

The project focuses on the concept of clusters, a concept which has been emerging as an important research topic in contemporary economics, both as a business model for company activities and as an economic policy instrument. Following the introduction of the concept into economic debate by M.E. Porter in the 1990s, it has inspired many researchers and practitioners around the world, but has still left many questions unanswered. The classic definition states that clusters are “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g. universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also cooperate” (Porter M.E. (1998), *On Competition*, Boston: HBS Press).

The economic successes of many regional economies, which have developed prosperous cluster structures, are an incentive for public authorities in different parts of the world to prepare strategies and implement programs, which support clustering processes. With the increasing popularity of clusters as an economic policy tool, we can observe significant deviations from Porter’s original approach and different trajectories of clusters development and models of cluster policy emerge around the world. Actual cluster policies in specific countries arise from a series of locally specific conditions within existing policy frameworks.

The key objectives of the project are the following:

- to identify and develop the taxonomy of the models of cluster development and policy that take place in different countries characterized by various levels of economic development and social, economic and institutional systems,
- to measure and compare how different models of cluster development and policy contribute to the competitiveness of the economy and to formulate recommendations for future cluster policy, with a focus on strategic policy solutions in Poland and the European Union.

Since the research project concentrates on the scientific problem of different approaches to and models of clusters and cluster policy that emerge in different countries, it provokes the interesting question of whether the insights acquired through analysing clustering in industrialized countries still hold true in developing economies. Research planned in this project includes:

1. Critical analysis of the theoretical foundations in the area of clusters and cluster policy, and their role in international competitiveness.
2. Creating the methodology for mapping models of cluster development and policy in different countries, and for their taxonomy, based on selected critical dimensions.
3. Collecting data and mapping models of cluster development and policy that exist in the global economy, i.e. identification of groups of countries sharing similar characteristics.
4. Case studies of cluster development and policy in selected countries, representing models identified in the taxonomy of cluster development and policy.
5. Constructing models for analyzing the impact of clusters on international competitiveness, and identification of the most competitive models of cluster development and policy.
6. Synthesizing the research results and formulating the recommendations for cluster policy.

The significance of the project is of a theoretical, empirical and applied nature, as it contributes to economic theory by proposing a taxonomy of cluster development and policy models in the global economy, as well as provides real-world evidence concerning the role of clusters as a factor of international competitiveness, and evidence of public support for clusters in different countries. In particular, the project is of great importance for Poland, which is currently developing the directions for future cluster policy that may be inspired by the best practises in the world economy.

One of the key effects of the research project will be developing a taxonomy of models of cluster development and policy, in which groups of countries sharing similar characteristics will be identified and providing with the recommendations for cluster policy and practise. This will constitute value added to previous cluster research, which generally focuses on case studies of individual or several clusters, or on cluster development and policies from several countries, but without trying to present the whole range of cluster models existing in the world economy.