The goal of the project is to determine the relevance of selected success factors for cluster-based policies. **The main objective** of the project is to assess the relationship between the levels of regional institutional thickness and social capital, on the one hand, and the success of cluster-based policies on the other. This success has been measured using the effectiveness and utility of the policies and the sustainability of the resulting clusters. **A cluster** is defined as a model to describe spatial concentrations of companies and their associated entities and was adapted for the purposes of human geography in the late 20th century. This project is also centred on another crucial term: "**cluster initiative**", an organised effort to boost a cluster's growth and its regional competitiveness.

The project's main hypothesis is this: Regional levels of institutional thickness and social capital have a beneficial effect on the success of cluster policies. The project draws on the institutional approach in human geography, which helps in understanding how institutions shape processes of economic development and why the levels of that development varies between territories.

The project intends to deploy a raft of research methods and techniques optimised in terms of the size and nature of the populations examined, including: 1) qualitative, individual in-depth interviews with coordinators of cluster initiatives; 2) quantitative surveys using telephone interviews with ca. 1300 members of these initiatives; 3) individual and group interviews with experts; 4) a survey of sources; 5) content analysis; 6) statistical analyses.

The study will be carried out in four Polish regions (NUTS 2) with different cultural backgrounds: Zachodniopomorskie, Pomorskie, Świętokrzyskie, and Podkarpackie.

The success of cluster-based policies, to be described in quantitative and qualitative terms, will come to form a new theoretical model for analysing public interventions of this type.

The project engages a number of areas of scientific doubt identified at the intersection of human geography, spatial economy and regional development. It contributes **a new theoretical model** to the analysis of cluster-based policies (which are a research area where innovation, including the concept of smart specialisation, is highly relevant) in the form of their successes and **dependencies** between regional conditions and the success of policies.

Once disseminated, the project **should stimulate debate about managing economic development through cluster-based policies.**