SUMMARY

This thesis is a thorough exploration of the concept of clustering , approaching the topic from a variety of economic and sectoral perspectives. The work is divided into two main parts, each comprising a specific number of chapters.

The first part of the thesis, being made up of two chapters, establishes the theoretical foundation and general context of the study. The first chapter addresses the theory and dynamics of clusters in the broad economic context, providing a deep understanding of the evolution of the concept over time and its impact on economic growth and competitiveness. The second chapter expands the discussion, focusing on the structure and size of clusters within the European Union, exploring the variety and depth of the industry in different regions and highlighting the crucial role of the digital sector.

The first chapter of the thesis, THE THEORY AND DYNAMICS OF CLUSTERS IN AN ECONOMIC CONTEXT, provides an in-depth perspective on the theory and dynamics of clusters in the economic context, highlighting the evolution of the concept and its importance in stimulating economic growth and competitiveness. It focuses on defining clusters as geographic and sectoral concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions, benefiting from enhanced exchange of knowledge and innovation. The theories discussed, such as innovation systems theory, network theory, cluster life cycle theory and agglomeration economics, illustrate different aspects of cluster formation, evolution, and competitiveness. The chapter also highlights how cultural and social diversity in a region can stimulate innovation and creativity, thereby contributing to economic development. The role of research institutions, as key actors in clusters, is emphasized, as they are fundamental in promoting innovation, education and research.

Deepening cluster theories, this chapter emphasizes the role of collaboration between various economic and educational entities in stimulating innovation. Also , the study highlights the fact that clustering facilitates the transfer of knowledge and experiences, companies and institutions benefiting from extensive networks. In addition, it addresses how the cultural and social diversity within a cluster can generate new ideas and innovative approaches, essential for economic development.

The second chapter of the thesis, CLUSTERIZATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, emphasizes the vital role of emerging industries in the global economy. The objective is to understand the depth and diversity of these industries in the EU and to

identify the strategic directions followed by the clusters. The analysis is based on data taken from the European Cluster Observatory platform and uses a quantitative approach to compare the distribution of clusters in different European regions. The results of the analysis indicate a clear trend towards a focus on digitalisation, with Central Europe and Mediterranean Europe dominating both in the total number of clusters and in their specifics. The chapter highlights the cultural and economic diversity of the EU, with each region having a unique pattern of clustering , from Central Europe, notable for its large number of small clusters, to Western Europe, distinguished by large clusters, indicating a maturity in cluster formation.

The detailed analysis of EU clusters demonstrates the importance of adaptability to changes in the global economy and emerging technologies. Thus, the clusters in Central Europe and the Mediterranean are at the vanguard of digitization, standing out by their number and diversity. Collaboration between large companies and SMEs is essential for innovation and growth. The study also highlights that while there is a unique pattern of clustering in each region, they all contribute to a diverse and dynamic economic landscape with significant implications for policy formulation and business decisions.

The second part of the thesis, consisting of own contributions, consists of four chapters. The third chapter discusses regional synergies in the EU, focusing on economic performance and innovation in various regions. Chapter IV focuses on the role of clusters in economic development, analyzing the benefits and challenges of cluster collaboration. Chapter V brings to the fore a detailed analysis of the fruit-growing sector in Suceava county, highlighting the evolution and challenges specific to this sector. Chapter VI concludes the analysis, examining the potential and knowledge of clustering in the orchard sector in Suceava county, offering an insight into local attitudes and perceptions towards this concept.

Thus, chapter III, REGIONAL SYNERGIES: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO CLUSTERING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, addresses the complexity and diversity of clustering in the European Union, focusing on the comparative analysis of different European regions in terms of economic performance, innovation and social context. The aim is to identify synergies and regional particularities that influence the formation and effectiveness of clusters. The chapter highlights the vital role of clustering in boosting innovation, efficiency and economic resilience in the EU, recognizing the adaptability and collaboration fostered by clustering as key elements for sustainable economic success .

The study highlights that Scandinavian Europe stands out for its firm commitment to innovation, with a significant percentage of GDP dedicated to R&D activities. This reflects not only a priority for technological progress, but also a strategic alignment with the socio -economic objectives of the region.

The analysis highlights the economic plurality of the EU, from the dynamism of South-Eastern Europe to the stability of Scandinavian Europe. This aspect highlights the adaptability of European regions to global macroeconomic changes, taking into account the continent's historical and cultural complexity.

Labor market indicators, such as the unemployment rate and the percentage of NEET youth, illustrate the challenges facing different regions.

The study shows the adaptability and efficiency of European regions in the face of economic changes and their positioning in the global network of production and consumption. The dynamics of patent applications and R&D investments place the EU in a leading position in global innovation.

Finally, Chapter III highlights the vital role of clustering in boosting innovation, efficiency and economic resilience in the EU. Adaptability and collaboration, fostered by clustering , are recognized as key elements for sustainable economic success. In an ever-changing world, the EU has the potential to shape global progress, contingent on continued commitment to innovation, education and infrastructure.

In chapter IV, PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES IN BUSINESS CLUSTERS: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION, the importance of clusters within the European economy is observed, analyzing different perspectives and approaches to this concept. Thus, the essential role of clusters in promoting collaboration and stimulating economic growth is recognized, but also the challenges encountered within them, such as conflict management and the development of effective collaboration frameworks.

The chapter addresses diversity in cluster initiation, the impact of culture and cultural diversity and the need for education and awareness of the benefits of clustering.

It also highlights the untapped potential for collaboration between industry and and research institutions, highlighting that links between these fields can accelerate innovation and knowledge transfer.

The study highlights a broad consensus among respondents regarding the essential role of clusters in promoting collaboration and stimulating economic growth. There is significant variation in familiarity with the concept of clustering , highlighting the fact that there is fertile ground for educational and promotional initiatives.

The chapter highlights challenges encountered within clusters, such as managing conflicts and developing effective collaborative frameworks. It is suggested that a personalized approach can optimize collaboration.

The analysis also shows a wide range of views on which entities should initiate clusters, indicating that there is no single, universally applicable solution.

In summary, Chapter 4 highlights the importance of adaptability and flexibility in promoting and managing clusters, given the diversity of cultural, economic and development contexts. It also highlights the essential role of education and awareness in fully harnessing the potential of clusters, as well as the need to improve collaboration between sectors to drive innovation and economic growth.

Chapter V, titled ANALYSIS OF CLUSTERING POTENTIAL – CASE STUDY, focuses on the fruit-growing sector in Suceava County, analyzing the evolution of companies and economic performance. For the period 2018-2022 we analyzed economic and operational indicators such as economic performance, number of employees, assets, equity and other relevant indicators. The chapter addresses the sector's challenges, including climate change, labor shortages and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and presents a robust evolution of the sector, highlighting the need for continued strategic adaptation and innovation.

The analysis highlights the importance of establishing an orchard cluster. This could be a vital step for the sustainable development of the sector, offering advantages such as access to advanced technologies, wider markets and opportunities for innovation. The fruit sector in Suceava county demonstrates a robust evolution and a remarkable ability to adapt to environmental and market changes. Continued strategic adaptation and innovation is recommended to meet current challenges and exploit opportunities for growth and sustainable development in the future. The creation of an orchard cluster in the county can be essential for the sustainable development of the sector, offering advantages such as access to advanced technologies, wider markets and innovations in the field.

The last chapter of the thesis, entitled THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CLUSTERIZATION, investigates the perceptions and attitudes of fruit growers in Suceava regarding the adoption of the concept of clusterization . The level of interest and understanding towards clustering is analyzed , highlighting the need for additional information to better understand the concept and its benefits.

The results of the analysis reveal a male predominance among the respondents, with a significant representation of the female gender. It is noted that although there is a

basic level of knowledge of the concept of clustering , most respondents require additional information to better understand the concept and its benefits. Also, a significant percentage of respondents are very interested in participating in a cluster, but most want to know more about its benefits and implications before committing.

In terms of perceived benefits, access to new markets and customers, as well as opportunities for collaboration and exchange of experience, are considered the most important advantages. Most respondents are also willing to actively collaborate and share resources within a cluster. However, the survey also identifies significant challenges, such as difficulties in establishing effective collaboration, lack of funding or financial support, and fierce competition in the field.

The respondents consider the support of local and government authorities crucial and show a positive tendency towards the allocation of human and financial resources for the development of the cluster. Regarding the management structure, there is a preference for a collegial, democratic model. The study also highlights the differences in the perception of the benefits of clustering according to the age group of the respondents.

In conclusion, the results of the study indicate a significant potential for the development of clustering in the orchard sector in Suceava county. To ensure the success of this initiative, it is essential to pay attention to adequate information, financing and addressing the challenges perceived by fruit growers.

The paper concludes with a conclusions and recommendations chapter, where the main results of the study are synthesized and directions for future research and practical implementation of clusters, especially in the fruit sector, are provided. This chapters aims not only to sum up the accumulated knowledge, but also to propose concrete steps for their application in the real economic contex.