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Boosting Cluster and Mini-Cluster-based Programs in Korea

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This paper addresses the issues about Korean cluster policies focusing on Mini-cluster programs mainly operated by the KICOX. For more than a decade, Korean government has taken the top-down approach to clustering to enhance R&D activities and innovation, and thus to stimulate firm growth and regional development. In general, the top-down approach may have many beneficial aspects, including enhancement of innovation and productivity and improvement of employment opportunities. In earlier stage, however, it could also have some risk factors, in particular a weak entrepreneurial culture, difficulty in integrating SMEs, barriers to cross-sectional collaboration, and insufficient supply of innovation finance. To mitigate the problems associated with the clustering, both Korean government and the KICOX have been implementing diverse Mini-cluster programs. The Mini-cluster programs are various types of a small group alliance which usually composes of firms, universities, research institutes, the KICOX, and local government. Then, we will describe the role and performance of the Mini-cluster programs. After explaining typical Mini-cluster cases in Korea, we will discuss potential success of those programs.

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