EU Cluster talks – Written record

EU Cluster Talks took place on 19th October 2022; the topic was: **"Ukraine: How can clusters support business integration and recovery?"**

The online EU Cluster Talks webinars are for the cluster community. This event is happening under the European Cluster Collaboration Platform – ECCP). The presenter of the webinar was Christopher Burns. Speakers at the webinar:

Alexandre Yurchak: President, Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA)

Alexandre Yurchak spoke about connecting the Ukrainian clusters with Europe, the main challenges of industrial SMEs (small and medium enterprises), and the programme export – internationalisation of industrial and high-tech fields. He also spoke about fast internationalisation. Thirty and more online meetings were organised, attending ten and more offline events, twelve signed Memorandums of Understanding and announcing the first winners in I4MS / Horizon programmes.

He also spoke about the collaboration between the Czech and Slovak Republics. UCA made new partnerships, signed four Memorandums of Understanding, and created the Action plan for 2023. Also, B2B exchanges started. Three significant events are planned to be organised.

An article about the Development of bilateral sectoral agendas – the first experience from the Czech Republic can be found HERE.

What has Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA) learned on their journey?

UCA has strong support from European partners, which is essential for SMEs and clusters. From experience, they can say that creating partnerships is much easier than creating value for both sides. Financial help – "faster is better than slower" (many international donators not yet adapted this). Public support: European commission is much closer than the EU government; it is a big challenge with the Ukrainian government and cluster promotion.

What are the UCA's priority needs?

- Establish partnerships and successes in advanced manufacturing with the Czech Republic and continue in countries such as Poland, Lithuania and France.
- Organise the first UCA conference in the Slovak Republic.
- Start exchanging industrial policy and programmes for Ukraine with EU countries and governments.
- UCA's needs:
    - Program oriented to Critical industries / Infrastructure
    - Support Engineering & industrial outsourcing programs
    - Programs supported Cluster capacities growth
    - All kinds of support for UA clusters & clusters management

Taras Holub: Advisor to Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

Taras Holub started his speech with words about the war and how difficult the situation is right now since the bombarding of Ukraine is happening every day. There are many questions about the Ukrainian economy "How to restore the economy in the country? What are our needs?" Planning and discussions about the needs are happening. The order of importance is determined. To recover the economy in Ukraine is vital to get involved in projects and collaborations, which can bring new financial resources into the next period. For example, he mentioned the project Creating a digital geological register system for the territory's regional development, cities and towns. This project is in collaboration with a Slovak company with previous experience with a similar digital system. Taras Holub believes that clusters can help to recover Ukraine.

Monika Matusiak: Team leader on Smart Specialisation – Global Outreach within the Territorial Development Unit, Joint Research Centre

Monika spoke about the contact with the Ukrainian government and regions and how the war slowed the connection. She also mentioned that the latest days are better since communication is much faster. Monika Matusiak spoke about the declaration of the Ukraine Recovery Plan, which happened earlier this year. She also said that it is necessary to involve clusters so they can support Ukraine and could help with the recovery of regions in the country. Monika Matusiak believes that clusters are ready to jump in and support Ukraine as much as possible.

Tereza Šamanová: Member of the Board and CEO, CzechInno

Tereza Šamanová from CzechInno started with thank you speech. She was delighted to represent the Czech Republic and share CzechInno's experience from the Ukrainian collaborations. CzechInno is an association of co-founders and partners of several innovative digital HUBs in Czechia. It is also a founder of a leading Central European platform for digital innovations, CEEino, representing several pilot projects between Ukraine and the rest of Europe. CzechInno is not a cluster organisation but often works with Czech and international clusters.

Collaborations between CzechInno and Ukrainian partners have already been happening for several years. Once CzechInno found out about the events happening in Ukraine, they were devastated. They have decided to help Ukraine to connect and create partnerships between Ukraine and the European community of Innovators and Digital innovative HUBs in several countries. Šamanová says that she is impressed by how fast Ukrainian Cluster Alliance can grow in a short time (since February 2022). CzechInno is such a big fan of this initiative. Since February, they have submitted several projects, including the EIC Start-Up application. They

also organised the Smart Export Forum, which focused on Czech-Ukrainian collaborations in Digital innovation.

On 6th October 2022, the Engineering Fairtrade took place in Brno. CzechInno organised the Ukrainian Smart Export Forum. They also got support from the Czech government in a short time. They submitted three projects within the Economic diplomacy support, where they connected with the Czech Embassy in Kyjev. CzechInno received support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to organise three missions for Ukrainian experts in the Czech Republic in 2023. The excellent news for CzechInno is the announcement of the Ukrainian three years recovery plan approval. They are now negotiating with the Ministry of Industry and Trade about organising projects and collaborations that help Ukraine.

Upcoming EU Cluster Talks – Series 2

Transformational technologies for energy – 2nd November 2022 (Register HERE)

Transition Pathway for Construction: Technologies for green and digital transition – 16th November 2022 (Register HERE)

Transition Pathway for Agri-Food 30th November 2022 (Register HERE)

Outcomes of the Expert Group on Clusters: National cluster policies and networks 14th December 2022 (Register HERE)