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Deliverable D4.4

EPIX outreach networking events

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Premises

The European Cluster Partnerships have been launched by the European Commission to encourage clusters from Europe to intensify collaboration across regions and sectors. The action aims at facilitating cross-cluster networking and learning, supporting the professionalization of specialised and customised business support services to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the development of cluster management excellence and formation of strategic cross-regional collaboration between industrial clusters across Europe.

EPIX project is a transnational cluster partnership selected under the **European Cluster Excellence Programme of the European Commission to be part of the European Strategic Cluster Partnership for Excellence (ESCP-4x)**, one of the 26 strategic partnerships supported by funding from the EU COSME programme to facilitate cross-cluster networking and learning, aiming at professionalization of specialised and customised business support services to small and medium enterprises.

The main objective of the EPIX project is to empower and enable its project partners – **6 clusters from Italy (Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto and ELCA European Lighting Cluster Alliance), Germany (MoWin.net), Poland (Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster), Hungary (DUTIREG) and Spain (Cluster HABIC)** - for identifying and exploiting opportunities that will change the outlook of cities by making them smart and sustainable and providing added-value services and new governance for the creation of data-sharing communities formed by cities and businesses. The EPIX-specific objectives are the following:

- to increase the skills and competencies of cluster managers on technological trajectories (smart energy; smart mobility and transportation; smart data, smart IoT devices; smart infrastructures) as well as on main project topics (sustainable smart cities, data sharing communities, public finance, and investments) that will make them smart cities champions and will smooth the creation of data sharing communities formed by city managers and SMEs;
- to promote cross-cluster value chain interconnections to seize new growth opportunities emerging from smart cities technologies and data sharing communities and enhance SMEs' practical collaboration in joint projects for public procurements bids;
- to develop comprehensive and focused cluster strategies, with related implementation roadmaps for effectively interconnecting clusters, their SMEs, and cities in the long term. The strategies and roadmaps will include long-term upskilling and reskilling activities, new data-sharing services, and public financing opportunities.
- to actively contribute to the successful implementation, promotion, and further deployment of the COSME ClusterXchange professional program, a new pilot scheme to support short-term exchanges to better connect Europe's industrial ecosystems, by facilitating transnational cooperation, peer learning, networking and innovation uptake between actors of different industrial clusters. It is implemented by EPIX partners through sound management, tailored outreach and awareness-raising campaigns, and execution of high-quality short-term exchanges.

Considering the above, the WP4 leader – PP DUTIREG implemented a methodical project communication and dissemination plan to communicate valuable information to a broad range of recipients (as other clusters, SMEs, public authorities, Funding Authorities, ECCP platform, etc). Aligned with the general project communication plan, there is also the specific ClusterXchange outreach strategy, defined by PP Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster in order to ensure necessary attention to this exchange scheme, its promotion and further deployment. The ClusterXchange outreach strategy and the EPIX dissemination plan are developed in accordance with the ClusterXchange pilot scheme's policies and rules, and the EPIX Grant Agreement. These two EPIX strategies are interconnected and complementary, having a common goal to deliver a clever and to-the-point message and "call to action" to the target audience. Both strategies are defined according





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to strategic overview, messages, tactics, audiences, communication objectives and activities planned, responsibilities and related time plan.





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1. EPIX Outreach and networking events

The EPIX project's outreach and networking events, organized by EPIX partners throughout the project's lifespan, involved promoting and disseminating EPIX's achievements and activities during specially organized information and networking sessions, as well as at the Partners' institutional or sector-relevant events and fairs, thematic Conferences, and participation in partnering events. EPIX clusters followed specific provisions entitled in the *ClusterXchange Outreach Strategy (Deliverable 4.1)* and the *EPIX project dissemination plan (Deliverable 4.2)* in their outreach campaigns.

The EPIX outreach campaigns followed a dual path with specific yet synchronized objectives:

- Promotion of the ClusterXchange scheme: This aimed to publicize the CXC programme to recruit participants and ensure its success and expansion. The communication plan specified target stakeholders and channels to attract both visitors and hosts for the EPIX project.
- Communication and dissemination of the EPIX project: This involved systematic dissemination actions targeting a broad range of recipients, including other clusters, SMEs, public authorities, funding authorities, and the ECCP platform. The plan described methods for distributing information, considering stakeholders' information needs, timing, and delivery methods.

To promote the project and its activities, EPIX partners participated in and organized events and networking opportunities both locally and internationally.

2. Partners' networking and outreach events

To enhance cluster collaboration and increase visibility for their innovative companies operating within project value chains, **Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto** – EPIX project Coordinator - introduced a special international category in its regional **Venetian Smart Lighting Award – edition 2022** (<http://www.venetiansmartlightingaward.it/>) for the best smart city project proposed by EPIX companies – (the 5th category). The first edition of the *EPIX “Be SMART for your city” International Contest* was organized on July 21, 2022, at the premises of RI LIV in Levada di Piombino Dese (Italy). This international category was open to all companies that are members of the EPIX clusters (RI LIV, ELCA, DUTIREG, SIC, HABIC, and MoWIN.net) operating in the lighting, furniture, construction, and mobility sectors, with a special focus on companies producing smart city solutions. On this occasion, ELCA and LIV organized and chaired a B2B networking moment, where lighting companies, representatives of the Federation of Municipalities of Camposampierese and other stakeholders had the opportunity to discuss themes related to smart cities and technical solutions that can support the transition of local cities into sustainable smart cities.

The winners were announced during the official award ceremony held on July 21, 2022, at the Luce in Veneto premises in Piombino Dese (Italy), with the participation of all EPIX team members. The EPIX category was won by the Basque SME B.LUX S.A., a member of the Habic cluster.

5. SPECIAL PRIZE: EPIX – BE SMART FOR YOUR CITY



For 2022, a special prize will be awarded to companies belonging to the industrial clusters – partners of the European project EPIX operating in the fields of lighting, furniture, construction, infrastructure and collective mobility. The participating companies will be able, in particular, to propose design products, technological solutions with a marked character of innovation, design elements and components designed for outdoor / indoor environments in the smart city framework concept.



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*Special Prize
EPIX: Be Smart
For Your City*



WINNER

C-BALL SYSTEM

B. LUX S.A.

It is a versatile lamp, iconic and pleasing to the eye. It allows the possibility of being declined in different compositions. It has a strong craftsmanship value and adapts to the needs of the user. We like the concept design and the quality of the production.



On June 3, 2023, ELCA and RI LIV presented the EPIX project activities at the **Micro Festival dell'Abitare event** (<https://www.padovanet.it/evento/iniziativa-micro-festival-dellabitare>) held in Padova (Italy). This event served as a significant platform for discussing the evolving landscape of living spaces and smart cities, particularly in the context of changes prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

RI LIV and ELCA provided a comprehensive overview of the EPIX project's initiatives, emphasizing its innovative approaches and the impact of its activities on the design and development of modern living environments. They highlighted how the EPIX project is addressing the challenges and opportunities brought about by the pandemic, fostering smarter, more resilient urban spaces. Their presentation not only showcased the project's achievements but also facilitated a broader discussion on the future of urban living with an audience of experts, students, architects and stakeholders, and contributed to the ongoing dialogue on the integration of smart technologies in the design of post-pandemic living spaces.





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Cluster HABIC organized two promotional **local outreach events** for its member SMEs to present the main goals of the EPIX project and the various training and collaboration opportunities available, including the Summer Schools in September, the EPIX Digital Platform, and the ClusterXchange mobility scheme.

The first meeting took place on June 30, 2023, at Aula Empresa UPV/EHU, attracting 14 participants from 12 SMEs. The second meeting was held on July 29, 2023, at the Costa Vasca Hotel, with 19 participants from 15 SMEs. During these sessions, HABIC detailed how the EPIX project could benefit their businesses, enhance skills through targeted training programs, and facilitate collaboration across clusters and regions through the mobility scheme. These events provided a valuable platform for SMEs to learn about and engage with the EPIX project, fostering greater involvement and support for its initiatives.



On May 25, 2023, representatives from **RI LIV and ELCA met with the Europe Office of the Federation of Camposampierese**, which comprises 10 municipalities in the Veneto Region. The meeting included key officials Anna Giacomelli, Mirco Bordin, and Martina Rocco from the European Office. The primary focus was to discuss the specific needs of the **Veneto area from a smart city perspective** and to explore potential collaborations between clusters, lighting SMEs, and local authorities.

The discussion aimed to identify strategies to support the transition towards a *"smart, sustainable, and inclusive territory"*. RI LIV and ELCA emphasized the role of innovative lighting solutions and cluster cooperation in achieving these goals. The meeting served as a platform for fostering partnerships that could drive the implementation of smart city initiatives, enhance urban sustainability, and ensure inclusivity within the region. This collaboration aims to leverage the strengths of various stakeholders to create more resilient and technologically advanced urban environments in the Veneto Region.





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The meeting held on March 17, 2022, by **Cluster HABIC in collaboration with the Regional Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization (RIS3)**, brought together managers from the CAVIAR Research Group, which supports S3 activities related to the priority of **Quality of Life in Architecture**. During this meeting, HABIC introduced the EPIX project, highlighting its main goals and activities.

As an active participant in the Basque RIS3 processes, HABIC also promoted the EPIX project among officers of the Internationalisation Group and the Technology Group during periodic working meetings held between March and July. This engagement provided HABIC with valuable networking opportunities to discuss policies with key authorities.

In particular, **HABIC held four meetings attended by Basque Country RIS3 managers**, representatives of the Basque Government for territorial planning, and representatives from the UPV School of Architecture, which serves as the technical secretariat for RIS3. These meetings occurred on March 10, 2023, March 22, 2023, June 29, 2023, and July 21, 2023. During these sessions, HABIC not only continued to advocate for the EPIX project but also engaged in policy discussions, leveraging the opportunity to influence and align regional strategies with the project's objectives. RIS3 representatives have been invited to training activities and the Director of Housing and Architecture department of the Basque Country, Pablo García, has participated in the EPIX Summer Course that took place on 14 and 15 September 2023.

Irena Łobocka, a representative from **SIC**, participated in the **regional conference on smart mobility and transportation in the Malopolska region**, held on June 15, 2023, in Wieliczka. During the networking session following the conference, the EPIX project was actively promoted. As part of this task, SIC also explored the potential of the new platform launched on the EPIX project website, the EPIX International Platform (<https://epixproject.eu/data/>). This platform is designed to provide a comprehensive portfolio of services aimed at connecting clusters with smart cities. Cluster SMEs and technology providers are encouraged to register on the platform to showcase their solutions and explore cooperation opportunities. This initiative aims to foster greater collaboration and innovation within the smart city ecosystem, leveraging the expertise and capabilities of various stakeholders involved in the EPIX project.

Irena Łobocka, **SIC** held a meeting with **Cracow Municipality** on 13th June 2023 with the **Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation** to present the EPIX project and possible municipality support and cooperation in the smart city areas. Another meeting is scheduled for September to set up the details of the international Focus Group and project partner meeting planned for December 2023 in Cracow. Municipality representatives declared their support and willingness to participate in project activities and present city strategies and achievements during Focus Group and Smart City Factory. Another strategic cooperation to support the EPIX project was established by SIC with the director of the Department of Ownership Supervision and Economy of Marshall Office of the Malopolska Region and the Association Metropolia



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Krakowska – both offices declared their support for the EPIX project and engagement in project activities, in particular in the organisation of the Smart City Factory event.

SIC has undertaken many activities related to active cooperation with the **Marshal's office, responsible in the Malopolska region for implementing RIS3 and supporting smart specializations**. On behalf of regional authorities SIC cluster co-created an update for one of the smart specializations, i.e. sustainable energy (one of the subdomains is the smart city area). As a part of this, the SIC Cluster was the organizer of the meeting entitled *"Sustainable Energy – Intelligent Specialisation of the Malopolska Region"*, which was held in Krakow with the participation of 37 people. The participants included representatives of companies, local governments (Krakow and smaller towns), the Małopolska Marshal's office, universities, and associations of cities and municipalities in the region. The meeting focused on identifying strengths and weaknesses, as well as challenges and strategic objectives in the region that could be supported under the regional innovation strategy. One of the activities entrusted to the cluster is the animation of cooperation aimed at creating a specialization platform in the region. Sustainable energy (which also includes the smart city area) is one of the 7 smart regional specializations, the development of which is strongly emphasised due to the energy challenges facing the entire region, especially the city of Krakow as a large agglomeration. The purpose of the meeting was also to bring together different groups of stakeholders and create a platform for exchanging information and collecting recommendations, useful for updating the actions of regional authorities and adjusting the planned forms of support for smart solutions in the region in the current financial perspective. The cluster is one of the key players in the region actively co-creating regional policies in this regard.



On January 25, 2024, **DUTIREG** participated in and played an active role in the **national S3 workshop focused on the National Cluster Strategy—a novel instrument within the S3 framework—in Hungary**. This workshop was organized by the Cluster Department of the Ministry for Regional Development and provided an invaluable opportunity for cluster managers to convene in person.

The event served as a crucial platform for discussing the newly introduced National Cluster Strategy and its implications for the implementation of Hungary's S3 strategy. DUTIREG made significant contributions to the discussions, leveraging its expertise and insights to enrich the dialogue surrounding cluster development and regional innovation. Furthermore, DUTIREG engaged in inter-cluster exchanges, fostering knowledge-sharing and collaboration among participants. They shared their experiences and lessons learned from the EPIX project, offering valuable insights into successful strategies and practices for fostering cluster cooperation and innovation. Approximately 60 participants attended the workshop, underscoring the significance of the event as a forum for meaningful exchange and collaboration within Hungary's cluster ecosystem. DUTIREG's active involvement highlights its commitment to driving forward cluster development initiatives and contributing to the advancement of Hungary's innovation landscape.





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The **MoWiN.net** cluster, in conjunction with the Mobility Cluster, serves as the regional platform for cooperation and innovation within the North Hessian mobility economy. Operated by Regionalmanagement Nordhessen GmbH, it is a pivotal force in fostering collaboration and driving innovation within the regional mobility sector. As part of its regional mandate, MoWiN.net have convened internal meetings aimed at incentivizing smart mobility solutions. These discussions have involved key regional stakeholders, with Regionalmanagement Nordhessen playing a central role in addressing the region's mobility and logistics challenges.

Furthermore, MoWiN.net representatives have actively promoted the EPIX project and the ClusterXchange (CXC) initiative within their local network. These promotional efforts have been integrated into their internal meetings, providing opportunities for stakeholders to learn about and engage with these initiatives. By highlighting the potential benefits of participating in EPIX and CXC, MoWiN.net and its partners are working to foster greater collaboration and innovation within the regional mobility sector.

These internal meetings have attracted significant participation, from various sectors including the mobility industry, academia, and public bodies responsible for shaping regional mobility policies. Through collaborative efforts and knowledge-sharing initiatives, MoWiN.net and its partners are working towards advancing innovative solutions that address the complex mobility needs of North Hesse.

Mr. Miklós Pavlovits, representing **DUTIREG**, participated in **national-level cluster cooperation activities in Hungary**, contributing to DUTIREG's experience with international cluster-oriented projects such as EPIX. On November 22, the Deputy State Secretariat for the Implementation of Economic Development Programmes coordinated the inaugural Hungary Cluster EXPO Start, jointly organized by the Hungarian Cluster Association and launched the biennial Cluster EXPO. This prestigious event took place at the Óbuda University campus with the aim of highlighting the significance of clusters in the economy and showcasing their technological and business value.

DUTIREG contributed to the EXPO by participating in a roundtable discussion attended by guests from policy, business, and cluster sectors. The discussion focused on defining the role of clusters, emphasizing their importance as fundamental components of the economy, and clarifying the concept of clusters. This professional exchange helped to articulate the economic role of clusters even for non-specialists, highlighting their essential purpose within the economic ecosystem. Furthermore, DUTIREG shared its experience with ESCA benchmarking conducted as part of the EPIX project, contributing valuable insights to the discussion on cluster development and performance.

Áron Méhes, as the representative of DUTIREG, actively engaged in an international workshop facilitated by experts from the TCI Network. This workshop, organized by the **Hungarian Deputy State Secretariat for the Implementation of Economic Development Programs of the Prime Minister's Office**, was a key feature of the **Hungary Autumn Cluster Manager Club held on November 12-13, 2022**.

During this significant event, DUTIREG seized the opportunity to collaborate with other national cluster organizations, delving into discussions about strategies for cluster development and the critical aspect of intercluster cooperation. Within these engagements, the spotlight was placed on the impactful activities of the EPIX initiative, particularly in the realm of enhancing cluster strategies within the smart cities domain.

Through various channels such as B2B meetings and site visits, DUTIREG showcased the exemplary role of EPIX activities in bolstering cluster strategies. This served not only to highlight the effectiveness of collaborative efforts but also to inspire and inform stakeholders about the transformative potential of such



A rendezvény, amelyen bemutatjuk, hogyan válnak a klaszterek a magyar gazdaság sarokköveivé!

Ablakot nyitunk a klasztervilágra!

A tervek szerint 2 évente megrendezésre kerülő Klaszter EXPO-k célja bemutatni a klaszterek által biztosított üzleti és technológiai értékeket.

A Klaszter EXPO-k bevezető eseménye a 2022. november 22-én megrendezésre kerülő Klaszter EXPO Start, amely funkcióját tekintve értékelte a szakpolitikák, minisztériumok, kamarák, operatív szervezetek, kormányzati szervezetek és a releváns hatóságok felé.

Ismerje meg szektorokon átívelő klaszterközi kapcsolat-rendszerünket és szakértői bázisunkat, amelyben nap, mint nap a hazai vállalkozások támogatásán dolgozunk!

Várjuk szeretettel Klaszter EXPO Start rendezvényünkön!





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initiatives in advancing smart city agendas and the opportunities for companies to participate in the CXC mobility scheme.



Furthermore, DUTIREG actively pursued networking opportunities through various avenues. Éva Balogh, Tamas Gyulai, as DUTIREG experts, and Péter Maróti, as the STEPP Cluster Manager, participated in the National Conference on Urbanism (Országos Urbanisztikai Konferencia) held in Pécs, Hungary, on October 20, 2022. During this event, they presented a paper titled "Knowledge-based Urban Innovation by Transnational Cooperation" („Tudásalapú városi innováció nemzetközi együttműködésben”).

Moreover, Tamas Gyulai from DUTIREG contributed to the international online conference on territorial innovation on November 24, 2022. His presentation titled "Responsible Research and Innovation in Smart City Strategies" shed light on the service development activities and initial outcomes of the EPIX project within the Session “Sustainability and Social Innovation”. This event was hosted by Corvinus University in Budapest. These engagements underscore DUTIREG's commitment to fostering collaboration and sharing insights on urban innovation and smart city strategies.





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3. International Conferences and thematic Fairs

EUROPEAN CLUSTER CONFERENCE 2022 – PRAGUE (CZECHIA)

Antonella Venza from LIV, the Coordinator of the EPIX project, and Marta Krakowiak from ELCA attended the 8th edition of the European Cluster Conference on September 26-27, 2022, in Prague, Czech Republic. During the conference, they participated in networking sessions and thematic workshops, engaging with a broad spectrum of industry peers.

Throughout the event, LIV and ELCA were actively involved in matchmaking activities, which not only fostered new collaborations but also facilitated the exchange of valuable insights with representatives from diverse clusters. These interactions provided an excellent opportunity to disseminate information about the EPIX project and its activities. They highlighted the project's innovative initiatives and its role in promoting collaboration among clusters, SMEs, and city authorities across Europe.

Additionally, LIV and ELCA used this platform to showcase the ClusterXchange (CXC) program, emphasizing its unique approach to enhancing cross-cluster partnerships. By engaging with various stakeholders, they underscored the significant contributions of the EPIX project to the European cluster ecosystem and the opportunities it offers for ongoing and future collaborations.



CLUSTERS MEET REGIONS CONFERENCE 2022 – ZAGABRIA (CROATIA)

Éva Balogh, representing DUTIREG, showcased the impactful endeavours of the EPIX project and its supportive measures for cluster development at the prestigious Clusters Meet Regions Conference. This esteemed event, organized in Zagreb, Croatia on November 29-30, 2022, was jointly hosted by the European





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Commission (EC), the European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA), and the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, marking a significant collaboration on a European scale. The primary objective of the conference was to facilitate the exchange of best practices, where clusters are recognized as active contributors to regional economies and catalysts for economic transition. Furthermore, it aimed to foster collaborations between clusters and regional stakeholders to drive industrial development within respective regions.

DUTIREG representative took centre stage during the working session themed "Challenges and Promises of Cross-Border Cooperation" on November 30, 2022. Here, Eva adeptly introduced the innovative approach of EPIX, highlighting its strategic significance in fostering cross-border collaborations and addressing pertinent challenges in regional development. Through her insightful presentation, she illuminated the potential of EPIX in driving economic growth and fostering sustainable development across regions, thereby enriching the discourse on cluster-driven initiatives in the European landscape.

The event brought together around 100 representatives of regional development agencies, part of or outside EURADA's network, cluster organisations, national public authorities, companies, the Enterprise Europe Network, and other business support organisations from the EU Member States and regions.



| AGENDA | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 30 TH NOVEMBER 2022 | |
| 09:00 | REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS AND WELCOME COFFEE |
| 09:30 | <p>Challenges and Promises of Cross-Border Cooperation</p> <p>What lessons can be learnt from the experiences of Croatia in international cooperation? This session will showcase cross-border projects and demonstrate how cross-border collaboration can facilitate innovation among territories involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mislav Kovač, Head of Sector for European Territorial Cooperation and Macro-Regional Strategies, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds • Stjepan Marković, Head of Service for Coordination of EU Instruments and Fulfilment of Enabling Conditions, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds • Corrado Campobasso, Analyst, Informest (Italy) • Maurizio Malè, Project Manager, Venetian Cluster (Italy) • Bernard Likar, Advisor, Wood Industry Cluster (Slovenia) • Eva Balogh, STEPP Cluster/EPIX Project (Hungary) • Goran Rodić, PREDA (Bosnia & Herzegovina) • Yanis Kalogiannidis, Project Coordinator, MeDryDive (Greece) <p>Moderator: Adela Franja, Project Officer, IPA-Adriion Joint Secretariat</p> |
| 10:45 | COFFEE BREAK |

16TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS - CSÍKSZEREDA (ROMANIA)

Éva Balogh, representing DUTIREG, actively participated in the 16th Annual International Conference on Economics and Business, themed "Challenges in the Carpathian Basin." Held in Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), Romania, from May 10th to 12th, 2023, this event was organized by the Csíkszereda Faculty of the Sapientia Transylvanian Hungarian University, marking the 16th consecutive year of its inception.

The central theme of this year's conference, "*Towards a New Sustainability?*" prompted discussions on evolving approaches to sustainability in the context of contemporary challenges. With a longstanding tradition of providing a platform for young researchers, lecturers, and doctoral students to showcase their research findings, the conference served as a nexus for intellectual exchange and scholarly discourse.

During this esteemed gathering, Éva Balogh seized the opportunity to introduce the EPIX project and the EPIX Cluster Exchange international network-building program. In her presentation, she elucidated how cities and clusters could leverage the EPIX Cluster Exchange program to their advantage. By accessing the EPIX Digital Platform and participating in the CxC mobility scheme, cities and clusters could unlock a myriad of



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opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, thereby fostering innovation and sustainable development across borders. Éva Balogh's insightful presentation underscored the transformative potential of the EPIX initiative in catalyzing cross-border cooperation and driving economic growth within the Carpathian Basin and beyond.

CLUSTERS MEET REGIONS 2023 – KOSICE (SLOVAKIA)

SIC took part in the Conference **ClustersMeetRegions organised in Kosice (Slovakia)** between 29-30.03.2023 to promote the EPIX project and CxC mechanism on an international forum. It was a 2-day event including a set of workshops, seminars, cluster presentation and a cluster matchmaking event.

The conference provided an excellent platform for extending networks of cooperation and identifying new partners for European cluster joint projects and initiatives. There was a significant focus on fostering cluster collaboration with Ukraine, highlighting the importance of international partnerships. Through active engagement in these activities, SIC was able to showcase the EPIX project, emphasize the benefits of the CxC mechanism, and explore potential collaborations that could enhance the project's impact and reach.

200 participants attended this event.



CLUSTERS MEET REGIONS 2023 – KRAKOW (POLAND)

The most important event where the EPIX project has been presented and its achievement and general cross-cluster collaboration approach shared was the *Clusters Meet Regions* conference in Krakow on 11-12.12.2023 organised by the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, in partnership with the Malopolska Regional Development Agency (MARR) and the European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA).

This Krakow edition focused on the topics of Aerospace Technologies, Smart Cities, and Life Sciences, and had our EPIX partners strongly contributing to the discussion panel "Cosmic Kraków and Smart Cities" and the networking sessions.

The event had a turnout of **149 participants**, including cluster representatives, regional authorities and business associations. Final event agenda with the EPIX interventions: https://clustercollaboration.eu/sites/default/files/event_calendar/CmR_Krakow_Agenda_11112023.pdf

The streaming of the sessions where EPIX project was presented to the audience, and the discussion panels with EPIX partners (SIC, DUTIREG, ELCA and HABIC) are available on the ECCP portal: <https://clustercollaboration.eu/content/clusters-meet-regions-krakow-poland>

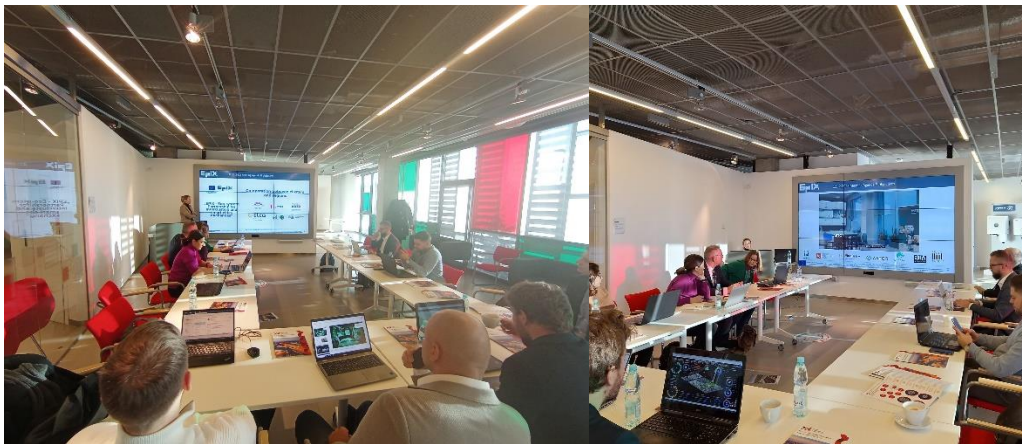




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D4.4 EPIX Outreach networking events



Throughout the course of the EPIX project, the partners actively engaged in an extensive array of events, boosting the project's visibility and fostering robust collaborative networks. Specifically, PPs participated in over 26 local networking events, ensuring a strong regional presence and facilitating engagement. These local events allowed partners to connect with various stakeholders, share insights, and promote the project's initiatives within their respective communities. Additionally, the partners took part in 5 major international events, such as the European Cluster Conference and the Clusters Meet Regions editions. These high-profile gatherings provided a platform for showcasing the project's achievements, exchanging best practices, and forming strategic alliances with other European clusters, projects and stakeholders. The cumulative impact of these efforts is evident in the impressive participation statistics. Approximately 650 participants were engaged through locally organized networking events, which included companies, other regional clusters, local and regional authorities, and local stakeholders, promoting the activities of the EPIX project. Additionally, through international conferences, the partners had the opportunity to interact with over 950 participants, further advancing the project's initiatives. By actively participating in these networking events, the EPIX project partners not only amplified the project's outreach but also facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the project's initiatives.





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D4.4 EPIX Outreach networking events

Conclusions

The organization of outreach events and networking opportunities with target stakeholders and the general public is a pivotal strategy for the successful implementation of a European project like EPIX - a transnational cluster partnership under the European Cluster Excellence Programme, which aimed to foster excellence and facilitate cross-cluster networking and learning. This strategic focus on outreach and networking was vital for several reasons.

Firstly, outreach events played a critical role in raising awareness about the EPIX project among a diverse audience, including potential beneficiaries, industry stakeholders, policymakers, and the general public. This heightened awareness was essential for garnering interest, support, and participation in the project's activities. Additionally, these events provided a platform to showcase the project's achievements, ongoing initiatives, and future opportunities. Such transparency helps build trust and credibility, which are crucial for long-term engagement and support.

Moreover, networking opportunities are vital for establishing and nurturing strategic partnerships. By bringing together clusters, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), academic institutions, and other stakeholders, EPIX can foster collaborations that leverage diverse expertise and resources. This collaboration enhances the project's overall impact, creating a synergistic environment where knowledge exchange and learning are commonplace. Events provided platforms for stakeholders to share best practices, innovative solutions, and lessons learned. This exchange of knowledge is fundamental for the professionalization of business support services, aligning with EPIX's objective to enhance the capabilities of SMEs through specialized and customized support.

Furthermore, engaging directly with SMEs through outreach allowed EPIX to better understand their needs and challenges. This direct feedback loop ensured that the support services offered were highly relevant and effective, thereby facilitating the growth and competitiveness of these businesses. Networking events can also help SMEs access new markets and expand their reach by connecting them with potential clients, partners, and investors.

The strategic organization of events strengthens the overall cluster ecosystem by fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. A cohesive ecosystem is more resilient and better equipped to adapt to changes and challenges in the market. Additionally, by involving policymakers in outreach events, EPIX advocated for supportive policies and regulatory frameworks, which are crucial for creating an enabling environment that facilitates cluster development and SME growth.

Outreach and networking activities ensure that the benefits of EU funding under the COSME programme are maximized. By promoting active participation and collaboration, EPIX achieved its goals more effectively and demonstrate the value of EU support in fostering innovation and economic development. These activities also contribute to the long-term sustainability of the EPIX project. By building a strong network of engaged stakeholders, EPIX can ensure continued support and momentum beyond the initial funding period.

In conclusion, the strategic organization of outreach events and networking opportunities was fundamental to the success of the EPIX project. These activities enhanced visibility, facilitated collaboration, supported SMEs, strengthened the cluster ecosystem, influenced policy, and ensured the effective use of EU funding.

