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## Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	9
<b>Beata Bal-Domańska:</b> Convergence of Central and Eastern European regions – spatial aspect.....	11
<b>Barbara Dańska-Borsiak:</b> The determinants of migration outflows from Polish sub-regions in both internal movement and abroad – identification and comparison.....	22
<b>Anna Golejewska:</b> Rethinking regional competitiveness. The role of productivity.....	33
<b>Małgorzata Golińska-Pieszynska:</b> Intellectual capital as an important element of knowledge management.....	43
<b>Piotr Hajduga:</b> Special economic zones in the Lower Silesia region as a regional development stimulator during the crisis .....	56
<b>Petr Hlaváček:</b> Analysis of the development processes of the city of Ústí nad Labem as an example of the social and economic transformation of cities in the Czech Republic.....	66
<b>Anna Jasińska-Biliczak, Jan Buleca:</b> Participation of economic self-government in the process of the promotion of entrepreneurship – case study of Poland, Germany and Slovakia.....	78
<b>Małgorzata Karczewska:</b> Diversity of the gross expenditure on R&D in GDP by sources of funds in Poland against the background of the European Union .....	89
<b>Artur J. Koźuch, Janusz Sasak, Kamilla Noworól:</b> Target costing and participatory budget in Territorial Self-Government Units.....	97
<b>Alina Kulczyk-Dynowska:</b> National park as an element fostering the sustainable development of the region – the example of the Tatra municipalities.....	108
<b>Iwona Ładysz:</b> The regional dimension of economic security in the age of globalisation using the example of the Lower Silesian Voivodship .....	118
<b>Krzysztof Malik:</b> Smart specialisation and Key Enabling Technologies in the New Regional Development Policy .....	128
<b>Štefan Marsina, Pavol Oravský:</b> Utilization of geothermal energy as a renewable source.....	141
<b>Anna Mazurek-Kusiak, Julia Wojciechowska-Solis:</b> Noticeability and effectiveness of tourism promotion in Lublin province .....	149
<b>Grygorii Monastyrskiyi, Tetyana Monastyrska:</b> Modernization of local self-government in Ukraine.....	160
<b>Alicja Olejnik:</b> Prospects and frontiers of Multidimensional Panel Spatial Autoregressive Models .....	170

<b>Pavol Oravský, Štefan Marsina:</b> Infrastructure of energetics and its diversification .....	180
<b>Alina Piątyszek-Pych:</b> The cluster development policy in Poland .....	190
<b>Zbigniew Piepiora:</b> Occurrence of natural disasters in Africa and international cooperation in the field of counteracting their effects .....	200
<b>Renata Pisarek:</b> The importance of passenger air transport and high-speed rail for regional development.....	210
<b>Małgorzata Rogowska:</b> The quality of public space in the development of urban areas.....	223
<b>Joanna Szafran:</b> Public-private partnership in Poland and the European Union .....	231
<b>Ewelina Szczech:</b> Is there a creative city in Poland? Defining and measuring the concept in Poland .....	242
<b>Andrzej Sztando:</b> Twelve rules for the construction of planning documents prepared by self-government units .....	252
<b>Maciej Turala:</b> Institutional capacity in Polish communes. Strategic, financial and spatial planning dimension .....	264
<b>Alla Vasina:</b> Management of the investment potential of Ukraine's regions in the process of regional structural policy realization .....	275
<b>Svitlana Veleshchuk:</b> Strategic development of the region in the context of the branding concept.....	285
<b>Marcin Bogdański, Wioletta Wierzbicka:</b> Socio-economic potential of Polish voivodship cities.....	295
<b>Marcelina Zapotoczna, Joanna Cymerman:</b> Application of selected synthetic measures in the assessment of the level of satisfied housing needs in Poland.....	306

## Summaries

<b>Beata Bal-Domańska:</b> Konwergencja regionów (NUTS-2) Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej – aspekt przestrzenny .....	21
<b>Barbara Dańska-Borsiak:</b> Determinanty krajowych i zagranicznych odpływów migracyjnych z podregionów – identyfikacja i porównanie .....	31
<b>Anna Golejewska:</b> Rozważania na temat konkurencyjności regionalnej. Rola produktywności.....	42
<b>Małgorzata Golińska-Pieszyńska:</b> Kapitał intelektualny jako ważny element zarządzania wiedzą.....	55
<b>Piotr Hajduga:</b> Specjalne strefy ekonomiczne na Dolnym Śląsku jako stimulator rozwoju regionalnego w dobie kryzysu .....	65

<b>Petr Hlaváček:</b> Analiza procesów rozwojowych miasta Ústí nad Labem jako przykład społecznych i ekonomicznych transformacji zachodzących w miastach Republiki Czeskiej .....	77
<b>Anna Jasińska-Biliczak, Jan Buleca:</b> Partycypacja samorządu gospodarczego w procesie wspierania przedsiębiorczości – analiza przypadku Polski, Niemiec i Słowacji .....	87
<b>Małgorzata Karczewska:</b> Zróżnicowanie udziału wydatków na B+R w PKB w Polsce według źródeł finansowania na tle krajów Unii Europejskiej ....	96
<b>Artur J. Kożuch, Janusz Sasak, Kamilla Noworól:</b> Rachunek kosztów docelowych a budżet partycypacyjny w JST.....	107
<b>Alina Kulczyk-Dynowska:</b> Park narodowy jako element wspierający równowagę rozwoju regionu – przykład gmin tatrzańskich .....	117
<b>Iwona Ładysz:</b> Regionalny wymiar bezpieczeństwa ekonomicznego w dobie globalizacji na przykładzie województwa dolnośląskiego.....	127
<b>Krzysztof Malik:</b> Specjalizacje inteligentne i technologie wiodące w Nowej Polityce Rozwoju Regionalnego .....	140
<b>Štefan Marsina, Pavol Oravský:</b> Utylizacja energii geotermalnej jako źródła odnawialnego.....	148
<b>Anna Mazurek-Kusiak, Julia Wojciechowska-Solis:</b> Zauważalność i skuteczność promocji turystyki w województwie lubelskim .....	159
<b>Grygorii Monastyrskyi, Tetyana Monastyrska:</b> Modernizacja samorządu lokalnego na Ukrainie .....	169
<b>Alicja Olejnik:</b> Perspektywy i ograniczenia panelowego wielowymiarowego autoregresyjnego modelu przestrzennego .....	179
<b>Pavol Oravský, Štefan Marsina:</b> Infrastruktura energii elektrycznej i jej dywersyfikacja.....	189
<b>Alina Piątyszek-Pych:</b> Polityka rozwoju klastrów w Polsce .....	199
<b>Zbigniew Piepiora:</b> Występowanie katastrof naturalnych w Afryce i międzynarodowa współpraca w zakresie przeciwdziałania ich skutkom .....	209
<b>Renata Pisarek:</b> Znaczenie pasażerskiego transportu lotniczego i kolei dużych prędkości dla rozwoju regionalnego .....	222
<b>Małgorzata Rogowska:</b> Jakość przestrzeni publicznej w rozwoju aglomeracji miejskich.....	230
<b>Joanna Szafran:</b> Partnerstwo publiczno-prywatne w Polsce i w Unii Europejskiej.....	241
<b>Ewelina Szczech:</b> Czy w Polsce istnieje miasto kreatywne? Próba definicji i pomiaru zjawiska w Polsce .....	251
<b>Andrzej Sztando:</b> Dwanaście zasad budowy dokumentów planistycznych jednostek samorządu terytorialnego.....	263
<b>Maciej Turała:</b> Sprawność instytucjonalna polskich gmin. Wymiar planowania strategicznego, finansowego i przestrzennego .....	274

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<b>Alla Vasina:</b> Zarządzanie potencjałem inwestycyjnym regionów Ukrainy w realizacji regionalnej polityki strukturalnej .....	284
<b>Svitlana Veleshchuk:</b> Strategia rozwoju regionu w kontekście koncepcji branding. ....	294
<b>Marcin Bogdański, Wioletta Wierzbicka:</b> Potencjał społeczno-gospodarczy miast wojewódzkich w Polsce.....	305
<b>Marcelina Zapotoczna, Joanna Cymerman:</b> Wykorzystanie wybranych miar syntetycznych do oceny zaspokojenia potrzeb mieszkaniowych w Polsce .....	316

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## THE CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN POLAND

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**Summary:** The purpose of this article is to present assumptions and policy instruments supporting clusters in Poland on the national level. In the first part of this article, the essence of the cluster policy was explained and the role of the public factor in creating and stimulating the development of clusters was briefly presented. Next, the instruments applied within the policy supporting clusters on the national level in Poland were described. In the first place, the records of the national strategic and government documents referring to supporting clusters were presented. In the following part of the article, the ways for supporting clusters through national operational programmes and actions taken by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PAED) were presented. At the end of the article, further to the conducted reflections, conclusions and guidelines for drawing up a coherent policy for supporting clusters in Poland were presented.

**Keywords:** clusters, cluster-based development policy.

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### 1. Introduction

For over twenty years, the concept of economic clusters, popularized in 1990 by M. Porter<sup>1</sup>, has been enjoying the growing interest. It is in clusters that both entrepreneurs and local self-governments, business environment institutions (BEI), governments of states and international organizations see development opportunities for individual companies as well as opportunities for improving competitiveness and accelerating the development of the local, regional, national and even international economy. It has resulted in the creation of the concept of the economic development policy based on clusters.

The cluster policy in Poland does not constitute a separate branch of the economic policy. However, clusters are an important instrument to combine and to implement

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<sup>1</sup> These are clusters/bunches as defined by M. Porter that are the subject of the analysis in the following study: “the geographical concentrations of the interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, companies operating in related sectors and associated institutions (e.g. universities, standardization bodies and industry associations) in the given fields, competing but also cooperating one with another” [Porter 2000, p.16].

other policies, such as the innovation policy related to the regional development and the research-developmental area.

The purpose of this article is to present assumptions and policy instruments supporting clusters in Poland on the national level. In order to achieve a purpose formulated in this way, it was required to conduct an analysis of the literature devoted to the issues of supporting clusters as well as of the studies of a practical nature. It is in the article that information from national strategic documents, sector operational programmes, reports and expert opinions being results of the research carried out in this field in Poland as well as information available on websites were used.

In the first part of this article, the essence of the cluster policy was explained and the role of the public factor in creating and stimulating the development of clusters was briefly presented. Next, the instruments applied within the policy supporting clusters on the national level in Poland were described. In the first place, the records of the national strategic and government documents referring to supporting clusters were presented. In the following part of the article, the ways for supporting clusters through national operational programmes and actions taken by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PAED) were presented. At the end of the article, further to the conducted reflections, conclusions and guidelines for drawing up a coherent policy for supporting clusters in Poland were presented.

## **2. The role of the public factor in creating and stimulating the development of the cluster**

The cluster policy is understood most widely as a development policy of a country or a region based on clusters, including and combining many different policies and instruments, which support the development of clusters in a coordinated way [Knop 2013, p. 124].

On the highest governmental level, the cluster policy is implemented through creating and formulating strategies, setting general directions for the development: for so-called priority areas as well as financial support for ongoing projects. Whereas, the agencies of the national level and local self-governments should take an active part in the strategy formulation on the regional and local level and, above all, implement the cluster policy as well as manage programs implementing the set directions of the development [Warzybok 2008, p. 24].

It is in order to enable the development of the cluster structures that the state should create favourable conditions for the companies to obtain the competitive edge through the implementation of the following measures: (1) focus on the creation of highly specialised production factors related to specific sectors and industries of the economy; (2) taking initiatives being aimed at attracting FDI; (3) creating privileged zones, industrial parks and the like; (4) promoting the export of the products produced in the clusters; (5) limitation of the intervention in the area of the market of production

factors or financial factors, which reduces the aspiration of the enterprises to develop an appropriate production level; (6) introduction and enforcement of strict quality, safety and natural environment protection standards; (7) weakening the competition among companies and eliminating regulations protecting national enterprises [Karaś 2011, p. 37].

### **3. Supporting clusters in the light of the chosen strategic documents**

*The National Development Strategy 2020* is the key strategic document on the national level, in which it is indicated that there is a need of the active state policy in the field of supporting clusters, which are most innovative and demonstrate the highest development potential as well as which are able to create highly competitive products and services being Polish and European export specialities. The fact is emphasized that functioning of clusters should be based on the market-participatory model, meaning the leading role of the private sector while initiating, financing and managing clusters [SRK 2012, pp. 62, 75].

It is in the document “*The Strategy for Innovations and Economic Efficiency – Dynamic Poland 2020*” that supporting cooperation within clusters is anticipated among others through: (1) promotion of the bottom-up approach towards the development of bunches; (2) abandoning supporting the clusters, which will not be able to develop, in favour of the so-called point intervention supporting higher forms of the cluster connections’ functioning such as internationalization of products and services or joint research projects on the EU level; (3) strengthening the cooperation among clusters and science-technological parks in order to translate the research results into innovations and efficiency; (4) supporting clusters and cooperation areas through creating preferential conditions within the access to financial resources; (5) involving regional authorities in activities aimed at adapting the educational system to the needs of bunches; (6) combining the cluster policy with the development of special economic zones (SEZ) due to the development of the trade specialization in SEZ, which may be a germ of sector clusters [SIiEG 2013, p. 61].

The issue of combining the SEZ development with the concept of bunches is also mentioned in the document “*The concept of the development of special economic zones*”. It is in this document that the investments supporting, among others, the development of clusters, industrial and technological parks or investments in priority economic sectors were recognised as suitable for backing up with the SEZ instrument [KRSEZ 2009, p. 4]. A comprehensive mechanism for supporting the SEZ development towards clusters will be developed on the basis of following actions among others: (1) promotion and trainings within the scope of clustering organised for companies managing the zones, enterprises and other entities; (2) conducting industry audit by individual SEZ being aimed at identifying potential clusters; (3)

determining zones, in which a pilot programme aimed at creation and development of formalised initiatives will be started; (4) creating a system of preferences for cluster initiatives functioning in SEZ; (6) extending legal possibilities and incentives for companies managing the zones for taking actions for business networking including initiating clusters and performing the role of their coordinators [[www.mg.gov.pl/klastry](http://www.mg.gov.pl/klastry)].

It is for the cluster policy in Poland that the provisions of the *National Regional Development Strategy 2010-2020: Regions, cities, rural areas* are also important. The document assumes supporting the economic development based on regional and local specializations; in particular within the scope of cluster initiatives. It is anticipated in this document that the clusters with the greatest competitive potential, demonstrating international competitiveness at present or giving a real chance of building such a competitiveness in the future will be supported. The regional policy within the scope of the cluster policy should contribute to improving the competitive potential and converting bunches of companies into dynamic clusters with a high level of competitiveness and cooperation, of interaction and external effects. Supporting clusters should mainly aim at: R&D activities, supporting international expansion of enterprises, development of the quality of the human capital in enterprises, stimulating trade cooperation and creation of new companies. The regional level was recognised as the most appropriate one for implementing the cluster policy; in addition, the need of maintaining the complementarity of the policy on the regional level with nationwide policies was emphasized [KSRR 2010, pp. 101-110].

An important role in shaping future cluster policy in Poland is played by the document “*The National Reform Programme – Europe 2020*”, which directly refers to the policy of the economic development based on clusters. This policy should be focused on the development of a mechanism for selection of the most competitive clusters, including technological bunches with the greatest innovative capacity and concentration of public funds on them. These selected cluster initiatives should be preferred within the existing system of structural funds. The clusters should be developed on the basis of regional innovation systems supported by authorities of individual voivodeships and central authorities, and their development should aim at creation of high-tech industries and at improving the competitiveness of the Polish economy through creation of an attractive offer for FDI creating dynamic and innovative research base on one hand and on the other hand, through creating networks of industry clusters with high innovative potential, capable of independent competing on the global market. It is in this document that the need for the development of cluster initiatives and for their monitoring, as well as for the development of the tools for supporting and internationalizing activities of clusters and network relations is indicated [KPR 2011, pp. 32-33].

An important document referring to supporting clusters in Poland is the information document “The directions and cluster development policy in Poland”. It is stated in it that the cluster policy in Poland is built on the basis of the bottom-

up initiatives, therefore, state actions should play a supporting role and concentrate on selective support programs as well as on creation of an adequate institutional infrastructure in the environment of bunches. The support for clusters from public funds should be related to real imperfections of the market, whereas the scale and the scope of the support should be adapted for the development phase of bunches [MG 2009, p. 18].

## **4. The tools used in the implementation of the policy of supporting clusters in Poland**

### **4.1. Supporting clusters with structural funds**

The majority of the clusters being active in Poland at present was created with the support of the structural funds in the years 2004-2006. The provisions of three Sectoral Operational Programmes referred to the concept of bunches. The first one was *“The Sectoral Operational Programme – Increase in the Competitiveness of Enterprises”*, under which the following two actions referred to supporting bunches: 1.1 *Strengthening of institutions supporting activities of enterprises* and 1.4 *Strengthening cooperation between the R&D sphere and the economy* [Uzupełnienie SPO WKP 2004, pp. 38, 60].

It was also the action 2.6 *“The Regional Innovation Strategies and Knowledge Transfer”* of *“The Integrated Regional Development Operational Programme”* that referred to supporting bunches and which aimed at increasing the potential of regions in the innovation sphere through strengthening cooperation between R&D sector and the economy [Uzupełnienie ZPORR 2007, p. 135].

*“The Sectoral Operational Programme: Human Resources Development”* referred to supporting bunches within the action 2.3. *The Development of Human Resources of the Modern Economy* aiming at increasing the competitiveness and developing the potential of enterprises through investments in human resources [Uzupełnienie SPO RZL 2004, p. 105].

In the financial perspective 2007-2013, the programmes for supporting clusters were included both in nationwide as well as regional operational programmes. It is on the national level that *“The Operational Programme: Innovative Economy”* is the most important one and, in which the following actions refer to bunches: 1.4 *Support for targeted projects for entrepreneurs*, 3.1 *Initiating innovative activities*, 3.3 *Creation of the system facilitating investing in SMEs*, 4.1 *Support for implementation of the R&D results*, 4.2 *stimulating R&D activities of enterprises and support in the field of the industrial design*, 4.4 *New investments with a high innovative potential*, 5.3 *Support for innovation centres*, 5.4 *Management of the intellectual property*, 6.1 *Passport for export*, 8.2 *Support for implementation of the electronic business of the type B2B*. These are joint ventures of the entities undertaking cooperation among others that are covered by financial support within the scope of the actions

mentioned above. However, clusters are supported in a special way within the action 5.1 *Support for supra-regional cooperative connections*, whose primary objective is to strengthen the competitive position of enterprises by supporting the development of connections among enterprises and among enterprises and business support institutions, including research entities. It is as part of this action among others that joint ventures of groups of entities being aimed at preparing a joint innovative product or service and its introduction into the market are being supported. Beneficiaries of the action are coordinators of technological or industrial connections, whereas the role of the implementing institution is played by PAED. As part of the action, separate sub-actions are anticipated for: the early development stage of cooperative technological or industrial connections as well as for the development stage of cooperative connections aimed at preparing a joint innovative product or service and its introduction into the market [*Szczegółowy opis priorytetów PO IG 2012*, pp. 14-108].

It is also to supporting clusters that “*The Operational Programme Human Capital*” refers, within the scope of which bunches are supported in the following subactions: 2.1.1 *The development of human capital in enterprises*, 8.1.1 *Support for the development of professional skills and consultancy for enterprises*, 8.1.2 *Support for adaptation and modernization processes in the region*, 8.2.1 *Support for cooperation between science and business*. The projects undertaken within the scope of the actions mentioned above are aimed mainly at: improving competences of employees of the SME sector, improving and adapting skills of the persons working for the needs of the economy and increasing the transfer of knowledge as well as strengthening connections among the R&D sector and enterprises [*Szczegółowy opis priorytetów PO KL 2013*, pp. 64, 253, 267].

Instruments being aimed at strengthening clusters are also anticipated in “*The Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland*”. Two actions of the programme refer to supporting bunches: I. 3 *Support for innovations and I. 4 Promotion and cooperation*, within the scope of which the projects for creation of permanent platforms for cooperation within promotion and development of clusters are implemented [PO RPW 2009, pp. 27, 35-37].

#### **4.2. The selected activities and system projects of PAED for bunches**

In 2005, the Agency started the implementation of the project “*The training programme promoting clustering*”. The project had the following assumptions and objectives: (1) Presenting enterprises and local authorities with possibilities of cooperation in the form of clusters; (2) Familiarizing owners, management staff of companies and institutions with the principles and practice of clusters; (3) Building the awareness of the clustering idea; (4) Enabling defining the areas for potential cooperation among companies. The project was addressed to groups of cooperating companies and self-government bodies supporting them, which were operating in the industry related to a product with a regional, traditional or local character. It was

within the scope of the project that trainings for entrepreneurs and their employees were carried out, meetings and conferences aiming at the dissemination of the knowledge on clusters were organized and the assistance by creating and developing existing bunches was provided [www.parp.gov.pl].

In 2007, PAED implemented the programme “Support for cluster development”, which was aimed at the development and improvement of the competitiveness of existing cluster structures, which indirectly or directly affected the economic and social development of the entire region. These were coordinators of a given cluster that could apply for support, and the implementation of the project consisted in conducting a competition for supporting bunches. It was within the scope of the programme that the financial assistance in the form of the non-refundable support for the implementation of the projects related to some areas of cluster activities was provided, with particular emphasis on innovations and increasing attractiveness of products, on strengthening the cooperation among companies, R&D centres and representatives of official authorities of the local and regional level as well as increasing the export potential through the cooperation [www.parp.gov.pl; Żołnierska 2006, pp. 59-64; MG 2009, p. 23].

PAED implemented also actions and projects for bunches as part of the Operational Programme Human Capital, the action 2.1.3 “*System support for increasing the adaptability of employees and enterprises*”. As part of the action mentioned above, the following projects referring to bunches were carried out: “*Benchmarking of clusters in Poland*” in the years 2010 and 2012, “*Polish clusters and the cluster policy*” and “*The cooperative connections of Polish enterprises*”.

The benchmarking of clusters in Poland was aimed mainly at: (1) Providing clusters with the information on possibilities of improving own operations, gaining knowledge and learning; (2) Promotion of the clustering concept, deepening the knowledge on the state of the development of clusters and presenting the best solutions applied in Polish clusters; (3) Indicating recommendations for the policy of supporting clusters; (4) Developing recommendations for other entities supporting and cooperating with clusters; above all for research entities and centres promoting innovations and entrepreneurship. The action was directly aimed at companies operating within clusters and at coordinators of clusters [www.pi.gov.pl].

The main objective of the project “*Polish clusters and the cluster policy*” was to strengthen Polish clusters, increase their competitiveness and innovative capacity through the development of the human capital and improving the effectiveness of shaping the cluster policy. The project was addressed to coordinators and animators of clusters, entities operating within clusters and cooperating with them, representatives of central and local authorities and to all interested in the development of clusters. As part of the project implementation, conferences, exhibitions, panel discussions and meetings of working groups were organised; a number of publications, reports, analyses and hand-outs was also published. One of the significant effect of the project was drawing up the report: “*Directions and assumptions of the cluster policy*”

in Poland until 2020” containing recommendations and guidelines for the future cluster policy in Poland [www.pi.gov.pl].

The project “*The cooperative connections of Polish enterprises*” was of a training and advisory nature and it was mainly aimed at increasing the knowledge on the cooperation of enterprises and providing stakeholders creating cooperative connections with the experience for creating and maintaining the competitive edge. The project was implemented within workshops, trainings, advisory services and study visits. It was addressed to: representatives of enterprises, which intended to start a cooperation in the form of a cluster and would demonstrate a potential for a task group of enterprises; representatives of enterprises, which had conducted a cooperation in the form of a cluster not shorter than for a year; business supporting organizations mentioned above associated with clusters; employees or representatives of R&D entities; employees of local government units, which the selected companies operating in the cluster come from [www.powiazaniakooperacyjne.pl].

## 5. Conclusion

Until now, no cluster policy addressing the problem in the comprehensive way, so as that the instruments of different policies could be coordinated, has been developed in Poland. Bunches are rather regarded as one of many instruments used for the implementation of the innovation or regional policy.

So far, the instruments and programs for supporting bunches in Poland have been carried out in a few forms. First of all, PAED initiated and implemented a few programmes concerning clusters. Secondly, regional projects were implemented in many voivodeships, which were aimed at stimulation of the creation and development of cluster initiatives. The implementation of the cluster policy in Poland is based on an unofficial principle, according to which the support for regional clusters is effected within the scope of the Regional Operational Programmes (RPO), whereas trans-regional clusters are supported by programmes implemented on the national level. On the national level, it is possible to speak about instruments of the very narrowly understood cluster policy among others in the actions 5.1 *The Operational Programme: Innovative Economy* and 1.4 *The Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland*. There are also many instruments of the innovation and technology policy, which are not directly addressed to clusters but influence the areas important for them; such as Building local partnerships or cooperation networks between business and the R&D sector.

Supporting clusters becomes more and more important element of the economic policy of each state. However, the assumptions developed so far are characterized by a high generality level and apply to the most important principles of the Polish cluster policy, which include the bottom-up approach while creating bunches, aiming at concentrating the financial support on the most competitive and innovative cluster structures and using them as a source of developmental impulses for the total

economy. The belief is also quite common that the most appropriate level for the development policy based on clusters is the regional level.

Since the majority of the recommendations adopted in government documents has still not been translated into the operational level, it seems to be necessary to develop and to adopt a cohesive policy for supporting bunches in Poland, which would refer to the provisions of the documents mentioned above and would match the strategy adopted on the European level. Since the structural funds of the EU are the main source for financing bunches, it is necessary to draw up such guidelines for the cluster policy, which will refer to provisions of the operational programmes for the new financial perspective 2013-2020. From the point of view of the effectiveness of supporting bunches, it is also necessary to develop an efficient process of selection of clusters, which will use it. It is often claimed in Poland that this process is based on competitions, because clusters can submit projects for competitions of financial operational programmes from structural funds. However, these are not competitions aiming at selecting clusters being supposed to receive the financial support. These are the projects fitted the best to the scope of the given action that are recommended for the given operational programme. It is possible to talk about a competition only then, when the applications are prepared exclusively by cluster initiatives and then they are compared one to another (including qualitative and quantitative criteria) and the best cluster projects are selected from them.

While choosing the appropriate model of the cluster policy, the specificity of the Polish reality should be taken into account, because it may turn out that imitating solutions of other countries may lead to incurring unnecessary costs.

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## POLITYKA ROZWOJU KLASTRÓW W POLSCE

**Streszczenie:** Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie założeń i instrumentów polityki wspierania klastrów w Polsce na poziomie krajowym. W pierwszej części artykułu wyjaśniono istotę polityki klastrów oraz krótko zaprezentowano rolę czynnika publicznego w kreowaniu i stymulowaniu rozwoju klastrów. Następnie przedstawiono instrumenty wykorzystywane w ramach polityki wspierania gron na szczeblu krajowym w Polsce. W pierwszej kolejności zaprezentowano zapisy krajowych dokumentów strategicznych oraz dokumentów rządowych odnoszących się do wspierania gron. W dalszej części artykułu zaprezentowano sposoby wspierania klastrów za pośrednictwem krajowych programów operacyjnych oraz działań podejmowanych przez Polską Agencję Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości (PARP). W zakończeniu, w nawiązaniu do prowadzonych rozważań, przedstawiono wnioski oraz wskazówki odnoszące się do opracowania spójnej polityki wspierania klastrów w Polsce.

**Słowa kluczowe:** klastry, polityka rozwoju oparta na klastrach.



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