Collaboration with scientific organisations and business support institutions
	5.3. Collaboration with other cluster coordinators
	5.4. Visibility of the cluster and its achievements

Source: M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Cluster management standards*, PARP, Warsaw 2015, pp. 8-9.

The next stage was to analyse the compliance of the proposed structure with existing evaluation systems and cluster benchmarking. For this purpose, 8 sources closely connected with the evaluation of cluster coordinators or of the cluster itself, have been selected. The list has been supplemented with the unified methodology for evaluating the competence of project managers (whereby, only three first areas were fully adequate to the cluster management standards) and the standards set for innovation centres. Below, there is a complete list of the documents analysed (they have been summarised in the matrix in the same order).

1. *European Network of Excellence for Cluster Management, Matching and Promotion*, The Economic Development Department Karlsruhe, 2007. Polish version: *Europejska sieć doskonałości na rzecz zarządzania, współpracy i promocji klastrów*, translated into Polish by PARP, Warsaw, 2007.
2. *European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI): The quality label for cluster organisations criteria, processes, framework of implementation*, European Cluster Excellence Initiative, 2012 oraz *European Cluster Excellence BASELINE. Minimum Requirements for Cluster Organisations, European Cluster Excellence Initiative*, 2011.
3. *Uncovering Excellence in Cluster Management*, PwC, 2011.
4. *Benchmarking klastrów edycja 2014, Metodyka benchmarkingu, konstrukcja badań, podstawowe obszary benchmarkingu, zgodnie z Szczegółowym Opisem Przedmiotu Zamówienia*, PARP, Warsaw 2014.
5. *World Class Clusters – An Attempt to Formulate the Main Criteria of World Class Clusters*. Discussion paper, 2011.
6. *European cluster benchmarking – methodology*, South East Europe Network of Excellence for Cluster Organisations, 2011.
7. *A Framework for Performance Based Competency Standards for Global Level 1 and 2 Project Managers*, Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards, 2007.
8. *Standardy działania i dobre praktyki w ośrodkach innowacji*, Polish Business and Innovation Centers Association in Poland, Poznań 2013.

Table 2. Matrix for evaluation of the compliance of the proposed sections and subsections with the existing standards

Proposed section	Proposed subsection	Presence of the proposed section/subsection in the existing standards								Compliance of the proposed section/subsection with the existing standards
		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	
1. Organisation		No	Yes	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	81.3%
	1.1. Organisational foundations of activity	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	87.5%
	1.2. Strategy	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	75.0%
2. Resources		Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes	87.5%
	2.1. Financial resources	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	75.0%
	2.2. Infrastructure	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	50.0%
	2.3. Human resources and know-how	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100.0%
3. Processes		Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	93.8%
	3.1. Marketing and public relations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100.0%
	3.2. Internal communication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100.0%
	3.3. Cluster development	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	87.5%
	3.4. Principle of sustainable development(*optional*)	No	No	No	Partially	No	Partially	No	No	12.5%
4. Services rendered to cluster members		Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	92.9%
	4.1. Acquisition of external financial resources	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	57.1%
	4.2. R+D and innovation activity. technology transfer	No	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	78.6%
	4.3. Market activity	Yes	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	92.9%
	4.4. Exchange of experience and networking/ matchmaking	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	85.7%
	4.5. Human capital development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	100.0%
	4.6. Internationalisation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	No	71.4%
5. External collaboration		Yes	Yes	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes	-	Partially	85.7%
	5.1. Collaboration with local governments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	100.0%
	5.2. Collaboration with scientific organisations and business support institutions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	100.0%
	5.3. Collaboration with other cluster coordinators (*optional*)	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	-	No	42.9%
	5.4. Visibility of the cluster and its achievements	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	-	No	71.4%
Compliance on the level of sections		50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	90.0%	100.0%	90.0%	
Compliance on the level of subsections		52.6%	78.9%	73.7%	81.6%	89.5%	92.1%	88.9%	73.7%	

Source: M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Cluster management standards*, PARP, Warsaw 2015, p. 10.

Each of the aforementioned documents has been analysed in terms of the presence of the given section/subsection. Then, the compliance has been calculated as follows. The number of points assigned was:
- 0 – if the proposed section/subsection is not present in the document,
- 0.5 – if it is discussed in the document to a small extent,
- 1 – if it is present in the document.

Then, the percentage has been calculated, which is the quotient of the sum of points for the presence in the documents and the maximum possible score (i.e. when the given section/subsection is present in all documents). It is worth noting the high compliance of the developed structure of the standards with the existing documents and evaluation methodologies at the horizontal level (the presence of the proposed section and subsection in the existing standards) and vertical level (% of the compliance with the proposed section and subsection).

Vertically, the least compliant is the document being a part of the project „European Network of Excellence for Cluster Management, Matching and Promotion", whereby it was developed more than 7 years ago (and therefore is the least up-to-date in this summary). The high level of matching of the proposed structure may be observed in relation to the methodology developed under the *European Cluster Excellence Initiative* and by the *South East Europe Network of Excellence for Cluster Organisations*. Horizontally, the lowest compliance has been observed for the following subsections:

1. Environmental protection. Only in two documents, and even only partially, the environmental issues have been taken into account. It is worth mentioning that it has been proposed as one of the activities of the cluster coordinator as early as in 2008 in the *Guide for cluster initiative facilitators in Poland*.[10]
2. Collaboration with other cluster coordinators. This has been directly proposed in case of two analysed documents (general readings regarding the need for external cooperation have not been taken into account).

At this stage, the above-mentioned subsections were optional, and their usefulness and adequacy to cluster development stage in Poland was assessed in the course of the consultation meetings and testing workshops (November 2014).

3.3. DEVELOPMENT OF INDICATORS

Taking into account the applied zero-one evaluation system for the standards („meets" or „does not meet"), it has been assumed that each standard should have precisely defined minimum criteria of compliance, with one or more indicators. In describing indicators for a certain standard, we sought to make them cover the standard in the fullest possible manner.

3.4. OBLIGATORY AND OPTIONAL STANDARDS DEPENDING ON DEVELOPMENT STAGE

Depending on the cluster development stage, each standard has two variants: „obligatory" and „optional". This resulted from an attempt to create management standards which take into account the cluster activity stages (embryonic, growth, maturity). For example, a group of indicators related to supporting internationalisation processes, may be optional in the emerging stage and obligatory in the maturity stage. The system does not exclude a situation that certain coordinator meets the requirements set for an optional indicator.

Table 3. Evaluation of the implementation level of the standard

Standard		
Minimum indicators for the standard	Obligatory	Optional
Met	Standard is met	Standard is met
Not met	Standard is not met	As the standard is optional, does not have to be met

Source: M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Cluster management standards*, PARP, Warsaw 2015, p. 11

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[10] L. Palmen, M. Baron, *Guide for cluster initiative facilitators in Poland*, PARP, Warsaw 2011, p. 129.

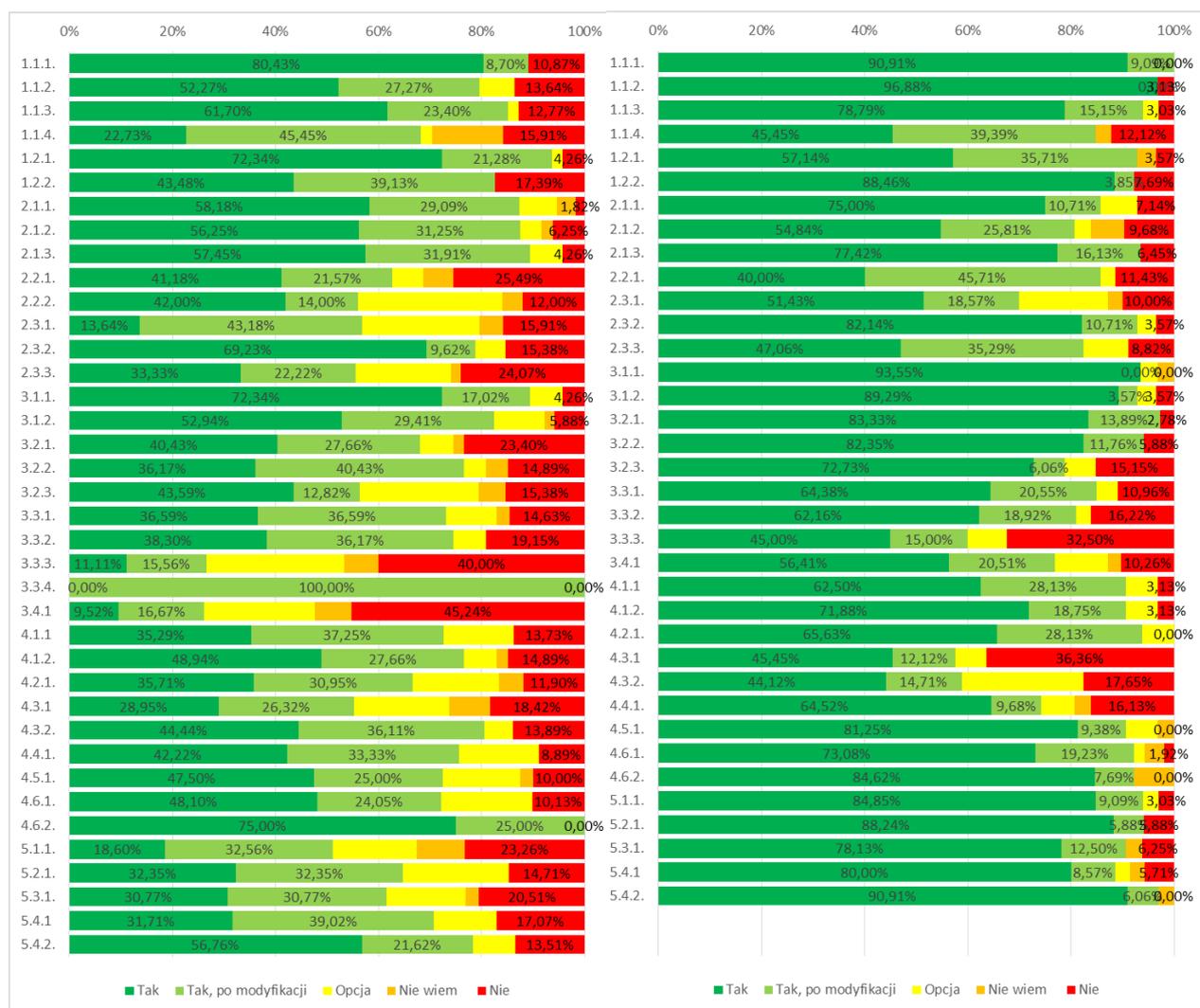### 3.5. CONSULTATION OF THE CLUSTER MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

A draft proposal of the cluster management standards has been subject to consultations with people directly involved in clusters and those interested their development (November 2014). The discussion on the proposed standards was essential for the project due to the need to reach consensus on the scope of the standards, methods of their use, monitoring and updating. Consultations had the following forms:

1. **Consultation meetings**. 4 consultation meetings were held (in Warsaw, Białystok, Poznań, Katowice), with the purpose to obtain feedback in relation to the presented proposal of the standards in terms of making possible changes and additions. It was an opportunity to review the assumptions and to make the necessary changes as a result of the discussion conclusions. Representatives of target groups, social partners and experts took part in the meetings. The meetings were attended by 215 persons in total.

2. **Testing workshops**. Testing was carried out on 13 cluster coordinators (clusters benchmarked in 2014 and earlier were preferred). The objective of each workshop was to verified the applicability of the standards in real-life conditions. In the course of testing, every cluster was evaluated against the proposed standards. Conducting a full evaluation process allowed to evaluate the standards and indicators in terms of relevance, usefulness and durability. During workshops, the representatives of selected clusters also verified the transparency and usefulness of the instructions on how to apply the standards.

3. **Consultation via the Innovation Portal**. Extensive public consultation was conducted on the Innovation Portal (http://www.pi.gov.pl).

In the process of public consultation, 41 comments have been received in total, submitted by 9 authors representing 9 institutions.

The collected results allowed to verify the initial proposal of the standards. It should be stressed that the standards have been accepted with moderate favour by the majority of the participants, as evidenced by the following statistical summary of the feed-back received.

Fig. 2. Statistical analysis of the individual feed-back collected during the consultation meetings (left chart, 1,699 opinions and comments) and testing workshop (right chart, 1,251 opinions and comments)

pl	en
Tak	Yes
Tak, po modyfikacji	Yes, after modification
Opcja	Option
Nie wiem	I do not know
Nie	No

Source: M. Piotrowski (ed.), *Cluster management standards*, PARP, Warsaw 2015, p. 13

Approval of the draft version of the standards was definitely higher during testing workshops, which may result from the following reasons: smaller number of participants in this form of consultation (5-10 persons), more time for clarifications regarding particular indicators and perceiving the standards by the participants from a practical point of view, based on their own experience. On a basis of the collected observations and comments, the final version of the standards has been developed.

1. CLUSTER MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

1.1. CLUSTER SET-UP

The standards related to cluster set-up determine the basic organisational and legal requirements for cluster operations.

1.1.1. ORGANISATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

The organisational foundations include development of organisational and legal framework for cluster coordinators to carry out their activities.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Indicator	Status
1. CLUSTER SET-UP	1.1. Organisational foundations	1.1.1. Rights and responsibilities of the coordinator defined	There is a document that specifies responsibilities and rights of cluster coordinator. The document has been approved by cluster members and/or the body representing cluster members. Such provisions may be included in the document establishing a cluster (e.g. cluster agreement) or in other documents (e.g. bylaws, resolution, regulation). Coordinator's rights and responsibilities may be set out in a separate document.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		1.1.2. Organisational structure of the cluster defined	There is an up-to-date document that describes the organisational structure of the cluster, approved by the cluster members and/or body representing the cluster members. The provisions in this regard may be a subject of a document establishing the cluster (e.g. cluster agreement, cluster contract) as well as they may be a subject of other documents (e.g. bylaws, resolution or a separate document).	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		1.1.3. Actual cluster member data base available	There is a dataset that contains updated information about each cluster participant. Basic data on the cluster members, such as contact details, business profile, type and size of the organisation, employment, and contact person, should be published on the website. The dataset could have any form provided that it meets such criteria as regular updating and access for all cluster members. It is recommended that access is provided online, e.g. as a section on the cluster website or a file to be downloaded from the cluster website.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		1.1.4. Preventing conflicts of interest within the cluster	The following indicators are met collectively: - coordinator does not use its privileged position in the cluster to build a competitive advantage over the other cluster members (e.g. by exclusive use of information assets). - coordinator does not use its privileged position to prefer one cluster member or a group of members over the other entities. - there is a document or mechanisms approved by the cluster members and/or the body representing cluster members to identify and manage conflicts of interest between coordinator and cluster member, or between members themselves (e.g., code of ethics).	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

The strategy is a key document for cluster development which determines, a vision, mission, strategic and operational objectives and action plan. Cluster coordinator should act in line with the strategy adopted for a given period of time which forms a basis for his appraisal.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Indicator	Status
1. CLUSTER SETUP	1.2. Strategy	1.2.1. Cluster has a development strategy and action plan	The following indicators are met collectively: - cluster has actual development strategy, approved by cluster members and/or the body representing cluster members, which includes, inter alia, analysis/diagnosis, vision and mission and strategic objectives. - the strategy has been developed in a participatory manner, i.e. with participation of cluster members who can really control individual provisions. - coordinator, along with cluster members, shall periodically update the document and analyses the potential directions of the cluster development. The frequency of the strategy validation and update corresponds with the degree of the cluster development, changes in its structure and surroundings, activities undertaken, as well as with the needs of cluster members. - there is an action plan, approved by the cluster members and/or the body representing cluster members, that specifies operational objectives corresponding to the strategy and a list of projects/undertakings for which financial resources have been identified.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		1.2.2. Coordinator observes the provisions of applicable cluster documents	At least once a year, the cluster members and/or the body representing cluster members evaluate the coordinator for the compliance of its activities with the provisions of the documents establishing the cluster and with the current strategy/action plan. The evaluation may also be carried out on an ongoing basis.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

2. RESOURCES

The standards reflect requirements related to financial, infrastructure and human resources of the cluster.

2.1.1. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The standards reflect requirements related to financial resources availability and revenue generation.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Indicator	Status
2. RESOURCES	2.1. Financial resources	2.1.1. Financial stability	Cluster coordinator has sustainable resources to finance current activities for a period of at least 12 months. They may include a membership fee or revenues from economic activity that are allocated for the statutory objectives of the cluster.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		2.1.2. Transparency of financial operations	The following indicators are met collectively: - in the beginning of fiscal year, the coordinator shall prepare a cluster budget setting out planned revenues and expenditures, which is a subject to approval by the cluster members or by the body appointed by them to exercise supervision of cluster coordinator. - after the end of the fiscal year, the coordinator shall prepare a report on budge execution, which is subject to approval by the cluster members or by the body appointed by them to exercise supervision of cluster coordinator.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

2.1.2. INFRASTRUCTURE

The standards reflect requirements regarding office space and research and development facilities being at the coordinator's disposal.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
2. RESOURCES	2.2. Infrastructure	2.2.1. Available office space	The following indicators are complied with collectively: — the coordinator has permanent access to office space, certified by an appropriate document, i.e. deed, lease or bylaws defining the terms and conditions of use. The access period should be secured for not less than 12 consecutive months. — office space should be sufficient in terms of i.a. size, number of rooms and equipment necessary for a given coordinator, his activities and cluster members' needs. — office space is located in the geographical region where cluster members are concentrated.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		2.2.2. Access to laboratory/ research facility	At least one of alternative indicators is complied with: — The cluster coordinator is in charge of disposing laboratory and research infrastructure, which can be accessed by cluster members based on transparent	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** optional

			and equal rules.	**Maturity stage:** optional
			- certain cluster members are in charge of laboratory/research facilities which are made available by them on equal rules to the other cluster members. — coordinator has signed long-term collaboration agreements with external entities (i.a. with university, research institute, Polish Academy of Science, research and development centre) that provide access to laboratory/research infrastructure for cluster members, ideally on preferential terms and conditions.	

2.1.3. HUMAN RESOURCES AND INFORMATION DIRECTORIES

Human resources, i.a. staff employed by the coordinator or staff delegated by cluster members to implement cluster tasks, are among of the major cluster assets. On the other hand, information directories available in the cluster provide data necessary for effective decision making process.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
2. RESOURCES	2.3. Human resources and information directories	2.3.1. Availability of staff for cluster coordinator	Coordinator has got staff needed in order to run current administrative work in the cluster and take actions planned in the cluster strategy and operation plan. Available staff is sufficient and corresponds with the cluster needs, considering the industry sector represented and cluster development stage.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		2.3.2. Database of assets and competencies currently accessible in the cluster	The following indicators are complied with jointly: — coordinator has got a database of competencies available in the cluster. This can be for instance a directory of cluster staff/ members, who have particular competencies (e.g. website design, accounting, legal services). — coordinator has an updated directory of assets accessible in the cluster and such directory is made available to cluster members. The above mentioned assets may include (depending on the cluster's specialization): know-how, buildings, research infrastructure, equipment and facilities, technologies, intellectual property rights, etc.) The following Indicator is alternatively complied with: — an internal online system for know-how and information exchange is in place and can be accessed by all cluster members. The system provides information about competencies in the cluster and other assets (e.g. buildings, research infrastructure, equipment and facilities, technologies, intellectual property rights, etc.).	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		2.3.3. Upgrading cluster management skills and competencies	The following indicators are complied with jointly: — coordinator identifies training needs of its staff and analyses education and skill development opportunities available on the market, such as training sessions, workshops, study visits, etc. — coordinator's staff actively participate in events aimed at developing skills and competencies (e.g. training sessions, study visits, workshops). The frequency and form of skill upgrading corresponds	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

			with the degree of cluster development, actions undertaken, changes undergoing in and outside the cluster, and cluster members' needs.	

3. PROCESSES

The standards reflect requirements regarding day-to-day cluster operations and processes taking place inside the cluster.

3.1.1. MARKETING

One of the basic tasks carried out by cluster coordinator is to develop a cluster brand and to increase its visibility. In this regard, it is crucial to design a visual identification system for the cluster.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
3. PROCESSES	3.1. Marketing	3.1.1. Cluster Visual Identification System	Cluster has a visual identification system, including i.a. a logo, specific colours, presentation designs, etc. Principles guarding the use of the system have been agreed together by the cluster members.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		3.1.2. Coordinator initiates and supports participation in fairs and exhibitions	The following indicators are complied with jointly: - coordinator initiates participation in fairs and exhibitions through identification and dissemination of information on events relevant to industry sector represented by the cluster. - coordinator offers assistance for cluster members in organisation of their participation in fairs and exhibitions relevant to cluster business profile. - coordinator actively takes part in fairs and/or other industrial events, by representing the cluster. In this respect, active participation means to: present goods and/or services offered by the cluster, prepare an exhibition or trading stand, hold meetings with external entities or sign a framework collaboration agreement. In this respect it is important that coordinator promotes the cluster and its brand. Frequency and form of participation in the above mentioned events should be correlated with the cluster's development stage and needs of its members.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

3.1.2. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Communication within the cluster is vital for the cluster's proper operation. It may take various forms, although today e-solutions are dominant (e-mail, social media, newsletters, communicators). The Coordinator should also take actions for integrating the cluster's members, which aim at i.a. increasing their identification with the cluster.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
3. PROCESSES	3.2. Internal communication	3.2.1. Variety of communication tools and forms	Coordinator remains in continuous contact with the cluster members via various communication tools, e.g. meetings, e-mails, telephone, conference calls, internet communicators, social media, newsletter. Communication frequency, form and target (all members versus selected groups) are adjusted to the implemented operations, changes to cluster's surroundings and the needs of cluster members. It is assumed, however, that at least once a year there should be a meeting gathering all cluster members.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		3.2.2. Actions integrating cluster members	Coordinator regularly implements actions aimed at cluster members' integration (e.g. formal and informal meetings, including meetings of governing bodies and working groups, corporate events, visiting cluster members, etc.). Frequency and form of those actions should correspond with the level of cluster development and its members' needs.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		3.2.3. Working groups and task forces	Coordinator actively supports development of collaboration in the cluster and coordinates various working groups and task forces consisting of cluster members' representatives. The scale of those actions corresponds with the stage of cluster development and its members' needs.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

3.1.3. CLUSTER GROWTH

Desired directions for change include quantitative and qualitative growth of the cluster, i.a. through recruting new members compatible with the cluster profile and able to answer to its needs (offering complementary competencies).

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
3. PROCESSES	3.3. Cluster growth	3.3.1. Monitoring and assessment of strategy implementation	The following indicators are complied with jointly: — coordinator has well-established mechanisms for monitoring and assessment of actions undertaken in order to achieve the goals and output/outcome indicators set in the strategy. Such mechanisms are applied to practice and effectively used to undertake corrective and preventive actions. — monitoring and assessment outcomes are discussed during the meetings with cluster members and can constitute a basis for updates.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		3.3.2. Cluster structure openness	The following indicators are complied with jointly: — coordinator can provide an offer for new members and explain benefits resulting from joining the cluster. — coordinator has established principles and procedures for admitting new members, which make it possible to fairly evaluate the candidates. Such principles and procedures are used in practice.	**Incubation stage:** obligatory **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		3.3.3. Quality management implemented by cluster coordinator	At least one of alternative indicators is complied with: — coordinator performs regular customer satisfaction surveys with regard to the quality of services rendered, especially those offered to cluster members. Such surveys target cluster members and/or external partners and other clients. Survey frequency corresponds with the development stage of the cluster, range of services offered and members' needs. — coordinator has implemented a quality management system such as ISO 9001:2000 or similar.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** optional **Maturity stage:** obligatory

3.1.4. R&D&I, TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Coordinator should actively engage in innovation development processes in cluster member organisations. This may include provision of information as well as direct involvement in innovation development processes (e.g. intermediary services in obtaining know-how).

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
3. PROCESSES	3.4. R&D&I, technology transfer	3.4.1. Supporting innovation in the cluster	At least one of alternative Indicators is complied with: — coordinator regularly engages in innovation development processes in the cluster (e.g. disseminates know-how and information, promotes innovation, initiates changes, acts as a technology or know-how broker, looks for technology recipients, organizes expert workshops or expert exchange under internship projects). The scale of actions should correspond with the level of cluster development and the needs of its members. — coordinator keeps records of ideas/unused innovations/solutions, and such records are made available for the cluster members. — there is a body in the cluster structure responsible for appraisal of innovative solutions and identification of innovations interesting from the cluster development point of view. — coordinator supports the process of establishing start-ups and spin-offs/spin-outs in order to commercialize ideas developed in the cluster (e.g. ideas generated by big enterprises or universities operating in the cluster).	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

3.1.5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development principle, as a part of CSR, is reflected in various EU and national regulations. CSR assumes voluntary integration of social interest, environmental aspects and relations with stakeholders, and employees in particular, into operations performed by businesses.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
3. PROCESSES	3.5. Sustainable development	3.5.1. Compliance with the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	One of alternative indicators is complied with: — cluster strategy and plan include provisions for implementation of CSR principles in the cluster, for example related to creation of employee friendly work environment, development and implementation of new, environmentally friendly technologies, increase of energy efficiency, limited use of natural resources, conducting various social actions, etc. — coordinator actively promotes CSR principles, for instance organizing instruction/guiding sessions and/or conducting actions to increase CSR awareness. Frequency, form and scale of those actions correspond with cluster development stage, represented industry and needs of cluster members. — coordinator undertakes specific actions or support projects aimed at implementation of CSR principles (e.g. acquiring funds for building thermal modernization, implementation of low emission technologies, decreasing the use of natural resources). Frequency, form and scale of those actions correspond with cluster development stage, represented industry and needs of cluster members.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		3.5.2 Boosting eco-efficiency commitment	At least one of alternative Indicators is complied with: - coordinator promotes implementation of environmental protection standards by the cluster members and offers support in obtaining certificates such as ISO 14001 and EMAS. - coordinator promotes technology and novel solution actions that contribute to reduction of negative environmental impacts. - coordinator promotes implementation of eco design, i.e. identification of the product environmental impacts and consideration for environment as early as on the project design stage.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

4. SERVICES RENDERED TO CLUSTER MEMBERS

At the stage of cluster growth, it is important to broaden coordinator's role and responsibilities to add services rendered to cluster members. Such services may include i.a. acquiring external funds, supporting market activities related to the cluster value chain or support for internationalization.

4.1.1. PROJECT FUNDING

Coordinator should provide information on the availability of funding sources and have an active role in the process of acuiring external funding on behalf of cluster members. Coordinator may also support cluster entities in implementing projects funded from external sources.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
4. SERVICES RENDERED TO CLUSTER MEMBERS	4.1. Project funding	4.1.1. Acquiring external funds	At least one of alternative Indicators is complied with: — coordinator engages in the process of acquiring private funds for the cluster development, i.a. seed and venture capital funding, loans and guaranty funding, and actively participates in implementation of projects funded with these sources. The scale of actions taken corresponds with the cluster development stage and its members' needs. — coordinator offers services to acquire funding from public sources in Poland and abroad. If funding is granted, coordinator offers support for implementation of particular projects (e.g. coordination, financial reporting and dissemination of results).	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

4.1.2. MARKET ACTIVITIES

Coordinator may actively participate in procurement and delivery operations carried out by cluster members, and support building consortia and partnerships to bid for tenders or implement collaboration projects. Especially, the value chain operations can directly translate into economic benefits for the cluster members (e.g. lowered costs, new market expansion).

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
4. SERVICES RENDERED TO CLUSTER MEMBERS	4.2. Market activities	4.2.1. Support for cluster members in existing value chains	At least one of alternative Indicators is complied with: — coordinator supports joint procurements (e.g. being a party of the deal, collecting individual demands of cluster members, negotiating terms and conditions for purchase on behalf of the group). — coordinator supports the processes of joint sales (e.g. being a party of the deal, collecting individual offers of cluster companies, negotiating delivery terms and conditions with clients on behalf of cluster members). — apart from procurement and sale, coordinator supports other value chain building processes in the cluster (e.g. logistics, promotion).	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		4.2.2. Assistance with bids for public sector contracts	Coordinator offers assistance to cluster members with bidding for public procurement (e.g. being a party of the deal, providing tender information service, preparing a tendering proposal). The scale and scope of actions undertaken correspond with actual needs of cluster members.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** optional **Maturity stage:** optional

4.1.3. EXPERIENCE SHARING, NETWORKING/MATCHMAKING

While collecting information on competencies, assets and needs of the cluster members and obtaining data from external environment, coordinator can play an effective role in experience sharing between cluster members or with external individuals and organisations. In this regard, networking and matchmaking may also be important.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
4. SERVICES RENDERED TO CLUSTER MEMBERS	4.3. Experience sharing, networking/matchmaking	4.3.1. Support for networking and matchmaking	The following indicators are complied with jointly: — coordinator performs networking activities. These may include for example organization of meetings to start collaboration between cluster members and/or between cluster members and external entities or admission of cluster or its members to national and international industrial networks and organizations. Activities undertaken correspond with cluster development level and cluster members' needs. — coordinator performs matchmaking activities. These may include organisation of B2B and B2C meetings, matchmaking missions or study visits with the participation of cluster members. Activities undertaken correspond with cluster development level and cluster members' needs.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

4.1.4. HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Coordinator should actively contribute to human resources development in cluster member organisations, providing training courses, workshops, study visits, etc. and actively searching for education offers on the market.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
4. SERVICES RENDERED TO CLUSTER MEMBERS	4.4. Human resources development	4.4.1. Skills and knowledge development of cluster members	Coordinator engages in the organization of education events for cluster members to improve their skills and knowledge (e.g. training courses, workshops, study visits). Frequency and forms of such events correspond with cluster development level, industrial profile, changes in the external environment and cluster members' needs.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage**: obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

4.1.5. INTERNATIONALIZATION

At growth and maturity stages of cluster development, the need for internationalization support starts to play a bigger role. This may be related i.a. to seeking new sales markets for cluster members. Very often a single company would not be able to effectively compete on international markets while cluster coordinator can launch joint operations and is quite important in this respect.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
4. SERVICES RENDERED TO CLUSER MEMBERS	4.5. Internationalization	4.5.1. Support for internationalization	At least one of alternative indicators is complied with: - coordinator represents cluster members before international partners (e.g. during negotiations, agreement signing, arbitration). Frequency and scope of actions undertaken correspond with cluster development level and cluster members' needs. — coordinator is involved in organisation of international outgoing (for cluster members) and incoming events (for representatives of foreign organisations), e.g. matchmaking missions, study visits, fairs and exhibitions. Frequency and scope of actions undertaken correspond with cluster development level and members' needs. - coordinator is rendering and/or contracting internationalization services for cluster members such as international matchmaking, market research, negotiations, establishing a company abroad, tax and legal consulting, arbitration, organization of distribution channels, advertising and marketing, sales support. Frequency and scope of actions undertaken corresponds with cluster development level and cluster members' needs.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		4.5.2. Availability of information on the cluster in foreign languages	The following indicators are complied with jointly: — cluster has updated website available at least in English, where basic information can be found on the cluster, its potential and goods/services offered. — information on products/services offered by the cluster is mad available at least in English in a form of catalogue, database, or folder.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage**: obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

5. EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

Cluster coordinators continuously interact with external environment, including local governments, scientific organisations, business support organisations, and/or coordinators of other clusters. Effective collaboration with the above mentioned entities can bring benefits to both parties.

5.1.1. COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Clusters, especially at maturity stage, interact intensively with local governments and can have a real impact on regional development. They become important partners i.a. in drafting local and regional development strategies and other similar documents.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
5. EXTERNAL COLLABORATION	5.1. Collaboration with local governments	5.1.1. Established long-term collaboration with local government	At least one of alternative indicators is complied with: — cluster has a valid agreement, memorandum of understanding, letter of intent or any other document, proving collaboration with local government (e.g. co-organization of events, promotion actions and/or planning and drafting of strategic documents). — cluster or coordinator, on behalf of the cluster, is a partner of local authorities in implementing joint projects (e.g. organisation of regional events such as workshops and conferences, developing infrastructures, etc.). — coordinator, on behalf of the cluster, actively contributes to drafting of regional strategic documents or provides feed-back on such documents (e.g. Regional Innovation Strategy, Regional Development Strategy, Regional Operational Programme, etc.).	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

5.1.2. COLLABORATION WITH SCIENTIFIC AND BUSINESS SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Effective collaboration with scientific and business support organisations can bring real benefits to all the parties. Cluster members often get preferential access to scientific, research, consulting and/or training services while the other party, wins a client with a prospect of considerable order potential, and a possibility to get involved in economic processes conducted by cluster entities.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
5. EXTERNAL COLLABORATION	5.2. Collaboration with scientific and business support organisations.	5.2.1. Long-lasting collaboration with scientific and business support organisations under regional innovation system	At least one of the alternative indicators is complied with: — coordinator has a valid agreement, memorandum of understanding, letter of intent or any other document which proves collaboration with business support organisation and/or scientific organisation which is not a cluster member and is located in the same region. — coordinator regularly meets with such institutions in order to learn about available services or agree collaboration terms and conditions. Frequency, form and scope of contacts correspond with cluster development level, industry represented and cluster members' needs. — coordinator implements joint actions with external scientific and/or business support organisations, located in the same region, for the benefit of cluster members (e.g. implementation of research and development projects). Frequency, form and scope correspond with cluster development level, industry represented and cluster members' needs.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

5.1.3. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER CLUSTERS

Collaboration and networking of cluster coordinators is becoming more frequent practice and can play a vital role in knowledge transfer, development of national and regional policies related to cluster support measures, or service exchange.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
5. EXTERNAL COLLABORATION	5.3. Collaboration with clusters	5.3.1. Long-lasting collaboration with other clusters	At least one of alternative indicators is complied with: — coordinator has got a valid agreement, memorandum of understanding or letter of intent, which proves collaboration with other clusters in Poland and abroad. — coordinator initiates or participates in meetings with representatives of other clusters. A goal of such a meeting can be e.g. starting collaboration between clusters in order to implement a joint undertaking (specific project). Frequency and agendas of meetings correspond with identified needs for collaboration between clusters. — cluster implements joint projects with other Polish and/or foreign clusters.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

5.1.4. VISIBILITY OF THE CLUSTER AND ITS ACHIEVEMENTS

Building a cluster brand and increasing public awareness requires liaisons with media, especially local and regional ones. On the other hand, visibility of the cluster to policy development institutions at national level, evidences its active promotion or results from benchmarking studies at national and/or European level.

Section	Subsection	Standard	Method of compliance/Indicator	Status
5. EXTERNAL COLLABORATION	5.4. Visibility the cluster and its achievements	5.4.1. Cluster presence in media	At least one of alternative indicators is complied with: — on the cluster website there is a section dedicated to media, where some parts of the cluster visual identity systems are available, along with a brief description of the cluster and press release on current events related to the cluster operations. — coordinator collaborates with media (press, radio, TV, Internet) in order to disseminate information on the cluster and its operations. Such collaboration may include for instance provision of press materials adjusted to media needs, acquiring patronage from media, or discussing policy. Compliance with this indicator does not include a purchase of services such as paid advertisements or advertorials.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory
		5.4.2. Visibility to cluster policy makers	At least one of alternative indicators is complied with: — cluster is registered on the Cluster Map operated by PARP. — cluster has provided data to cluster surveys (e.g. Cluster Benchmarking in Poland or any other studies on clusters). — cluster participates actively in the projects and actions undertaken by cluster policy institutions at regional and national levels (e.g. giving presentations, taking part in discussion panels, etc.). - cluster is registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and/or European Cluster Observatory and/or belongs to a European Strategic Cluster Partnership.	**Incubation stage:** optional **Growth stage:** obligatory **Maturity stage:** obligatory

Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości (PARP) jest agencją rządową, która od 2000 roku wspiera przedsiębiorców. Celem działania PARP jest rozwój małych i średnich firm w Polsce – powstawanie nowych podmiotów, podnoszenie kwalifikacji i wzrost potencjału, wzmocnienie pozycji konkurencyjnej w oparciu o innowacyjność i nowoczesne technologie, kształtowanie przyjaznego otoczenia biznesowego, tworzenie warunków do prowadzenia działalności gospodarczej. Realizując działania wspierające przedsiębiorców (a także: instytucje otoczenia biznesu, jednostki samorządu terytorialnego, państwowe jednostki budżetowe, uczelnie), PARP korzysta ze środków budżetu państwa oraz funduszy europejskich. Zarówno w okresie przedakcesyjnym, jak i po wejściu przez Polskę do Unii Europejskiej, PARP oferowała przedsiębiorcom wsparcie finansowe, szkoleniowo-doradcze i informacyjne.

PARP posiada doświadczenie nie tylko w przekazywaniu unijnej pomocy przedsiębiorcom. Od kilku lat w Agencji działa **Ośrodek Badań nad Przedsiębiorczością**, którego zadaniem jest prowadzenie badań z zakresu przedsiębiorczości, innowacyjności, zasobów ludzkich i usług wspierających prowadzenie działalności gospodarczej. W oparciu o ich wyniki powstają założenia dla kolejnych programów pomocowych, które odpowiadają na zidentyfikowane potrzeby przedsiębiorców. Od 2013 r. PARP realizuje projekt pilotażowy służący analizie wpływu projektowanych i istniejących regulacji na sektor małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw (MSP).

Aby pomoc była skuteczna, przedsiębiorca musi mieć łatwy dostęp do informacji na jej temat. PARP zainicjowała utworzenie **Krajowego Systemu Usług dla MSP (KSU)**. KSU oferuje doradztwo dla firm na każdym etapie prowadzenia działalności: od rejestracji działalności, poprzez sprawne prowadzenie i zarządzanie firmą, aż po zawieszenie lub zakończenie działalności. Wszystkie ośrodki KSU (około 170) działają na podstawie wypracowanych Standardów Usług, dzięki czemu przedsiębiorca może być pewien, że otrzyma usługę najwyższej jakości. Przedsiębiorca chcący skorzystać z usługi doradztwa biznesowego ma do wyboru: Punkty Konsultacyjne KSU, ośrodki Krajowej Sieci Innowacji KSU oraz ośrodki realizujące usługi w zakresie ochrony środowiska, szybkiej optymalizacji kosztów, a także ośrodki testujące nowe usługi pilotażowe. Dodatkowo może otrzymać pożyczkę lub poręczenie ze współpracującego funduszu. Wiele organizacji tworzących KSU współpracuje jednocześnie z innymi znanymi sieciami, takimi jak Enterprise Europe Network (konsorcja dawnych Centrów Euro Info, EIC i Ośrodków Przekazu Innowacji, IRC).

Działający przy PARP ośrodek sieci **Enterprise Europe Network** daje szansę przedsiębiorcom na skorzystanie z możliwości rynku ogólnoeuropejskiego. Ośrodek oferuje nieodpłatne, kompleksowe usługi obejmujące informacje, szkolenia i doradztwo, przede wszystkim z zakresu prawa i polityk Unii Europejskiej, prowadzenia działalności gospodarczej w Polsce i za granicą, dostępu do źródeł finansowania, internacjonalizacji przedsiębiorstw, transferu technologii oraz udziału w programach ramowych UE. Ponadto, sieć Enterprise Europe Network, dzięki współpracy blisko 600 organizacji członkowskich z ponad 50 krajów w Europie, na Bliskim Wschodzie, w Azji i Ameryce, pomaga przedsiębiorcom w znalezieniu partnerów zagranicznych oraz organizacji ich udziału w targach i misjach gospodarczych.

PARP działa jako punkt kontaktowy w programie „Erasmus dla młodych przedsiębiorców", finansowanym przez Komisję Europejską. Program ten oferuje przyszłym lub początkującym europejskim przedsiębiorcom możliwość wyjazdu na staż do firm w innych krajach Unii Europejskiej.

Zaangażowanie PARP w międzynarodowe fora i organizacje zajmujące się wspieraniem przedsiębiorczości i innowacyjności przekłada się na jakość oferowanych usług i ich zbieżność ze światowymi tendencjami. Członkostwo w **TAFTIE** (Europejska Sieć Agencji Innowacyjnych) gwarantuje stały dostęp do najlepszych praktyk stosowanych w wiodących europejskich agencjach wspierających innowacyjność. Jako członek Światowej Sieci Ekspertów na rzecz Konkurencyjności, Klastrów i Innowacyjności (**TCI**), PARP ma możliwość nawiązywania roboczych kontaktów z ekspertami z różnych krajów świata oraz wymiany doświadczeń i wiedzy w obszarze rozwijania klastrów i polityki opartej na klastrach. PARP jest również członkiem stowarzyszonym **IASP** (Międzynarodowe Stowarzyszenie Parków Naukowo-Technologicznych i Stref Innowacji), dzięki czemu korzysta z bogatych doświadczeń zagranicznych parków naukowo-technologicznych.

PARP systematycznie dopasowuje ofertę informacyjno-doradczą do zmieniających się potrzeb przedsiębiorców oraz pojawiających się nowych kanałów komunikacji. Obecnie Agencja dysponuje kilkunastoma **specjalistycznymi portalami internetowymi i społecznościowymi**, oferującymi szkolenia e-learningowe, e-booki, transmisje ze spotkań szkoleniowych i konferencji, informacje nt. możliwości ubiegania się o wsparcie, bazy wiedzy, publikacje, wyniki badań. Z informacji i narzędzi zawartych we wszystkich portalach PARP dostępnych za pośrednictwem głównego portalu Agencji **www.parp.gov.pl** korzysta blisko milion internautów miesięcznie.

Osoby zainteresowane uzyskaniem informacji nt. programów wsparcia oferowanych przez PARP dla przedsiębiorców oraz instytucji otoczenia biznesu, mogą skorzystać z infolinii prowadzonej w ramach **Informatorium PARP**. Konsultanci udzielają informacji telefonicznie i mailowo oraz biorą udział w spotkaniach z zainteresowanymi osobami.

Zapraszamy do skorzystania z naszych usług!