Call for Expression of Interest to Host the Inaugural ECA Conference in 2025

The **European Clusters Alliance (ECA)** is delighted to announce the **Call for Expression of Interest** to host the **1st ECA Conference** in December 2025. This flagship event will mark the beginning of tradition, aimed at bringing together **national cluster associations, cluster members, policymakers, and industry stakeholders** to reflect on achievements, strengthen collaboration, and shape the future of Europe's cluster ecosystem.

The **first edition of the ECA Conference** will also be a special occasion to celebrate **ECA's 5th birthday**, creating both a professional milestone and a celebratory moment for the community. Taking place during the **festive season**, this event will embrace the **Christmas spirit of the host city**, offering incredible opportunities for **social networking** amidst the charm of **Christmas markets**.

Key Components of the Proposal

Why Host This Event?

- o **Showcase Your Organisation:** Highlight your leadership in innovation and collaboration within the European cluster community.
- o **Engage Stakeholders:** Demonstrate your contributions to cluster development and policy alignment.
- o **Shape the Programme:** Influence the themes, discussions, and overall direction of the event.

o **Strengthen Networks:** Build relationships with cluster leaders, policymakers, and international stakeholders.
o **Timing:** The conference is scheduled for the **1st or 2nd week of December 2025**, providing a festive atmosphere to complement the event.

What We're Looking For in a Hosting Partner

o **Eligibility:** Open to **ECA Members** and **Regional or National Authorities** working closely with national cluster actors.
o **Capacity:** Accessible venues for plenary sessions, breakout discussions, and networking activities.
o **Engagement:** A strong record of collaboration with local clusters, businesses, and authorities.
o **Innovation:** Highlighting local or regional initiatives supporting cluster development.
o **Sustainability:** Integration of eco-friendly practices. Host organisation or alliances may consider financial support from **sponsors and partnering organisations** to strengthen event sustainability.
o **Flexibility:** A willingness to collaborate with ECA on the event's structure and themes.

Indicative Participation Fees structure

While the primary objective of the conference is not to generate profit, a **small delegate fee** will contribute to the financial **sustainability of the event**, help cover costs and prevent no-shows and control food waste. The following fee categories can be considered:

Category	Details
ECA Members	Discounted rate for ECA member organisations.
Cluster Representatives	For representatives of clusters that are members of national cluster associations or networks.
Group Discount (3 Representatives)	Reduced rate for groups of three representatives from the same cluster organisation.
Other Participants	Standard rates for participants not part of the above categories.
Early Bird and Standard Fees	Differentiated rates to incentivise early registration.

Day	Time	Activity	Details
Day 1	10:00 – 12:00	**ECA General Assembly**	*Overview of achievements, budget, activities, new members, and strategic plans for 2026.* **Exclusive to ECA members only.**
	13:00 – 13:30	**Registration of all participants and Official Opening**	*Registration for the main conference begins, open to the wider public. Includes welcome remarks and keynote speeches by ECA leadership and officials.*
	13:30 – 15:00	**Plenary Session**	*Keynote presentations and panel discussions on cluster support, internationalisation, and member needs.*
	15:00 – 15:30	**Coffee Break**	*Networking opportunity for participants.*
	15:30 – 17:00	**Thematic Group Discussions (Parallel Sessions)**	*Focused discussions on challenges and opportunities in key themes.*
	19:00 – 21:00	**Networking Dinner**	*Social evening programme showcasing local culture and cuisine, hosted by the organising committee.*

Day	Time	Activity	Details
Day 2	09:30 – 11:00	*Interactive Sessions (Parallel Discussions)*	*Continuation of thematic group discussions or breakout sessions on core themes.*
	11:00 – 11:30	*Coffee Break*	*Morning networking opportunity to foster informal dialogue.*
	11:30 – 13:00	*Plenary Discussions*	*Reports from thematic groups and discussions on key findings.*
	13:00 – 14:30	*Business Lunch*	*Formal networking opportunity for all participants.*
	14:30 onwards	*Thematic Visits*	*Guided tours of local innovation hubs or flagship cluster projects, showcasing the host city's strengths and initiatives.*

Note: *This is an **indicative programme structure**, and the applicants are encouraged to propose creative and innovative elements in their application.*

Key Dates

- **Call Launch:** Now open.
- **Submit Proposals:** By **28 January 2025**.
- **Evaluation and Shortlisting:** February 2025.
- **Final Announcement of Host:** By **1 March 2025**.

How to Apply

Interested organisations are invited to submit proposals that include:

1. **Motivation:** Why your organisation is the ideal host.
2. **Ideas:** Suggestions for themes, discussions, and programme highlights.
3. **Social and Thematic Visits:** Proposed networking and social events and visits to local innovation ecosystems.
4. **Fee Structure and Accommodation Options:** Details on delegate rates and preferred accommodations.

Questions are welcome and can be directed to **Teodora Jilkova** at **tjilkova@veritascluster.com**. Proposals must also be sent to the same contact by **28 January 2025**.

Next Steps

1. **Submission Deadline:** Submit proposals by **28 January 2025**.
2. **Evaluation and Shortlisting:** Proposals will be reviewed in February 2025 based on:
    - Alignment with the outlined requirements and objectives.
    - Venue and accommodation capacity.
    - Creativity in programme suggestions and innovative ideas.
    - Commitment to collaboration and sustainability.
3. **Final Announcement:** The hosting organisation will be announced by **1 March 2025**.

Be part of shaping the **ECA Conference 2025** into a transformative and unique experience for Europe's cluster community. Let's celebrate **ECA's 5th anniversary** while establishing this conference as a cornerstone of European cluster collaboration and innovation.