



## Achieving Clusters Excellence (ACE)

Project name:	<b>ACE - Achieving Cluster Excellence</b>
Duration:	<b>24 months</b> , starting date: 6th January 2014
Partnership:	<b>Finpiemonte SpA</b> - Regional Financial and Development Agency of Piedmont Region (IT) <b>ADER</b> - The Economic Development Agency for La Rioja (SP) <b>SIEA</b> - Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (SK) <b>MAG</b> – Hungarian Economic Development Centre (HU)
Lead Partner:	<b>Finpiemonte SpA</b> - Galleria San Federico, 54 - 10121 Torino ITALY
Project Coordinator:	<b>Susanna Longo</b> - <a href="mailto:susanna.longo@finpiemonte.it">susanna.longo@finpiemonte.it</a>

The ACE Project gathers together 4 European partners:

- Finpiemonte (Piemonte region - **Italy**)
- ADER (La Rioja region - **Spain**)
- SIEA (**Slovakia**)
- MAG (**Hungary**)

The overall objective of the project is to increase the level of excellence in cluster management in the member Countries/Regions of the consortium and to shape a pool of experts coming from local policy making organizations about new high level competencies on European quality standards.

The project makes use of methodologies and tools developed by the European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI).

The ACE project collaborates with the European Foundation for Cluster Excellence (EFCE), which is mandated to produce high level training materials, and with the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA), which is mandated to train, benchmark and award the quality label to cluster management organizations in Europe.

### The focus of the project:

- **To run training activities provided by ESCA and ECFE** with the aim of preparing local experts to be entitled to conduct cluster benchmarking interviews and to assist cluster managers in improving their management skills and their services. Such experts will then be able to act not only locally but also nationally and internationally, thus contributing to multiply the results of the ECE Initiative.
- **To involve a wide number of cluster organizations** in order to make them aware about the key features of cluster excellence in Europe, assess them using the ESCA benchmarking methodology, motivate them to join the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and Cluster Observatory. In the ACE project, cluster organizations have the possibility to obtain the ESCA bronze level certification and can receive active support in the necessary steps to move to the ESCA gold level of excellence.
- **To establish a dialogue with programme owners and policy makers** in order to provide them with an insight into the performance of local clusters and to stimulate their awareness and commitment about cluster excellence in relation to regional/national strategies and programmes.

In the framework of the ACE project, the consortium will select and support the most appropriate clusters to be candidate for the gold assessment: at least 2 clusters from Piedmont, 2 from La Rioja, 1 from Hungary and 1 from Slovakia will be supported to go through the ESCA assessment for the GOLD LABEL quality certification.

More information about the ACE project is available in partner's websites:



[http://www.finpiemonte.it/attivita/politichesviluppo/progetti\\_internazionali.aspx](http://www.finpiemonte.it/attivita/politichesviluppo/progetti_internazionali.aspx)



<http://www.ader.es/servicios/innovacion/proyectos-europeos/proyecto-ace-achieving-cluster-excellence/>



[http://www.siea.sk/medzinarodne-projekty-prehľad\\_inovacie/c-6387/ace-achieving-cluster-excellence/](http://www.siea.sk/medzinarodne-projekty-prehľad_inovacie/c-6387/ace-achieving-cluster-excellence/)



[http://www.klaszterfejlesztzes.hu/content.php?cid=cont\\_5368a8dfaff163.22831319](http://www.klaszterfejlesztzes.hu/content.php?cid=cont_5368a8dfaff163.22831319)



**FINPIEMONTE S.p.A.** [www.finpiemonte.it](http://www.finpiemonte.it)

**Finpiemonte is the finance company of Regione Piemonte**, born to sustain **development** and **competitiveness** of the regional territory. Finpiemonte is a public company, directed and coordinated by Regione Piemonte, which holds over 96% of equity; other associates are the Chambers of Commerce and some local institutions. The company holds strategic shareholdings aimed to promote technological, social, cultural and economic contents in order to encourage the development of the region. The shareholdings are identified in societies which manage **6 Scientific and Technology Parks** and **3 universities spin-off incubators**.

Finpiemonte supports the Regional Government for the **management of regional programmes on research, innovation and competitiveness**, offering its technical know-how and qualified services. Commissioned by the Region, Finpiemonte acts as **promoter and developer of the regional network of Innovation Clusters** which were launched in 2009 and involve nowadays over 1.500 entities with a large majority of SMEs.

Finpiemonte assists Regione Piemonte to set-up and implement **European projects**. Particularly, with the aim to stimulate the participation of local stakeholders in international, trans-regional and inter-cluster networks, Finpiemonte takes part in several projects within the Framework Programme and the CIP Programme of the European Union, as well as within the Territorial Cooperation Programmes (such as MED and Alpine Space).

#### **ACE PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION TEAM**



**Susanna LONGO** has a senior experience on regional and European cluster policies, as well as on international project management dealing with SMEs, research and innovation. She works as liaison officer to the European Commission, participates in international networks and expert groups and supports policy makers to set-up initiatives in line with the EU guidelines.



**Luca FUSTA** in the framework of the implementation of the regional Cluster programme launched in 2009, he supervises the activities related to the cluster strategy development, the set-up and management of the cluster evaluation system, the monitoring of R&D projects and the policy impact assessment.



**Camilla GRACIS** is experienced on innovation clusters, project management and regional innovation policies. She has been collaborating at the implementation of the Regional Cluster programme since its launch in 2009, dealing with 12 Piedmont's Innovation Clusters and cluster managers.



**Valentina MASTRULLO** covers organisational tasks working in direct connection with policy makers and regional cluster managers, for the implementation of the regional cluster programme, its monitoring system and its ongoing improvement.

#### **How to find us:**

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**Agencia de  
Desarrollo Económico  
de La Rioja**

**ADER** [www.ader.es](http://www.ader.es)

The Economic Development Agency for La Rioja (**ADER**) is a public organization belonging to the La Rioja Regional Government, attached to the “Regional Ministry” for Industry, Innovation and Employment, which is responsible for developing policies and economic / industrial promotion, mainly for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises.

**ADER** is an organization committed to promoting business and industry in our Autonomous Community, making them grow in order to reach a position that can rival the most developed areas of Europe. Its aim is to promote regional economic development, enhancing the creation and consolidation of businesses in La Rioja and creating a suitable environment for companies to prosper. ADER is responsible for managing cluster fund programmes.

Two other organizations are involved in the project too:

**Innovation, Industry and Commerce General Directorate of La Rioja (DGIIIC)** [www.larioja.org/innovacion](http://www.larioja.org/innovacion)

**Employer’s federation of La Rioja (FER)**, [www.fer.es](http://www.fer.es)

## **ACE PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION TEAM**



**Milagros URUÑUELA** is Innovation and Intellectual Property Adviser at ADER. In charge, among others, of the evaluation of R&D Projects and innovative business initiatives, providing comprehensive advice and support to regional SMEs and Clusters in innovation related issues.



**Elena LÓPEZ** is responsible for managing the cluster policy according to regional strategies since 2009, as part of the team responsible for Research, Development and Innovation Regional Strategies and Plans at DGIIIC. She is also the General Secretary of La Rioja Biotechnological Cluster (Grupo Biorioja) and EFQM Excellence Model Assessor.



**Javier RIDRUEJO** is currently Innovation and Technology Manager at FER and Secretary General, General Manager and R&D Director of La Rioja IT Cluster and Business Association. He has extensive experience in European R&D Project Management.

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## **MAG- Hungarian Economic Development Centre** [www.magzrt.hu](http://www.magzrt.hu)

MAG – Hungarian Economic Development Centre Private Company Limited by Shares (MAG) is Hungary's intermediary body for economic development, regional development, and public administration programs financed from European Union resources. The primary goal of MAG is to provide the highest level of cooperation for development policy planners and managers, the beneficiaries of the grant programs and the effected enterprises as well as the realization of goals set down in the business plan. MAG – Hungarian Economic Development Centre is one of the most significant members of the institutional system created by cohesion policy of the European Union.

### **MAG – Cluster Development Office**

From 2011, a division called Cluster Development Office (CDO) has been set up within the organization of MAG. CDO performs the tasks related to cluster policies, professional assistance of clusters, management of cluster calls and the cluster accreditation process, helping clusters in internationalization and produce professional analysis on clusters performance.

### **ACE PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION TEAM**



**Peter KELLER** is Head of the Cluster Development Office, ESCA expert for cluster benchmarking, currently enrolled in the ECEI/EFCE cluster management training. He was working more than 10 years for the Ministry of Economy and Transport and Ministry of Public Administration and Justice. On 1 January 2012 he joined MAG–Hungarian Economic Development Centre, where he leads the Cluster Development Office.



**Mátyás SOMKUTI** is Cluster Development Coordinator, ESCA expert for cluster benchmarking. He has been dealing with clusters and cluster development since 2008, when the first systematic cluster programme, the so-called Pole Programme has been launched. He had participated on the formulation of the cluster accreditation system for the Hungarian clusters. From 2011, he is working as cluster development coordinator of MAG Cluster Development Office.



**Miklós JUHASZ** is Cluster Development Analyst. His main duties include compiling cluster analyses (especially Accredited Innovation Clusters); participation in the implementation of the Hungarian multi-stage cluster development model; participation in the management of cluster accreditation system.



**Gyöngyi TAKACS** works as an international relations team leader. She is responsible for the financial and administrative tasks of the international projects of MAG. She has experiences with programs for women entrepreneurs. She will carry out partly the financial management of the project

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## SLOVAK INNOVATION AND ENERGY AGENCY [www.siea.sk](http://www.siea.sk)

The Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (SIEA) was established in 1999 as a professional state allowance organization directed by Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic.

SIEA carries the information service for the Ministry of Economy, with special focus on innovations and energy sector. It gathers processes and disseminates information related to the increase of energy efficiency, using of renewable energy sources, combined heat and power and the development of innovation activities. SIEA also act as an implementation agency for Structural Funds of the EU.

SIEA has a long-lasting experience in the implementation of international projects within various EU community programs (Intelligent energy – Europe, Central Europe Programme, CENTRAMO, Cluster COOP, etc.).

SIEA's headquarters is based in Bratislava and it is also represented by three regional branches in Trenčín, Banská Bystrica and Košice. From those, it is able to cover whole Slovakian regions, to be easily available for general public needs.

### ACE PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION TEAM



**Miroslav Balog** is Director of Innovation Department of SIEA. His main responsibilities deal with project management, analyses for Ministry of Economy, cluster policy communication with partners. He is a Cluster Benchmarking Expert and has extensive publication record in the field of innovations.



**Vladimír Borza** is Project Manager in the Innovation Dept. of the SIEA. He is responsible for preparing and implementing state aid schemes related to cluster and SMEs development. He also works as evaluator of R&D Projects.



**Pavol Duman** is Project Manager in the Innovation Dept. of the SIEA. His main responsibilities deal with implementation of concept materials in the innovation field, analysis and cluster policy.



**Zuzana Klucikova** works at the technical and financial support. She is the authorized Director of Economic Department of SIEA. She responsible for SIEA budget, financial operation and accounting transactions.

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