Athens 2025:
Advanced EU Funding & Project Innovation Camp

2 - 6 June 2025 Athens, Greece

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About Us

European Academy is a training provider.

Established in 2015 as a respond to the noticeable information gap between the E.C. and its beneficiaries.

Building on our direct experience within the E.C. and the E.U. funding and project environment, we offer open and tailor-made courses on highly specialised domains.

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Welcome!

A European Academy's exclusive event, meticulously designed to provide you with the tools, connections, and confidence to deliver projects that stand out.

Gain the essential skills and knowledge to excel in every aspect of EU project management—from crafting winning proposals to advanced project execution, financial mastery, impact maximisation, and audit preparedness.

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Sessions for Online Delivery

Friday, 13 June

- 09:30-11:00 CET
Managing Project Costs: Direct & Indirect Costs

11:00-11:30 CET – Coffee Break

- 11:30-13:00 CET
Reporting Costs of External Experts

Tuesday, 17 June

- 09:00-10:30 CET
The Erasmus +: 2021-2027

10:30-11:00 CET – Coffee Break

- 11:00 – 12:30 CET
Avoid Risks: Coordination That Clicks – Meetings, People & Partner Communication in EU-Funded Projects

12:30-13:30 CET – Lunch Break

- 13:30-15:00 CET
Mapping Your EU-Funded Project to PM^2 Methodology

15:00-15:30 CET – Coffee Break

- 15:30-17:00 CET
Future of Work and Industry 4.0: Dr Bojan Lalić

Wednesday, 2 July

- 12:45-14:15 CET
Managing Project Costs: Direct & Indirect Costs

14:15-14:45 CET – Coffee Break

- 14:45-16:15 CET
Reporting Costs of External Experts

Friday, 4 July

- 16:00-17:30 CET
Innovation in Public & Private Sectors

Tuesday, 8 July

- 09:00–10:30 CET
Innovation Leadership & Change Management

10:30–11:00 CET – Coffee Break

- 11:00–12:30 CET
Industrial Transition Strategies

12:30–13:30 CET – Lunch Break

- 13:30–15:00 CET
Creating Effective Cluster Models

15:00–15:30 CET – Coffee Break

- 15:30–17:00 CET
Workshop: Strategic Planning for Industrial Clusters

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Cluster management

Goran Mladenovic

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Goran Mladenovic

Inspirer, Change Maker

Business Achievements

- Guided 20 startups and SMEs to early-stage investments totalling €4.5 million
- Secured funding for over 60 projects
- Best hiring process in Serbia in 2020; 2nd and 3rd place in 2023

Education

- Faculty of Electronic Engineering
- MBTI

Experience

- 2003 NGO Youth Response
- 2005 Branch Manager at a Coliers
- 2007– Organizational Development and HR in an international corporation at WVI
- Since 2011 CEO and Project Manager at Ni CAT
- Since 2025 Founder of ITG Consulting

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Agenda

- Ni CAT cluster pitch
- Cluster basics, Stages in development
- Group work and Discussion
- Useful documents, Critical skill
- QA session

Short introduction and 1 example of positive/negative experience with clusters

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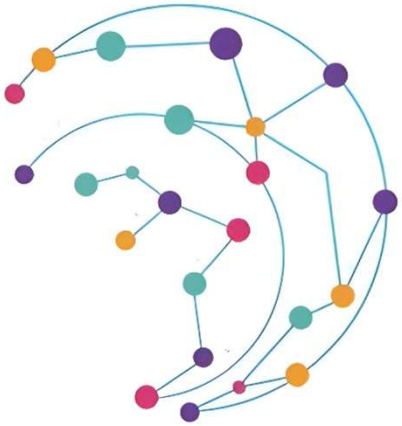

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NIS CLUSTER OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

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City with engineering in its DNA

Past

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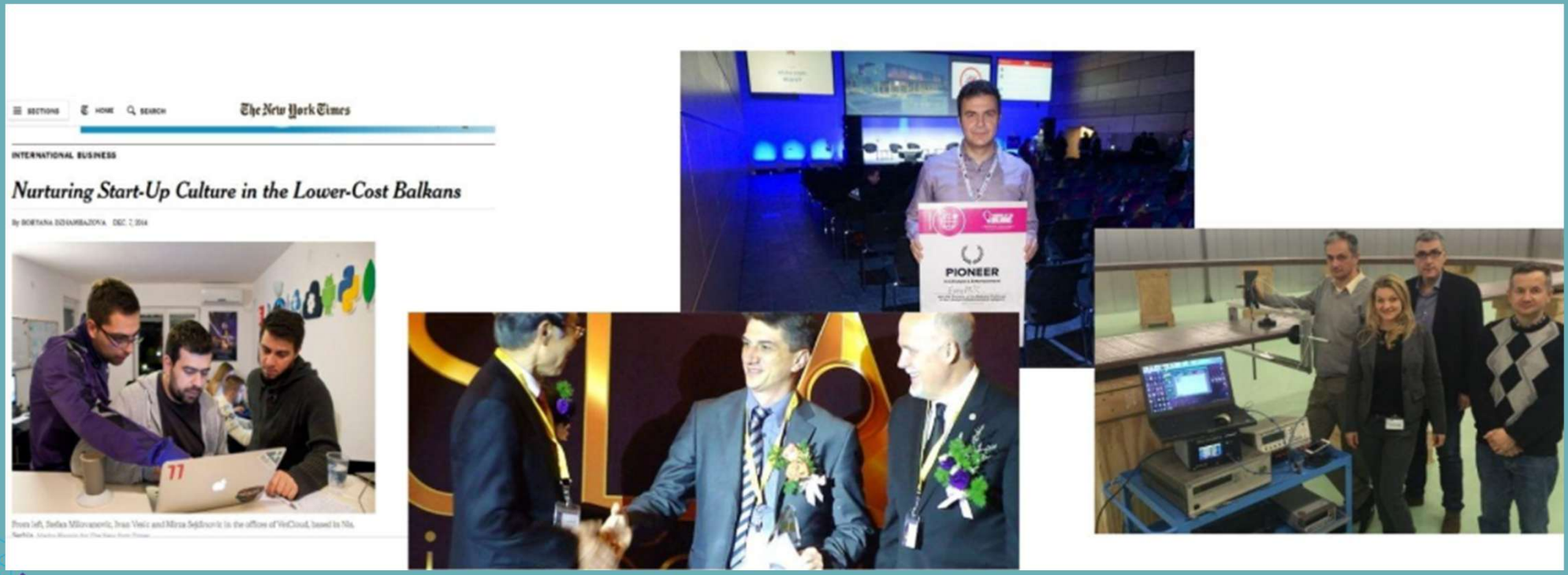
City with engineering in its DNA

Present - 2nd and 3rd generation



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Cluster structure

- 25 SMEs
- 5 Universities and Faculties
- 3 Business support institutions
- Individuals
- Other partners

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Corporate Values

Vision

The Southeastern Serbia region is a center for advanced technology development in the Balkans.

Values

Integrity

Changes

Partnerships

Innovations

Technology

Excellence

Mission

Leverage the potential and expand opportunities in the region in the field of advanced technologies.

2011/2025

1 vision
6 values
35 members
50+ projects
80+ partners
200+ events
1.900+ emails
10.000+ participants at events
500.000+ people informed about our actions

*Impressed with meeting with Ni CAT cluster team…**Inspiring reality of today's Serbia the EU is proud to support***
Sam Fabrizi, European Union Ambassador to Serbia 2019.

Goals

1. Increasing the revenue and profit of cluster members
2. Strengthening companies capacity for technological development & innovation
3. Promoting the city of Nis as an IT center

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City with engineering in its DNA

Future

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Nis - Where East meets West

History

- Birthplace of Constantine the Great (Mediana site)
- The first breakout from the camp
- Serbian “300“

International recognition

- Nis - City of the Future (ranked 7th on the European list of the future by Financial Times)
- Nis Airport - 2nd fastest-growing airport in Europe by number of passengers in 2017

Merak

- Nisville in the top 10 jazz festivals in Europe (The Guardian)
- Film, choir and many other festivals
- Famous Serbian cuisine and active nightlife

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Why

- Movement
- Startup

Cluster basics

- Michael Porter -1990s
- Building Bridges was different stakeholders and ecosystems
- Tool for regional development
- 3500 cluster initiatives across the Europe

Different

- models from cluster of brands to brand of cluster
- shapes of cluster implementation
- priorities

Triple Helih model

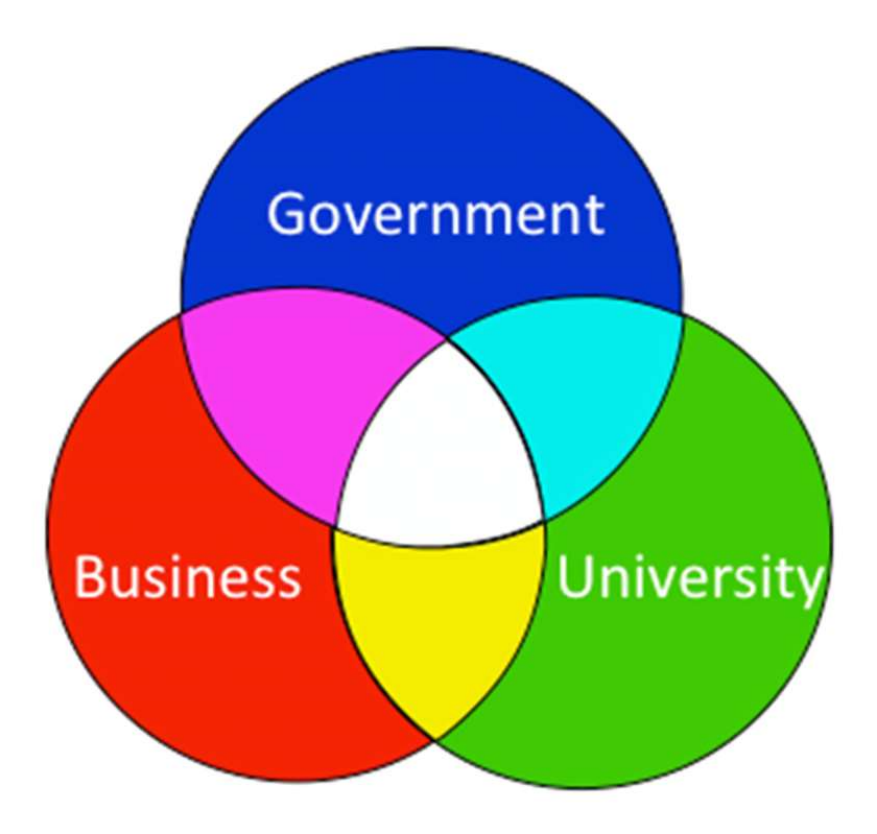

Figure 1 https://www.researchgate.net/

- Triple to five helix (friends/individuals, financial institutions and investors…)
- Spatial focus 100km
- Sectorial focus
- Critical mass of firms
- Management unit, Assembly, Board

Stages

- Initiation
- Establishment
- Operationalization
- Transformation

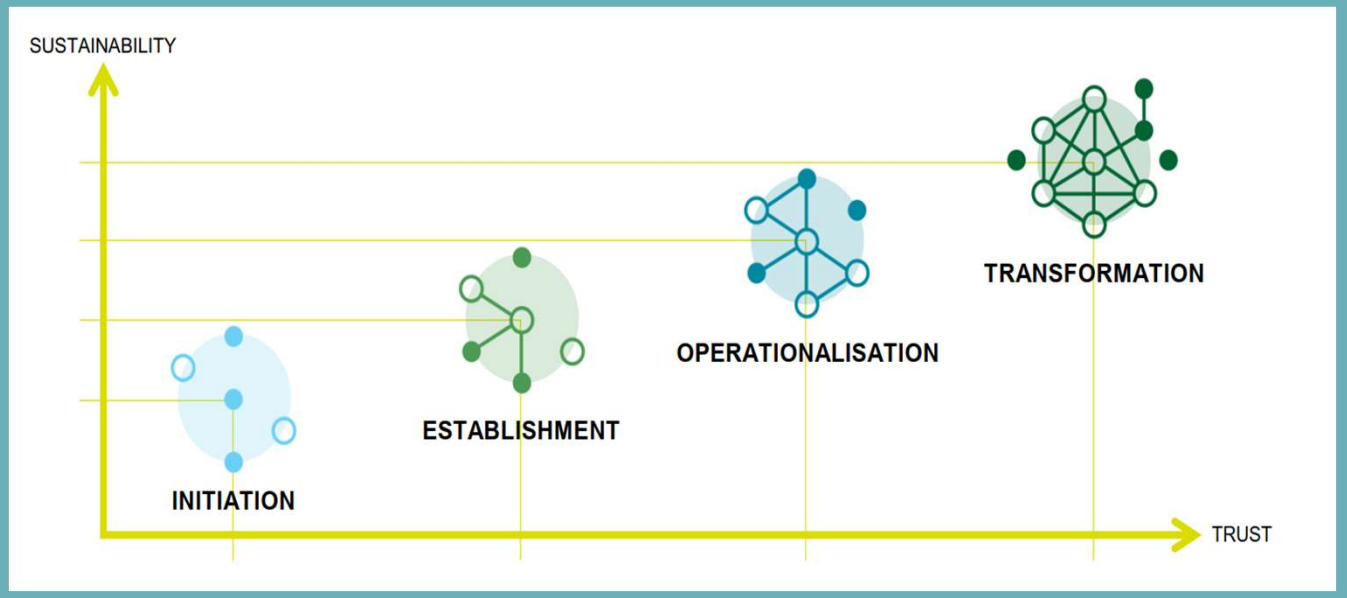

Figure 2 *Cluster Development Guide GIZ 2021*

Initiation

Positive context

- Community support – visually present who is part of your ecosystem.
- Companies with a long-term perspective
- Committed Board of Directors and CEO

Challenges

1. 0 euros budget
2. Previous cluster similar inatives had failed
3. Lack of a knowledge-sharing culture and trust

How we succeeded:

1. Short-term goals and measurable metrics
2. Inspirational leadership and a clear vision
3. Good practices and global exposure

Useful document

- SWOT, business plan

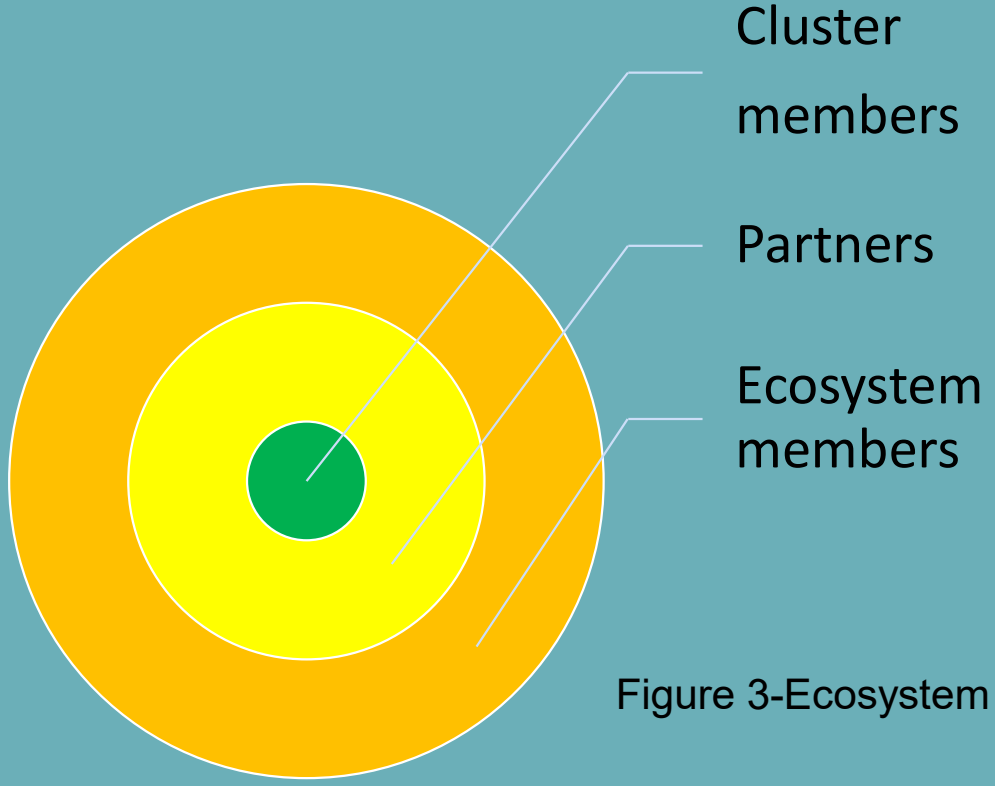

Figure 3-Ecosystem

Initiation/role of non SME members

Government

- LoI
- Participation of Chamber of Commerce and Regional Agencies

Academia

- All best universities/credibility
- Openness

Work in groups

- Working Group 1: How to Ensure Engagement and Motivation of Cluster Members in the Initial Phase
- Working Group 2 How Can the Cluster Quickly Demonstrate Value to Its Members (Quick Wins)
- Working Group 3 How to Establish Effective Communication Within the Cluster

How to motivate community

- Suggestion – regular annual review, with additional updates throughout the year
- Matrix available linku
- Infographic available linku
- Newsletter, Info Days

Establishment

Positive context
- Blaming is not constructive – focus on positive communication
- First time in Belgrade – stepping into leadership
- Award for excellence – 150% commitment

Chalenges
- 5 sectors / lack of focus
- More projects
- New ones are joining

Actions
- Individual understanding
- Excellence

Useful document
- Personal profiles

rovic.ai@gmail.com	Veoma prijatan čovek, uvek odgovara na telefo prijatna i spreman je za saradnju. Dešava se da situacija kada se uvredio zbog toga što smo ga predavač.
an@ast.co.rs	Često u gužvi, mora se biti veoma koncizan i br poruke na viberu/whatsApp-u, ukoliko se ne jav
a@ast.co.rs	Za sve se kontaktira Milica, ona je bivša kolegir odgovori, pustiti poruku.
vidojkovic@badin.rs	Uvek nju kontaktirati. Uglavnom se javi, ukoliko Fina i saradljiva.
vic@code3profit.com	Javlja se i odgovara na poruke, možete ga kont
dic@code3profit.com	

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Services

- Annual questionary
- Regular Board meetings
- Ad hoc and regular meetings
- Working groups

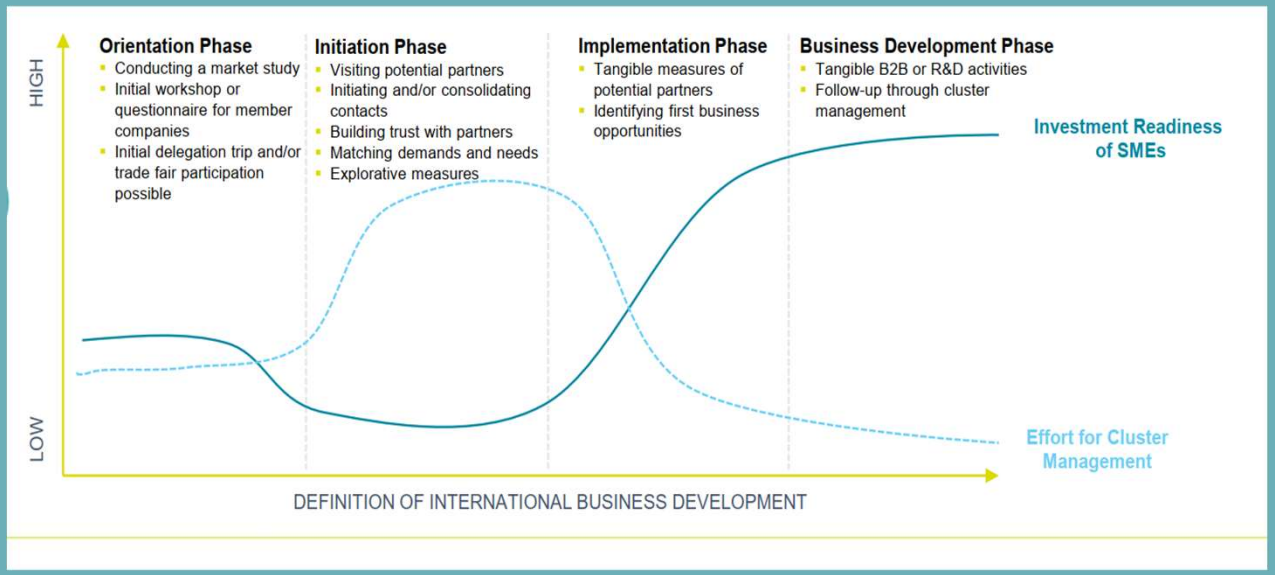


Figure 4 *Cluster Development Guide GIZ 2021*

Establishment /role of non SME members

Government

- Small grants
- Industry recognized as important

Academia

- Joint projects (Erasmus)
- Meetings
- Participation in University bodies

Operationalization

Positive context

- Building procedures and systems
- Document for new colleagues
- Many partners and projects

Chalenges

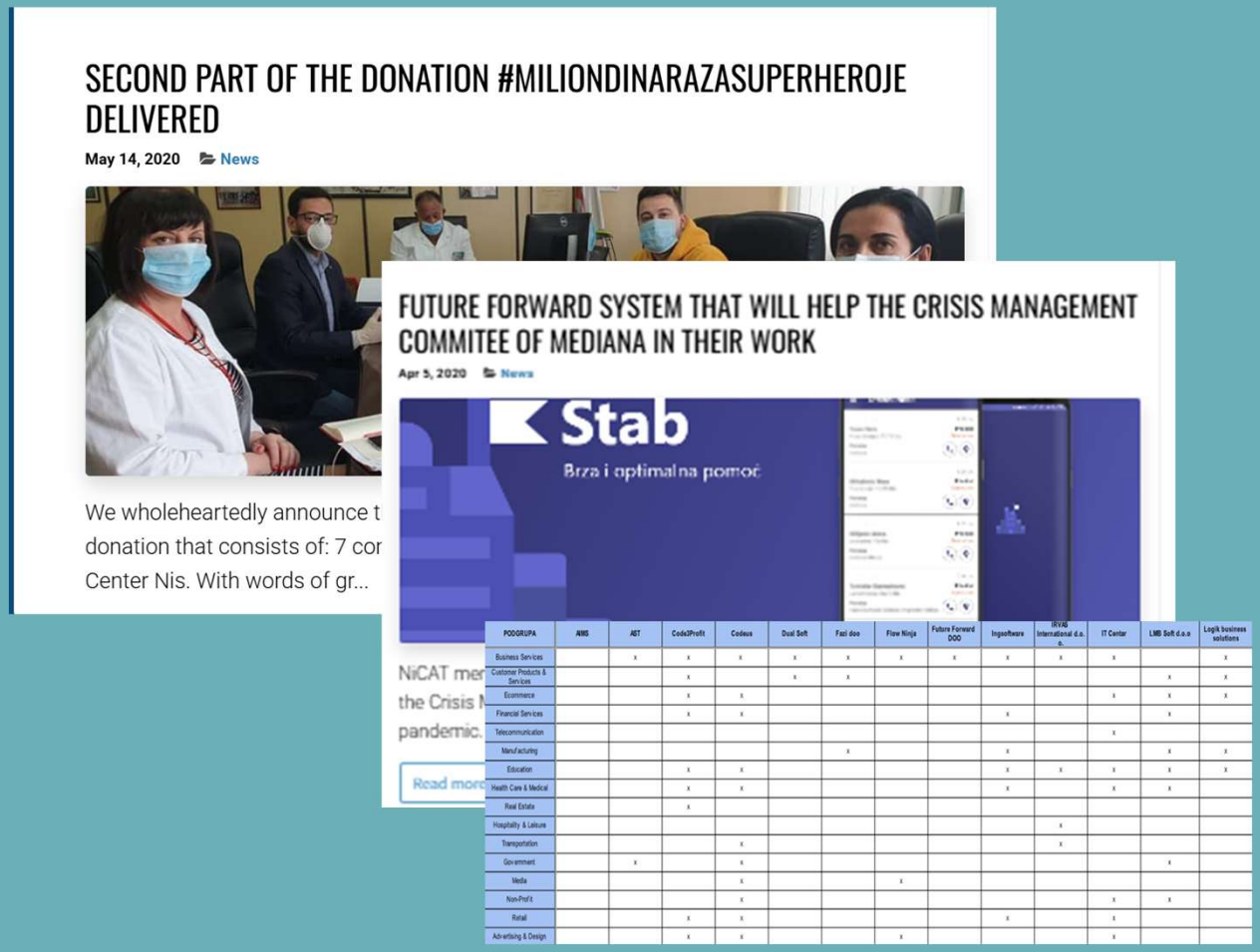
1. Revaluation of the model
2. Model 5 sectors questionable
3. COVID

Actions

1. 3P BALANCE
2. Meeting about the future
3. Leadership approach

Useful document

- Matrix competence



ITG Consulting

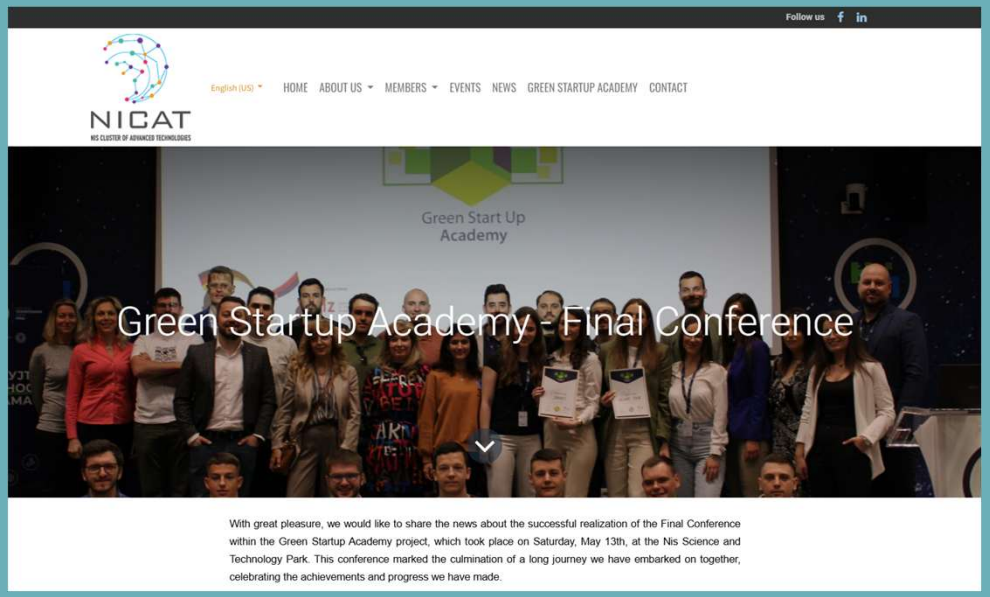
Operationalization /role of non SME members

Government

- Science Technology Park
- CEO of cluster member of City Business Council
- National IT strategy adopted in 2017- participation on Serbian Government and addresing to them

Academia

- 16 topics addressed with Electronic Faculty
- Curriculum change
- Open days
- Projects (Start UP academia lecturers
- 2 worlds connected/brokerage economist in hi tech, guide)



Ensuring Cluster Sustainability

Funding Sources:

- **Membership Fees** – Base level income, but not always sufficient or stable.
- **Paid Services** – Tailored support, training, B2B facilitation, market research.
- **Sponsorships** – From corporate partners aligned with cluster goals.
- **Public Funding** – Local, national or EU-funded projects (key in transition phase).
- **Partnership Projects** – Joint ventures with other clusters or institutions.

Ni CAT journey:

- From 100% membership fee-based model → dropped to 30% → back to 100% → again to 30%.
- Sustainability is not linear – it evolves with the engagement of members and funding cycles.

Transformation

Positive context
- High team dynamics
- „Proud members“
- Members SMEs outside from Nis

Chalenges
- Lack of time, crisis in IT
- Lack of focus

Actions
- Short meetings, extremely agile approach
- 5 to 2 sectors

Useful document
- KPIs

Ciljevi i indikatori za rad klastera u 2025.
(prve 3 teme su najvažnije)

Tema	*Akcija*	*KPIs*	*Progres*
Sigurna luka za umrežavanje i deljenje iskustva, resursa, dobrih i loših praksi	1. Biznis klubovi - 4,54 - (prosečna ocena) - Vreme održavanja Biznis klubova: Van radnog vremena (84.6 % je glasalo za ovu opciju) - Organizovati u 18h 2. *Neformalna okupljanja* 3. Masterclass-ovi -	1. **2** (april i oktobar - broj učesnika minimum 30 od toga broj učesnika iz firmi minimum 66%) 2. ***Poželjno, ako treba*** *(minimum po 10 osoba na svakom okupljanju koje su ili prisustvovale ili pogledale)* 3. Predložene teme Masterclass-ova: (4) • Marketing i prodaja • Poresko zakonodavstvo i olakšice • Organizacija unutar kompanije – kako biti spreman za scale-up; razumevanje PDV-a (ulazni i izlazni) – osnove finansijske pismenosti • Strategije ugovaranja poslova sa velikim korporacijama • Primena raznih AI alata • Izmene zakonske regulative i uticaj na poslovne aktivnosti firmi članica; razmena iskustava • Geopolitika	1. Održan 1 Biznis klub (april) uz finansiranje od strane RDNIS-a Prisustvovalo je 36 osoba - 56% učesnika iz firmi. 2. 0, nije bilo potrebe. 3. **2 Masterclassa:** 1. masterclass na temu: „Strateško planiranje" (u prostorijama Flow Ninje, Goran Mladenović i Uroš Mikić držali predavanje, prisustvovalo 9 firmi, 11 učesnika). 2. masterclass na temu: „Zaštita IoT uređaja od sajber napada – izazovi i rešenja" - Vladan Todorović, AST.

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Transformation /role of non SME members

Government

- 2nd Science Technology Park
- Big projects (Digital Innovation Hub)
- Direct suggestion to Mayer

Academia

- Joint projects (SHINE)
- Joint applications (COMBO, metropolitan)
- Frequent meetings

Critical skill-Effective presentation – 500 public appearances in the 60s

- Start and end effectively
- Know the 3 key messages and speak clearly to your target audience
- Conciseness and conceptual clarity

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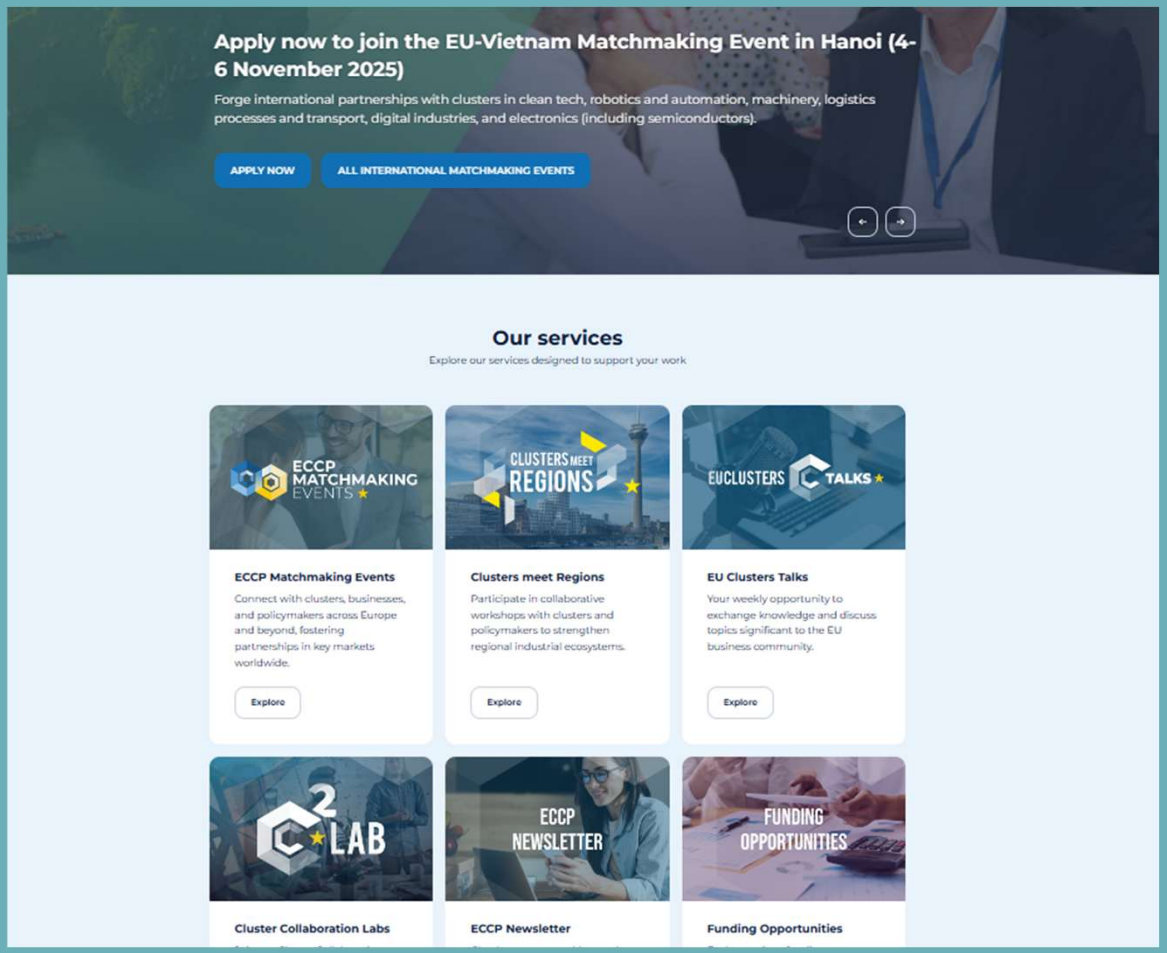
How to measure success

- Action plan-short term
- Action plan annualy
- Strategic directions
- Annual KPIs

ECCP platform as resource

https://clustercollaboration.eu/



Critical skill-Effective presentation – 500 public appearances in the 60s

- Start and end effectively
- Know the 3 key messages and speak clearly to your target audience
- Conciseness and conceptual clarity

- High level pitch
- Elevator pitch
- 3 minutes

QA session

1. How it was founded
2. What are the benefits for companies
3. What we have achieved and what we aim to achieve
4. Types of meetings
5. Who should be accepted, who should not
6. What to do when someone doesn’t pay the membership fee
7. Conflicts within the cluster, Sensitive topics
8. Dealing with others when they are not fair or cooperative
9. Relationship with the government
10. Large companies – should they be included

Summary and what is next

- Start up approach-150% commitment of CEO
- Involve champions
- There are no quick successes
- A critical mass is needed
- Personalized approach to each member
- Policy support does not guarantee cluster success

- Identify all organizations in your region relevant for you
- Short assessment
- Identify 3 elements how you can contribute

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Paying it forward culture

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References

- The 'School of Athens' fresco by Raphael, housed in the Vatican, is meant to represent the Greek agora and all the great minds that passed through it. (Image credit: Heather Whipps) *How the Greek Agora changed the world* 17 Mar 2008 https://www.livescience.com/4861-greek-agora-changed-world.html Accessed 6 July 2025
- The triple helix model https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-triple-helix-model_fig1_361483128 Accessed 6 July 2025
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- Preminuo akademik Vladeta Jerotić, počasni građanin Opštine Negotin, 4 Sept 2018, https://www.negotin.rs/vest-preminuo-akademik-vladeta-jerotic-pocasni-gradjanin-opstine-negotin-4234.htm Accessed 6 July 2025
- https://clustercollaboration.eu/ Accessed 6 July 2025
- *This content was partially created with the assistance of artificial intelligence (ChatGPT), followed by review and adaptation to ensure relevance and applicability OpenAI ChatGPT (2025)*

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Appendix-NiCAT activities 2025.

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Cluster as a Safe Harbor for Networking and Sharing Experiences, Resources, Good and Bad Practices

- Regular updates via mailing list and Viber group
- Business clubs
- Masterclasses (online and in person)
- Informal general assemblies
- Resource sharing between companies
- Competency matrix

PODGRUPA	AMS	ABT	CodeXProfit	Codeus	Dual Soft	Fast doo	Flow Ninja	Future Forward DOO	Ingeoftware	IKYAB International d.o.o.	IT Center	LMB Soft d.o.o	Logis
Business Services		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Customer Products & Services			x		x	x						x	
Ecommerce			x	x							x	x	
Financial Services			x	x					x			x	
Telecommunication											x		
Manufacturing						x			x			x	
Education			x	x					x	x	x	x	
Health Care & Medical			x	x					x		x	x	
Real Estate			x										
Hospitality & Leisure										x			
Transportation				x						x			
Government		x		x								x	
Media				x			x						
Non-Profit				x							x	x	
Retail			x	x					x		x		
Advertising & Design			x	x			x				x		

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Internationalization and Cooperation with the Diaspora

- Organization of business missions
- Sharing information about our activities through newsletters
- Activation of business ambassadors
- Participation in cluster events in Zaragoza and Palma de Mallorca

Promoting Niš as a Center of Advanced Technologies

- Forming the Advanced Technologies Forum
- Participation in the Economic Advisory Council and lobbying at the city and national levels
- Promoting success stories on social media

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New Opportunities and Threats

- Strategic planning in a fast-paced era
- Virtual board
- Maximizing the use of AI
- National innovation activities register
- Virtual membership in the NTP
- Data center in Kragujevac

Community Support

- Students from Madrid
- Opportunities for young Roma
- Humanitarian activities and support for students
- NiCAT as an example of good practice

Projects and Cooperation with Academia

- Digital Innovation Hub
- SHINE – Improving STEM curricula using best practices and methodologies