



UKRAINIAN  
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# NEWS UCA



July

DIGEST 1

## Introductory Word from the CEO of the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA)

We are pleased to present to our partners from governmental bodies and international organizations a new communication product - the monthly digest of cluster activities within the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA).

The core idea behind this digest is to respond to the challenge of fragmentation in communications - across time, channels, and audiences. This digest consolidates the most important information within the UCA community and provides a focused summary of key developments over the past month, including our achievements and areas for further growth.

So, what were the key highlights of July 2025?

This month marked an important milestone in the evolution of modern cluster policy in Ukraine. For the first time at the regional level, six cluster development programs were developed and presented, integrating clusters into the regional economic programs of six Ukrainian regions. These documents resulted from an inclusive strategic planning process conducted within the Clusters4Regions project, involving regional administrations, regional development agencies, businesses, academic institutions, and expert communities - with the support of the UCORD project.

In its July communications, UCA aims to convey a key message to governmental stakeholders: clusters should not be seen as temporary initiatives, but as **institutionalized mechanisms for economic transformation** – local drivers of change capable of aligning and synergizing innovation policy, SME support, digitalization, green transition, and regional development.

At the same time, unleashing this potential requires targeted support - institutional, financial, regulatory, and communicational.

Together with our partners from government bodies and international technical assistance programs, UCA continues to work systematically on building a sustainable ecosystem for cluster development. In July, our focus was directed at several key areas:

- Implementation of medium-term regional cluster development programs;  
Strengthening the capacity of cluster organizations;
- Building dialogue with universities and reinforcing the role of education and science;
- Promoting successful cases of export-oriented cooperation;  
Launching new inter-cluster initiatives in healthcare and digital innovation.

The Executive Directorate expresses its sincere gratitude, first and foremost, to our clusters for their resilience and effective work carried out under such challenging conditions. We also extend our thanks to international partners and donors for their continued support.

At the same time, this digest serves another important purpose - to mobilize greater international and governmental support for our clusters. In order to scale best practices, achieve institutional recognition of clusters at the national level, and build stronger capacities, Ukrainian clusters - most of which are still young organizations - require sustained attention and assistance.

That is why, through these monthly issues, UCA aims to highlight current progress as well as fresh, high-priority proposals aimed at developing and strengthening the impact of cluster policies. In this issue, for example, we present initiatives to support educational activities for government stakeholders, our partnership with Rebuild Ukraine 2025, and the formation of a network of Prototyping Centers.

We invite government institutions, international donors, and partner organizations to join us in implementing these initiatives. We are convinced that the cluster-based approach - grounded in synergy, trust, and partnership - holds the key to Ukraine's recovery and long-term sustainable economic development.

Oleksandr Yurchak  
CEO, Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA)

## Key Highlights from July at UCA

### Launch of 6 Regional Cluster Development Programs within the Clusters4Regions Project



On July 23, the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA) presented the first six regional cluster development programs as part of the Clusters4Regions initiative.

For Ukrainian clusters, this marks a historic milestone – for the first time, medium-term cluster development programs have been created at the level of regional administrations in Ukraine.

Working groups in each of the six regions – Vinnytsia, Ternopil, Volyn, Odesa, Sumy, and Khmelnytskyi - developed the programs over more than three months. In total, over 120 participants took part in the process, including representatives of clusters, regional development agencies, regional administrations, businesses, and expert communities.

Since February 2025, UCA has been implementing the Clusters4Regions project with the support of UCORD – NIRAS.

The development of these cluster support programs is a key step toward integrating clusters into national recovery strategies and building innovative, resilient regional economies.

### | Regional Cluster Potential in Focus of Targeted Donor Programs

On July 3, the UNDP-organized conference *“The Potential of Cluster Development for Business, Regional Economies, and Smart Specialization”* took place in Kyiv, gathering over 100 participants – from government institutions to international organizations and real-sector business representatives.

The main focus of the event was the presentation of the cluster potential of four regions: Kharkiv, Kyiv, Vinnytsia, and Odessa.

Among the participants and panelists were UCA leadership, representatives of seven UCA clusters, economic recovery experts, UNDP professionals, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine and regional military administrations.

The discussions centered on the role of clusters in supporting SMEs, boosting employment, and developing regional economies through smart specialization.

UCA presented its proposals for collaboration with regional administrations, emphasizing the need for dedicated cluster support programs, similar to those being developed under the Clusters4Regions project.



### | UCA strengthens focus on cluster capacity

In June–July, the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance conducted a series of five exchanges and workshops for clusters.

The goal was to strengthen managerial, communication, and project-related competencies of cluster organizations operating in wartime conditions and preparing to contribute to the country's recovery.

The events included two specialized matchmaking workshops, webinars on “10 Common Mistakes When Launching a Cluster” and “Preparing for EDF / Horizon Europe Calls”, as well as coordination meetings in preparation for Rebuild Ukraine 2025 in Warsaw.

Building the capacity of clusters and establishing cluster management standards remains a long-term challenge for UCA clusters.

### **| Meetings with universities – strengthening cooperation on innovation and workforce development**

UCA organizes monthly roundtables and mini-conferences with universities. Since May, such events have been held in Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Ternopil, and Lviv.

The two largest roundtables took place on July 31 in Lviv, with participation from six UCA clusters, the Lviv City Council, the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU), and Lviv Polytechnic.

Key topics included the development of Prototyping Centers (first discussed at UCU) and the advancement of medical innovation (at Lviv Polytechnic).

Both events highlighted several cooperation challenges, among which the formation of a “unified voice of clusters” with concrete proposals for collaboration with universities emerged as a current priority for UCA.

Detailed report available at the [link](#).



## **Digest of Cluster Activities**

### **| Zaporizhzhia IAM Cluster – A Driver of Innovation in an Industrial Region**

In July, Zaporizhzhia hosted a new session of the “Government–Business Dialogue” platform organized by the Regional State Administration. The central theme was the role of clustering in regional development, with the Engineering–Automation–Mechanical Engineering (IAM) cluster showcased as a key case.

Cluster leader Andrii Karpenko presented the results of four years of work, including the development of a cooperative ecosystem of over 50 members, featuring major industrial companies, Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic University, the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and business associations.

The cluster is actively promoting the establishment of a European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) in the region as a platform for Industry 4.0, automation, and engineering development. New partnerships were also signed with universities and business communities.

During the event, Oleksandr Yurchak, CEO of UCA, presented the draft government resolution on the official recognition of clusters, developed by the Ministry of Economy in collaboration with UCA.

Meanwhile, Maksym Kucherenko, Deputy Director of the Economic Development Department of the RSA, confirmed support for infrastructure initiatives focused on innovation, exports, and technological advancement in the region.

### **| UAFM – A Model of Effective Export Cooperation**

The Ukrainian Association of Furniture Manufacturers (UAFM) is one of UCA's benchmark clusters for export development. In July, UAFM gained international recognition when *IntelliNews* published an article about the cluster as an example of successful transformational growth.

According to the report, the cluster demonstrates stable performance in export markets:

- Furniture exports increased by 15.5% over the past year;
- Investments reached €565 million, supported by partnerships such as Kronospan;
- Several local companies entered the Forbes rankings, indicating growing trust and brand recognition.

Experts estimate that 72% of all Ukrainian sofa beds are produced in the region, and companies like Skloresurs LLC are confidently entering EU markets.

UAFM is also preparing its members for new EU traceability requirements for timber. In cooperation with FSC, SIPPO, PEFC, and Ukrderzhlisproekt, a kick-off workshop was held, with over 200 participants already registered for upcoming online sessions.

Institutional growth also remains a priority: five new companies joined UAFM in July, and a Lean tour in Zakarpattia united manufacturers around sustainable production practices.

A new podcast titled *"Built a Business on Furniture"* was launched on July 22 in Kyiv, sharing real entrepreneurial stories and promoting the sector as a key growth area in Ukraine's economy.

### **| Prykarpattia: Focus on Exports, Innovation, and Partnerships**

In July, clusters in the Prykarpattia region demonstrated strong development dynamics in exports, education, digitalization, and international cooperation.

The Prykarpattia Industrial Cluster continued to support export-oriented business through the Go Export initiative, offering personalized consulting to companies preparing to enter foreign markets, particularly the EU. Services include export readiness assessments, individual roadmaps, and support in partnership with ITC, Diia.Business, and others.

A key member, logistics company RIO TRANS, joined the EU's New Computerized Transit System (NCTS), significantly reducing time and costs for Ukrainian exporters. The company was also listed in Forbes Next 250 as a high-growth business – the fourth company from the cluster to receive this recognition.

A major development was the confirmation of €500,000 in funding from the Interreg NEXT 2021–2027 program for the Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, a cluster member, to establish a Center of Engineering Excellence. The center will be equipped with robotics, CAD/CAM systems, and CNC machinery, enhancing engineering education and industry collaboration.

At the same time, the Ivano-Frankivsk IT Cluster, in partnership with SoftServe, began integrating AI technologies into educational programs at Prykarpattia National University. The project aims not only to teach AI tools, but also to build competencies for ethical and effective use in a knowledge-based economy.

These developments confirm Prykarpattia as a growing hub for industrial and digital transformation.

### **| Khmelnytskyi Region: Podillia Fashion Cluster – Sustainable Development and Digital Fashion as a New Specialization**

In July, the Podillia Fashion Cluster made major strides in shaping a new regional specialization at the intersection of sustainable manufacturing and digital design in the light industry sector.

The cluster received a UNIDO grant to launch a system for recycling textile production waste. The initiative introduces circular practices into the local business environment and is part of Khmelnytskyi's 2035 Development Strategy. It is the first regional project combining sustainability and recycling with institutional coordination by a cluster. The system will help reduce textile waste, boost environmental responsibility, and open new opportunities for local businesses within the green transition.

The cluster is also advancing digital skills. In July, the first module of the CLO3D course was completed, covering 3D clothing design, digital pattern creation, and virtual fabric testing. Participants have already begun creating digital prototypes and turning them into physical products – cutting development cycles and lowering sample costs.

Podillia Fashion Cluster not only supports local business but also accelerates the shift to a circular economy, fosters environmental responsibility, and opens doors for international partnerships.

### | APPAU – Foresight on “The Future of Ukrainian Engineering”

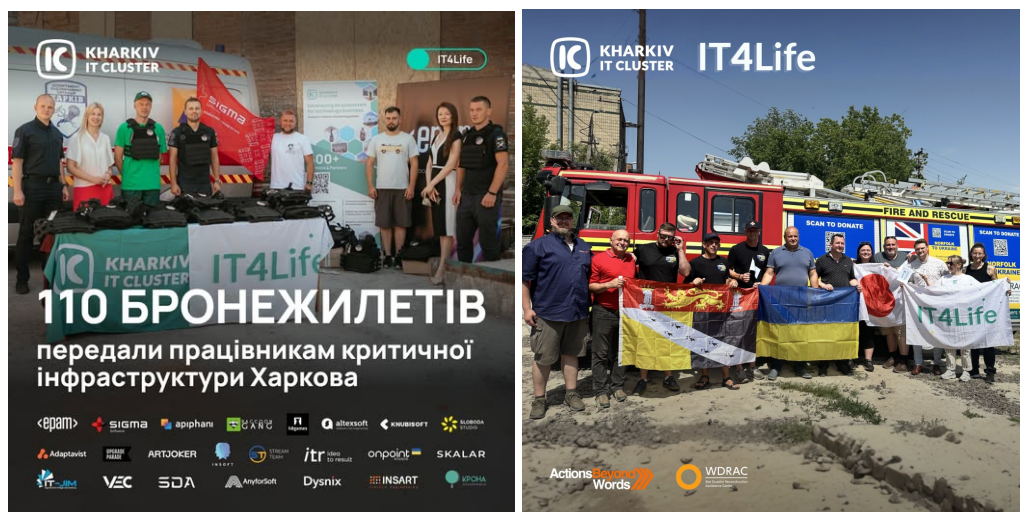
On July 24, APPAU – a leading association in Ukraine’s Industry 4.0–5.0 movement – held a foresight session titled “*The Future of Ukrainian Engineering*”. The event was part of the IDEALIST (HE) project, in which APPAU is a participant, and the foresight methodology was used during the session.

Within two future scenarios – prolonged war or rapid peace and recovery – participants analyzed key impact factors: human capital, economy, technologies, and cluster cooperation.

While a full report is forthcoming, initial conclusions have already been made. Regardless of the scenario, engineering companies in Ukraine must develop three key strategies:

1. Invest in talent and skills;
2. Use cooperation as a key tool to mitigate turbulence;
3. Integrate into international value chains and ecosystems, with a strong focus on adhering to international standards.

### | Kharkiv IT Cluster: Digitalization, Security, Veteran Support



Kharkiv IT Cluster launched the Eastern Ukraine EDIH office – a digital transformation hub for five regions.

The hub provides a full cycle of digital transformation services for businesses, communities, and public organizations.

It covers five regions – Kharkiv, Sumy, Poltava, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhzhia – and is becoming an important institution in the transformational recovery of Eastern Ukraine.

As part of the IT4Life initiative, the cluster handed over 110 bulletproof vests to critical infrastructure workers in Kharkiv.

Volunteer activity is nothing new for the cluster – earlier, under the same initiative, a fire truck was delivered to the Zmiyiv community.

On July 31, a Veterans2Tech meeting took place to support veterans in their transition to the IT sector.

Veterans already working in tech shared their personal experiences of entering a new career.

## **Inter-Cluster Cooperation: Key Initiatives and Projects of the Month**

### **| Clusters4Health – Joint Solutions for the Healthcare Sector**

While Clusters4Regions brings together 6 regions and their stakeholders in the development of regional programmes, the Clusters4Health project, implemented by 2 Ukrainian clusters - Rivne Interregional Medical and Medical Device Manufacturers Cluster - is aimed at all medical clusters that are members of the UCU, as well as those that are not, but have only a cluster initiative and are ready to build medical clusters and develop medical innovation and internationalisation. In July, the first of a series of 'Clusters4Health Breakfasts' took place, aimed at developing a joint European-Ukrainian roadmap for establishing long-term partnerships. They discussed the needs of Ukrainian manufacturers to enter European markets, joint projects in digitalisation, rehabilitation, and training.

They consolidated their requests to European partners regarding twinning, acceleration programs, certification, and international market entry – opening up new opportunities for medical clusters to receive targeted support, especially in wartime conditions.

### **| UCA Initiatives to Boost Inter-Cluster Collaboration and Leadership**

At UCA's General Assembly on July 16, priorities for the second half of the year were confirmed along with three new initiatives:

- "Pay It Forward" – promotes and celebrates voluntary support within communities as a cultural and organizational value. The initiative aims to counterbalance consumerist tendencies and competition among clusters. While many examples of this approach have already emerged, especially from international ambassadors of Professionals4Ukraine, they have not yet become part of the broader organizational culture.
- "Practice Leader" – highlights and scales best practices within UCA's cluster network. The key condition: one cluster voluntarily takes the lead in setting the benchmark and demonstrating the practice. The Ukrainian Heat & Power Engineering Cluster was the first to take the lead, showcasing its "Lean+" company visit methodology, which combines lean production principles with other performance improvement tools.

- "Win-Win in Action" – focuses on strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation between clusters and between UCA's Executive Directorate and individual or grouped clusters.

## | Fundraising: Cluster Proposals and Requests

Despite positive development dynamics among clusters across Ukraine, funding challenges remain critical. Addressing them requires enhanced coordination between clusters, government, international donors, and partners. Below are three key initiatives currently seeking external support:

### 1. Legal Recognition of Clusters and Stakeholder Awareness

Clusters and regional authorities are eagerly awaiting the adoption of a government resolution that would officially recognize clusters within Ukraine's economic development priorities. A draft resolution has already been developed by the Ministry of Economy in cooperation with UCA.

Adopting this resolution would pave the way for public funding and participation of clusters in recovery programs. However, the Clusters4Regions project revealed a very low level of awareness among government stakeholders. UCA's recent article [\*"Ukrainian Clusters as a New Reality – Changing the Narrative"\*](#) addresses this gap and presents success stories from leading clusters. The article calls for all stakeholders to unite efforts in awareness-raising and promoting the cluster development agenda.

To this end, UCA is launching a new initiative: a webinar series titled "Dialogues with Government" from September to November, covering the most pressing policy-making issues.

UCA is seeking donor support for this initiative.

Estimated cost: €7,000.

### 2. Support for UCA Clusters at Rebuild Ukraine 2025

At the upcoming Rebuild Ukraine conference in Warsaw (November 2025), UCA plans to present proposals from 8 Ukrainian clusters as well as an updated portfolio of sectoral and regional recovery projects.

While UCA can cover only minimal costs (e.g., a shared stand), further support is needed for marketing materials, logistics, travel, and organizing meetings.

UCA is seeking international partners and donors to support this effort.

Estimated co-financing required: €10,000.

In return, partners will gain early access to investment-ready projects and cluster-led ecosystem opportunities under development.

### 3. Prototyping Centers as a Foundation for Innovation Resilience

A unified, integrated network of existing small-scale prototyping centers is UCA's response to the current fragmentation and limited capacity of prototyping labs and centers at technical universities across Ukraine.

UCA has prepared a project proposal, outlining how a consolidated network of 5–7 existing centers could significantly improve the ability to meet prototyping and innovation demands from hundreds or even thousands of SMEs across various sectors.

UCA suggests starting with a pilot phase – conducting a detailed audit and developing a joint concept for the network.

Project summary : [\[link\]](#)

Full overview of the current landscape (Ukr): [\[link\]](#)

Estimated budget: €30,000

#### Contacts and Feedback

This digest was prepared by the Executive Directorate of the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance (UCA) for our partners from government and international organizations, Ukrainian and foreign clusters, donors, and sponsors supporting the development of the cluster movement.

We welcome cooperation and partnership.

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