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ECO-SYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FOR INTERCLUSTERS  
 AND SMART CITIES EXCHANGES

## Deliverable 1.2

### ESCA Excellence labels

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<b>Author(s)</b>	Antonella Venza (RI LIV)			
<b>Short Description</b>	This report summarizes the ECEI Excellence labels assigned to EPIX project clusters (Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto, Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster, HABC cluster, Dutireg/STEPP cluster and MoWiN.net) within the project duration. The ECEI quality labelling system consists of three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold. The Bronze label demonstrates that cluster management is striving for excellence and is interested in improving its management performance; the Silver quality label confirms the successful implementation of improvement processes that were initiated following a Bronze label benchmarking; the Gold Label is a quality label based on very high standards of cluster management practice.			
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## D1.2 ESCA Excellence labels

### Premises

The European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI), which was initiated by the European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry in 2009, developed methodologies and tools to support cluster organisations to improve their management capacities and capabilities. The European Cluster Excellence Initiative invented a uniform set of cluster management quality indicators and developed a quality labelling system featuring the three quality labels for professional cluster management:

- ✓ BRONZE Label “Striving for Cluster Excellence”
- ✓ SILVER Label “Dedicated to Cluster Excellence”
- ✓ GOLD Label “Excel in Cluster Excellence”



The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA) was initiated and mandated by the ECEI to organise the assessment process and to award successful cluster organisations with the respective labels in GOLD, SILVER, and BRONZE. A network of around 200 specifically trained cluster experts from more than 30 countries supports these activities.

During the course of the EPIX project, three project partners (RI LIV, DUTIREG and SIC) carried out a benchmarking process supervised by the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis and obtained BRONZE Label; MoWiN.net renewed its SILVER Label and HABIC cluster its GOLD Label.

ELCA unfortunately is not eligible for the ESCA benchmarking process as it is a network of clusters and not a single cluster organisation.

## D1.2 ESCA Excellence labels

### 1. Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto

On 22.11.2022, Antonella Venza, Cluster Manager of Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto was interviewed by Helmut Kergel from ESCA Secretariat (VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH) in the context of a joint video benchmarking 1-day workshop for the partners of the EPIX project.

Based on the assessment findings, ESCA expert recommends implementing the following customised actions to improve the Cluster Management Organisation's performance of Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto towards excellence:

<b>STRUCTURE OF THE CLUSTER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Attract new cluster members located in the region to better maximise the regional growth potential</li> </ul>
<b>MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE, STRATEGY, FINANCING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Recruit a sufficient number of experienced staff to provide tailor-made and demand-oriented services;</li> <li>✓ Support continuous internal human development, ongoing training, analysis of training needs, and regular budget-supported training measures for the management team to meet evolving cluster management demands and to ensure improved services and tailored support for cluster participants.</li> </ul>
<b>SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Expand tailored services or increase the intensity of existing offerings within this service category, such as internal networking and thematic events, by conducting a thorough analysis of participants' needs and collaborating closely with potential beneficiaries.</li> <li>✓ Expand the range of tailored services or increase the intensity of current offerings, potentially involving the acquisition of third-party funding, to bolster the Cluster Management Organisation's initiatives in collaborative technology development, technology transfer, or R&amp;D activities.</li> <li>✓ To advance entrepreneurship, the Cluster Management Organisation should consider expanding the scope or enhancing the intensity of current services in this category, potentially through tailored offerings, based on a thorough analysis of participant needs in collaboration with potential beneficiaries.</li> <li>✓ To better achieve the objectives of representing the region in (inter)national or European working groups and implementing public support programs, the Cluster Management Organisation should consider broadening the scope of services or intensifying existing ones through tailored approaches, all based on a thorough analysis of participants' needs in collaboration with potential beneficiaries.</li> <li>✓ To further the internationalization of cluster participants, the Cluster Management Organisation should consider expanding the range or increasing the intensity of services, potentially through tailored offerings, based on an analysis of participants' needs in close collaboration with potential beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
<b>ACHIEVEMENTS AND RECOGNITION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The focus on the design of services and activities within the cluster initiative should prioritize generating (positive) impacts at the level of individual committed cluster participants. By utilizing individual discussions and surveys among these participants, potential effects on Business &amp; International Activities can be identified, guiding the design and implementation of services. Subsequently, it is crucial to analyze if the anticipated effects are observed within an appropriate timeframe.</li> </ul>

## D1.2 ESCA Excellence labels

Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto (LIV) fulfilled the set of “Eligibility Criteria for Cluster Management Excellence Labels” of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) and re-confirmed the **BRONZE label – Striving for Cluster Excellence**. The RI LIV certificate expires on 31.12.2025.

The BRONZE label confirms the organisation’s status as a Cluster Management Organisation with a serious interest in striving for excellence.



## D1.2 ESCA Excellence labels

### 2. Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster

On 22.11.2022, Irena Łobocka, Manager of Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster was interviewed by Helmut Kergel from ESCA Secretariat (VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH) in the context of a joint video benchmarking 1-day workshop for the partners of the EPIX project.

Based on the assessment findings, ESCA expert recommends implementing the following customised actions to improve the Cluster Management Organisation's performance of Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster towards excellence:

<p><b>ACHIEVEMENTS AND RECOGNITION</b></p>	<p>✓ It's essential to prioritize generating (positive) impacts on individual committed cluster participants by utilizing individual discussions and surveys to identify potential effects on R&amp;D and Business activities, guiding the design and implementation of services. Subsequently, it is vital to analyze whether the expected effects are observed within an appropriate timeframe.</p>
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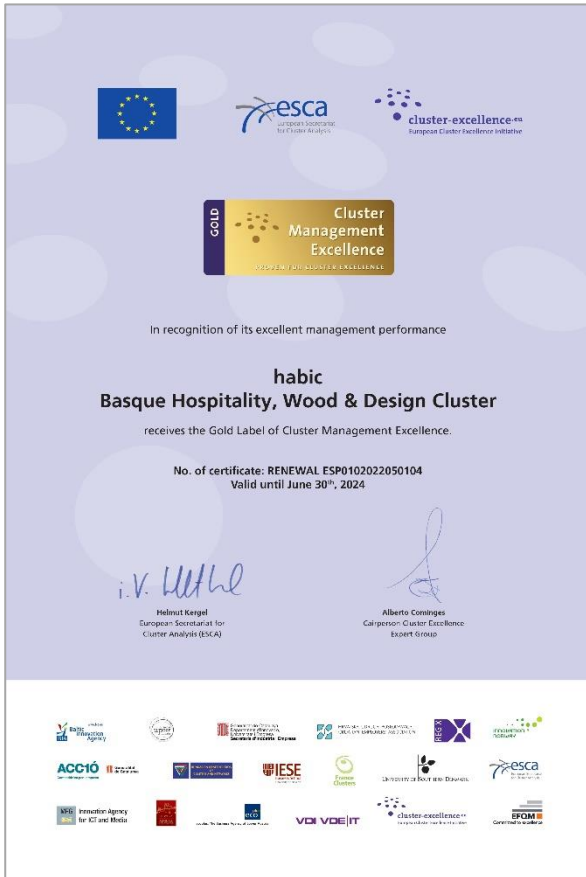
Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster (SIC) fulfilled the set of "Eligibility Criteria for Cluster Management Excellence Labels" of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) and obtained the **BRONZE label – Striving for Cluster Excellence**. The SIC certificate expires on 31.12.2024.

The BRONZE label confirms the organisation's status as a Cluster Management Organisation with a serious interest in striving for excellence.



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### 3. HABIC Cluster



HABIC cluster did not participate in the EPIX benchmarking as it has renewed its **Gold Label of Cluster Management Excellence**, the highest international recognition for excellence in cluster management, in June 2022 with the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA). The HABIC certificate expires on 30.06.2024.

The “Cluster Management Excellence Label GOLD – Proven for Cluster Excellence” depicts the highest standard of cluster management practice. It certifies excellent cluster management according to the approach developed by ECEI – European Cluster Excellence Initiative.



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### 4. Dutireg/STEPP Cluster

On 22.11.2022, Eva Balogh and Tamas Gyulai from STEPP – Science, Technology and Educational Platform for Photonics, Hungary Cluster were interviewed by Helmut Kergel from ESCA Secretariat (VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH) in the context of a joint video benchmarking 1-day workshop for the partners of the EPIX project.

Based on the assessment findings, ESCA expert recommends implementing the following customised actions to improve the Cluster Management Organisation's performance of STEPP Cluster towards excellence:

<b>STRUCTURE OF THE CLUSTER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Attract more partners to have more competences available in the cluster for the facilitation of innovation and competitiveness of all actors</li> </ul>
<b>MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE, STRATEGY, FINANCING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establish dedicated governance structures and turn them into practice, such as a General Manager overseeing daily operations and strategic initiatives, regular general meetings for participant input, a management board responsible for key decisions and control, advisory or thematic committees aiding decision-making and assisting the cluster manager, and the inclusion of a board or steering committee to oversee and evaluate the progress of both the cluster's work and its management;</li> <li>✓ Continual learning, internal human development strategies, and regular training tailored to staff needs, along with investment in international experience and language skills, are crucial for the Cluster Management Organisation's success in adapting to evolving challenges and better-supporting cluster participants.</li> <li>✓ Maintain direct personal contact with over 60% of cluster participants, achieved through visits to each other's premises, bilateral information exchange via various mediums, and collaborative engagement in specific projects or joint activities between the Cluster Management Organisation staff and cluster participants.</li> <li>✓ Develop a comprehensive cluster strategy in detail, reflecting cluster stakeholder needs translated into strategic measures, and supported by continuous monitoring and review processes, along with a corresponding operational plan regularly updated and reviewed.</li> </ul>
<b>SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Implement a broader range of tailor-made services or run existing services based on a needs analysis conducted in close collaboration with potential beneficiaries to enhance the internal networking facilitation and thematic event organization.</li> <li>✓ To bolster the hosting of incoming delegations and to promote the cluster's location and/or region, given the comparatively lower service range and intensity, it's advisable to introduce a more comprehensive set of tailored services or elevate the intensity of existing services, aligning with the needs analysis conducted in close collaboration with potential beneficiaries.</li> <li>✓ Expand the range of tailored services or increase the intensity of current offerings, potentially involving the acquisition of third-party funding, to bolster the Cluster Management Organisation's initiatives in collaborative technology development, technology transfer, or R&amp;D activities.</li> <li>✓ Reinforce B2B relations among participants or external partners and foster cross-sectoral cooperation, by introducing more tailored services or increasing the intensity of existing services.</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improve the Cluster Management Organisation's focus on human resource development, by developing a broader range of tailor-made services or running existing services with a higher intensity.</li> <li>✓ To achieve the objective of fostering entrepreneurship within the Cluster Management Organisation's work by introducing a wider array of tailored services or increasing the intensity of existing services.</li> <li>✓ To better achieve the objectives of representing the region in (inter)national or European working groups and implementing public support programs, the Cluster Management Organisation should consider broadening the scope of services or intensifying existing ones through tailored approaches, all based on a thorough analysis of participants' needs in collaboration with potential beneficiaries.</li> <li>✓ To further the internationalization of cluster participants, the Cluster Management Organisation should consider expanding the range or increasing the intensity of services, potentially through tailored offerings, based on an analysis of participants' needs in close collaboration with potential beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
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STEPP – Science, Technology and Educational Platform for Photonics, Hungary Cluster (Dutireg/STEPP Cluster) fulfilled the set of “Eligibility Criteria for Cluster Management Excellence Labels” of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) and obtained the **BRONZE label – Striving for Cluster Excellence**. The STEPP Cluster certificate expires on 31.12.2024.

The BRONZE label confirms the organisation’s status as a Cluster Management Organisation with a serious interest in striving for excellence.



## D1.2 ESCA Excellence labels

### 5. MoWiN.net



MoWiN.net did not participate in the EPIX benchmarking as it has renewed its “**Cluster Management Excellence Label SILVER – Dedicated to Cluster Excellence**” on 30.03.2022 with the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis, confirming the successful implementation of improvement processes that were initiated following a BRONZE label benchmarking in the last years, and its commitment towards the excellence level of “Cluster Management Excellence Label GOLD”.

The MoWiN.net certificate expires on 31.01.2024.

The “Cluster Management Excellence Label SILVER – Dedicated to Cluster Excellence” certifies a longer-term ongoing successful process of improving cluster management in the Cluster Management Organisation.