

The President's Foreword

Dear all,

I hope you all could benefit from the summer break to relax and to charge new forces for the autumn period.

On 10 September, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen addressed her [1st State of the Union speech](#) of the 2024-2028 period to the European Parliament. She addressed many topics including clean tech, energy, skills, cost of living, or circular economy. On part of her speech directly concerned cars: Mrs von der Leyen stated that she believes Europe should have its own E-car, and she precises ***"E for Environmental, for Economic, and for European: Built here in Europe, with European supply chains"***. This last request completely aligns with what we defend in our daily work, but also with what our network already stipulated in 2020 in Thesis #9 'The automotive industry landscape must better resist to global crises' of our document ['Transform pandemic into opportunity. Towards a joint EACN vision for the European Automotive Industry'](#). Seems that EACN was a little ahead five years ago.

We are also in a challenging time with the preparation of the new European Multiannual Financial Framework for the 2028-2034 period, with many upcoming calls for proposals after the summer break, but also with many activities, events and (new) projects realised by EACN members.

We are also happy to see our network growing. With the Food Technologies Digitalization Lithuania (FTD LT) cluster we warmly welcome our first associated member. The cluster will be presented in the next issue of our newsletter. The status of associated member has been introduced to allow clusters cooperating with EACN that are only indirectly contributing to automotive and mobility, e.g., materials, packaging, IT, machine tools, logistics,

Happy reading

Yours

Bruno Grandjean, President

Insight EACN

Cluster Excellence Meetings

In June, we started a series of meetings for Cluster Managers to share best practices on given topics. The first meetings focused on

- ▲ Commercial services (June): Tanja Mohorič, ACS GIZ Slovenia, and David Romeral, CAAR
- ▲ EU Projects (July): Bruno Amaro, Mobinov, and Patrick Dufour, Transformative

- ▲ Events (co-)organised by members (September): Igor Vijatov, AC Serbia, Paul Butler, NEAA, and Veronika Erős, Zone Cluster.

Each session brought together about 15 cluster managers who discovered how others are doing and learned from their advice. A great thanks to the speakers. The **next Cluster Excellence Meeting is scheduled for the 21 October 2025 at 13h00 – 14h30** and will address the topic 'National cluster collaboration: Actions and benefits for and synergies with EACN'.

EU Project section on EACN Website has been enhanced

The EACN website aims at highlighting activities of EACN members as well as sharing information and best practices / documents. EACN members are actively involved in multiple European co-funded projects. The updated '[Project](#)' website section now show many running and closed projects with their key information and an access to the project websites.

Upcoming events by EACN members

Clusters Meet Regions Regensburg (Germany) | 26-27 November 2025



The next Clusters meet Regions event with EACN participation will take place in Regensburg (Germany) on 26-27 November. The event will focus on **cross-innovation**: new and effective ways of working together to make **regional innovation ecosystems** sustainable, resilient and competitive. [Further information, draft agenda and registration.](#)

REMINDER: Automotive Supplier's Day 2025 | 08.10.2025 | Esslingen (Germany)

e-mobil BW and the Cluster ESW are organising again the [Automotive Suppliers' Day Baden-Württemberg](#) on 8 October 2025. This year's focus lies on the transformation towards **software-defined manufacturing and vehicles**, as well as **highly developed software-driven platforms**. Participation is free of charge, the full [programme can be found here](#).

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Members' lounge

Linking Vocational Education with Business – an Initiative of East Automotive Alliance

In recent weeks, our region, the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, has hosted several events focused on systematically training the next generation of professionals for industry, including the automotive sector. East Automotive Alliance (EAA) had the opportunity to actively participate in the work of the Regional Coordination Team in Rzeszów during its 6th meeting. The Regional Coordination Team is an advisory body at the voivodeship level, tasked with better aligning education with labour market needs and supporting lifelong learning.

Together with the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, we organized the Automotive Smart Specialization Panel titled "The Role and Importance of Vocational Education in the Regional Innovation System", held in the picturesque setting of the historic castle and palace complex in Baranów Sandomierski. Another key event was the seminar "Innovations in Vocational Education – Good Practices, Tools, and Support", hosted at the Technical School Complex in Mielec. During these meetings, participants emphasized that one of the main challenges facing the automotive sector is the weak link between vocational education and business needs. Companies increasingly report shortages of skilled workers, while schools struggle to adapt curricula to changing industry standards, resulting in graduates whose skills do not always meet market requirements.



Participants at the Vocational Education Event

East Automotive Alliance aims to bridge this gap by connecting schools, universities, training institutions, development agencies, and companies into a collaborative platform. This allows education and business to jointly design programs, organize internships, and prepare a workforce ready for the challenges of modern mobility.

These events made it clear that without stronger partnerships between education and business, the

region faces a growing mismatch between skills supply and industry demand. Through its cooperation within the EACN, EAA shares experiences, promotes good practices, and implements joint projects that support local ecosystems and enhance the competitiveness of the European automotive sector.

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EACN Member SA&AM re-certified with the ESSCA Gold label for Cluster Excellence



Cluster Silesia Automotive & Advanced Manufacturing (SA&AM) successfully passed the re-certification audit carried out by the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis and maintains the Cluster Management Excellence Label GOLD until 2028. SA&AM now holds the Gold label since 2023. Congratulations to the cluster management, to partners, to cluster members.

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NEAA appointed as employer representative body for the new North-East local skills improvement plan (NELSIP)

Covering the whole of the North-East Combined Authority region, including the North of Tyne, the integrated NELSIP will ensure local skills provision is better aligned with employer needs - helping to secure the talent pipeline required to drive future economic growth across the region. The new NELSIP will reflect current strengths and emerging opportunities across the strategically important sectors such as, e.g., Advanced Manufacturing; Defence, Offshore Wind & Energy Transition; Tech, Digital & AI; Construction; and SMEs - all of which are vital employers and growth drivers across the North East.

NEAA has been appointed as employer representative body for the new North-East local skills improvement plan (NELSIP). This milestone builds on the NEAA's successful leadership in delivering the previous NELSIP across County Durham, Sunderland, Gateshead, and South Tyneside, which supported a combined workforce of over 500,000 people.

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Strategic allies: Chinese investment as a lever for reindustrialization in Catalonia

CIAC has long defended that Catalonia must strengthen its capacity to attract investment and its role within global value chains.

In 2024, Chinese [OEM Chery](#) and Spanish Ebro-EV Motors, agreed on the production of a new brand under the name of Ebro in the former Nissan plant and its transformation into Chery's first production centre in Europe. This represents an investment of up to 500 million euros, 1,250 initial jobs, and an estimated production of 150,000 vehicles annually by 2029. In addition, Chery begun setting up a new 2,000 m² R&D centre in Cornellà de Llobregat, focused on designing vehicles adapted to the European market. This centre generates skilled employment and creates synergies with universities, technology centres, and talent hubs that enrich CIAC's ecosystem.

Although the ideal scenario would be to have decision-making centres located in Catalonia, today's European industrial reality requires abandoning unrealistic models and adopting new strategies of international collaboration. Read the full discourse from CIAC President Sergio Alcaraz [here](#).

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Cranes, Robots, & Humans Working Together: A Factory Demonstration Marks a New Era

At Konecranes' factory, cranes, AGVs and people showed how future factories will run with machines and humans collaborating safely and efficiently. The demo, carried out with Navitec Systems and VTT, highlighted how automation and human work can seamlessly blend to boost safety, productivity, and efficiency. As part of the broader Mixed Fleet project, which also involves other partners such as Atostek, Exertus, Mitsubishi Logisnext Europe, Tampere University, FIMA (Forum for Intelligent Machines ry), and the DIMECC-led VAMOS ecosystem for Autonomous Mobility and Smart Spaces, this demo offered a glimpse into the factories of the future. [Read more](#).

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Cluster news from Polish Automotive Group

PGM and APRA Europe enter mutual membership to strengthen remanufacturing in the CEE aftermarket

The Polish Automotive Group (PGM) has joined **APRA Europe**, while APRA has become a member of **PGM**. This two-way partnership reflects a clear industry shift: with a growing number of PGM members active in the **aftermarket** and **remanufacturing**, the cluster is committing to scale circular-economy practices that reduce emissions and material use—fully aligned with the EU's Green Deal priorities.



Through this collaboration, PGM companies gain access to APRA's European community, know-how and working groups (technology, legislation, market development), as well as opportunities to participate in **Horizon Europe** and other joint initiatives. In parallel, APRA's presence inside PGM will amplify the voice of Polish remanufacturers and accelerate knowledge transfer across the CEE region. **Why it matters:** Remanufacturing—using an already-produced component as the raw material—offers a mature, industrial path to lower the carbon footprint of vehicle production and maintenance while strengthening supply-chain resilience.

PGM launches "AutomotiveGo" project with PARP grant

The Polish Automotive Group (PGM) has secured EU co-funding under the national programme European Funds for a Modern Economy (FENG) to implement the project **"AutomotiveGo – Development of Innovative Services and Internationalisation of the Cluster."** The grant was awarded by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP). Running from March 2025 to December 2026, the project will strengthen PGM's capacity as cluster coordinator and deliver **four new or significantly enhanced services** for its ~100 Polish member companies:

- ▲ **New R&D infrastructure and services:** Including a flammability testing chamber, a salt spray chamber, and 3D measurement equipment to support innovation, certification, and product validation.
- ▲ **PGM HR Accelerator Academy:** A modular training programme for the automotive sector, stimulating innovation culture and equipping SMEs with skills in digitalisation, Industry 4.0, and circular economy.
- ▲ **Internationalisation support:** Collective participation in key trade fairs (e.g. Automechanika Frankfurt,

Motortec Madrid, Autopromotec Bologna), B2B matchmaking, and integration into European supply chains.

- ▲ **Capacity building:** Training of PGM staff in project management, innovation strategy, and technology transfer to raise the cluster's service level and international cooperation.

The total cost of the project is €1,031,315.32, with eligible expenditures amounting to €907,586.81. PGM has been awarded €538,570.56 in EU co-funding from PARP, with the remaining costs covered by member contributions. Expected outcomes include a 20% increase in R&D projects among member companies, the involvement of start-ups, and the establishment of new international partnerships – including in African markets. The project will also prepare PGM for the European Cluster Excellence Label (SILVER) certification, further confirming the cluster's management quality.

Polish Automotive Group launches major trade fair offensive

2025 is a very active year for the Polish Automotive Group (PGM) in terms of international trade fairs. The cluster has coordinated collective stands at a wide range of events, including:

- ▲ Motortec Madrid (Spain), 23–26 April
7 companies on 78 m²
- ▲ Automotive CEE Day, Opole (Poland), 8–9 May
10 companies on 24 m²
- ▲ Autopromotec Bologna (Italy), 21–24 May
5 companies on 60 m²
- ▲ Automechanika Birmingham (UK), 3–6 June
6 companies on 54 m²
- ▲ Automechanika Istanbul (Turkey), 12–15 June
4 companies on 30 m²
- ▲ MSPO Kielce (Poland), 2–5 September
13 companies on 140 m²
- ▲ TRAKO Gdańsk (Poland), 23–26 September
4 companies on 28 m²
- ▲ Equip Auto Paris (France), 14–18 October
- ▲ Solutrans Lyon (France), 18–22 November
- ▲ Automässan Göteborg (Sweden), 14–17 January 2026

What makes this effort remarkable is that none of these activities are supported by public funding. All costs are jointly covered by participating members. Out of PGM's ~100 member companies, more than 30 have already joined at least one of these events, some of them even several.

Members highlight the benefits of exhibiting together: reduced organisational effort, higher visibility through larger booths, peer-to-peer support (including cross-recommendations to clients), and stronger intra-cluster relations.



PGM booth and participants at the International Defence Industry Exhibition MSPO Kielce (Poland)

It is also noteworthy that **all PGM members are Polish-capital companies, mostly family-owned**, highly sales-oriented and eager to expand their client base. Importantly, they do not compete with each other directly – even when producing similar products or using similar technologies, they typically serve different markets and customer groups.

PGM to host workshop on negotiating with Chinese partners in the automotive sector

Later this autumn, the Polish Automotive Group (PGM) will organise a highly interactive training session for its member companies on **“How to deal with Chinese partners in the automotive sector?”** The event will combine **training with a moderated internal strategy meeting**, led by an experienced expert on China and international negotiations. The programme will consist of two parts:

- **Part I – Cultural foundations:** how hierarchy, harmony, “face,” etiquette, and indirect communication shape business behaviour in China.
- **Part II – Negotiation practice & brainstorming:** addressing real-life challenges faced by PGM members, such as information asymmetry, delayed payments, or unclear intentions. Participants will jointly explore practical techniques to protect know-how, ask the right questions, interpret signals correctly, and build stronger negotiation positions.

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Project corner

Bridging the Gap | Voltage Webinar

The Voltage consortium, including EACN members Cluster Electric Mobility South-West and Mobinov, organises a **free webinar “Bridging the Gap” on 11 November 2025 (10:00–11:30 CET) to explore how industry and vocational education co-create future learning environments.**

This webinar explores how companies and vocational education institutions can co-create innovative learning environments that respond to the needs of Generation Z and Alpha. Best practices from industry and education will highlight how future-proof training formats are designed and implemented in real-world contexts.

Don't miss this chance to gain insights into shaping future-proof vocational training for Generations Z and Alpha. [Further information.](#)

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SCAIRA - Interreg SUDOE Launches Final Open Call for Innovative and Disruptive Ideas

The SCAIRA - Interreg SUDOE project launched its third and final open call on 10 September 2025, aimed at innovative and disruptive ideas that address the challenges set by Horse Aveiro, Airbus Atlantic, and Renault Group Spain. Over the programme of six months, participants will have access to mentoring, workshops, European networking, and specialized support in legal, technical, and market areas. The program also offers B2B/B2F meetings and public-private funding opportunities. [Find more here.](#)

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CAAR at the forefront of European automotive resilience with ‘Bridge&Shift’ project

The European project Bridge&Shift has officially launched, with the Automotive and Mobility Cluster of Aragon (CAAR) joining as a key partner. A delegation from CAAR's technical team will soon travel to Brussels to attend the project's first in-person meeting, marking the beginning of a collaborative effort to support automotive regions and strengthen their resilience in the face of industry transformation.

Running from September 2025 to August 2027, Bridge&Shift brings together seven partners from the

Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, Austria, Poland, and Spain, all home to major automotive manufacturing hubs. Among the project partners are EACN members autoklastr (CZ) and Transformative Dialog Wirtschaftsraum Heilbronn (DE).

The initiative aims to foster knowledge exchange and cooperation between advanced regions and less developed areas. Through joint efforts, the project will focus on building skills, analysing market trends, and crafting strategies to enhance regional strengths. Key goals include expanding service portfolios, improving access to EU funding, and encouraging investment in underdeveloped regions. The outcomes of Bridge&Shift will be disseminated through workshops and reports, offering a blueprint for other regions to drive innovation and sustainability in the automotive sector.

This project comes at a pivotal moment for the industry, which is undergoing a profound shift from combustion engines to electric vehicles. This transition is dramatically reducing the number of components — and suppliers — while production increasingly moves to Asia and North Africa. Bridge&Shift represents a proactive response to these challenges, ensuring that European automotive regions remain competitive, innovative, and inclusive.

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Other information

2025 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen

In her State of the Union speech on 10 September 2025, **European Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen** shared the key priorities and flagship projects for the year to come, building on the progress the EU has made in recent years. She **addressed multiple topics, including Clean tech, jobs and re-/up-skilling, or affordable living (including cars).** Here are some extracts of her speech:

*“And we must also take the same approach [note: cooperation with the private sector] on clean tech – from steel to batteries. Europe's clean tech sector must stay in Europe – and we have to take urgent action. With the **Clean Industrial Deal**, we have identified the main hurdles that slow down these sectors. [...] This is why lead markets must be at the heart of our action. [...] Where both, supply and demand go up, and prices go down. On the supply side, we will launch a **Battery Booster package**. This will put EUR 1.8 billion up for equity to boost production in Europe. **Batteries are a key enabler of other clean tech – especially electric vehicles.**”*

[...]

When we talk about competitiveness **we talk about jobs**. We are talking about people and their livelihoods. So the bottom line is that workers must be empowered if we are to have a competitive economy. This is why we will propose a Quality Jobs Act. To ensure that modern employment keeps pace with the modern economy.

[...]

We will also put forward a series of packages on **affordability and the cost of living**. Allow me to give you four (housing, energy, cars, food) telling examples. [...] **The third example I would like to highlight is cars**: It is a pillar of our economy and industry. A European pride. Millions of jobs depend on it.

Earlier this year, we gave the sector more flexibility to reach their 2025 targets. This is working. And with respect for technology neutrality, we are now preparing the 2035 review. And millions of Europeans want to buy affordable European cars. So we should also invest in small, affordable vehicles. Both for the European market, but also to meet the surge in global demand. This is why we will propose to work with industry on a new **Small Affordable Cars initiative**. I believe Europe should have its own E-car.

- ⚡ E for **environmental** – clean, efficient and lightweight.
- ⚡ E for **economical** – affordable for people.
- ⚡ E for **European** – built here in Europe, with European supply chains.

Because we cannot let China and others conquer this market. No matter what, the future is electric. And Europe will be part of it. **The future of cars – and the cars of the future – must be made in Europe.**

Access the full speech [here](#).

New Horizon Europe Transport and Mobility calls for proposals are open | Deadline 20 January 2026

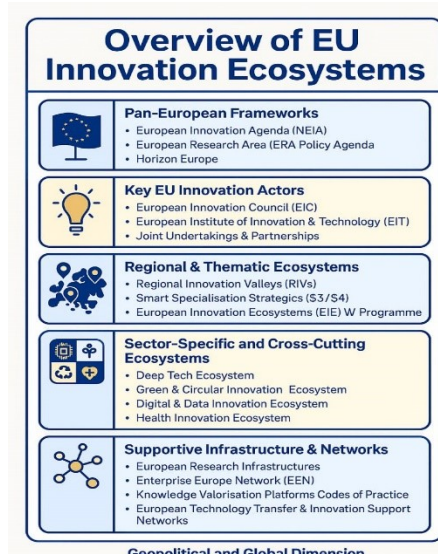
A total of EUR 188 million in EU funding is available under call [HORIZON-CL5-2026-01](#) that covers 3 Destinations and 16 topics:

- ⚡ Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition ([HORIZON-CL5-2026-01-D2](#))
- ⚡ Clean and competitive solutions for all transport modes ([HORIZON-CL5-2026-01-D5](#))
- ⚡ Safe, Resilient Transport and Smart Mobility services for passengers and good ([HORIZON-CL5-2026-01-D6](#))

The calls cover 16 topics based on current EU transport and mobility priorities. [Further information](#).

EU Innovation Ecosystems – a Theoretical and Practical View

Based on theories such as Business ecosystems (Moore, 1993), highlighting co-evolution and interdependence among firms, triple Helix models (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff), stressing collaboration between universities, industry, and government, and quadruple & Quintuple Helix extensions (Carayannis & Campbell), adding civil society and the environment as innovation drivers, the EU has developed a multi-layered architecture of ecosystems including frameworks, actors, regional ecosystems, sectoral ecosystems, support infrastructures & networks, and global cooperation.



Source: [Claire Fritz's post on LinkedIn](#)

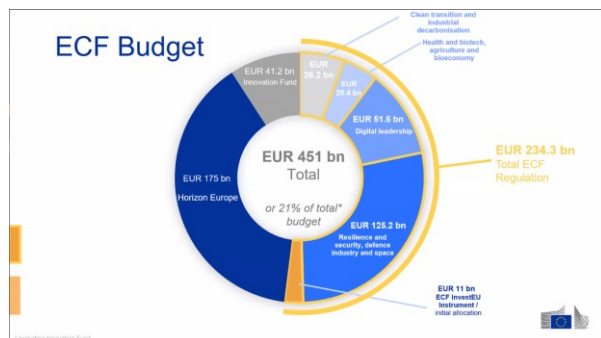
European Funding and Financing Initiatives Supporting the Green Transition

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) has published a new presentation on European Union (EU) funding and financing options to support the green transition. In the guide, three experienced cluster managers offer their practical insights on accessing funding, managing projects efficiently, and fostering strategic collaborations. [Download the guide](#).

Presentation of the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)

The EU ClusterTalks on 25 September have been the opportunity to discover and discuss the European Competitiveness Fund that aims at increasing funding flexibility in case of unexpected needs, at better linking European funds to other public sources (national, regional), at closing the funding and investment gap to scale-up, and to introduce common rules across different programmes. And with 175 bn€, the new

Horizon Europe programme represents the biggest share of the ECF budget.



Source: EU Clusters Talk, 25 September 2025

The final MFF and ECF budgets are now under negotiation between European Commission, European Parliament and Member States.

The recording and the presentation held at EU Cluster Talks can be found [here](#).

European survey on 'Net Zero Acceleration Valleys' - Deadline: 30 September

EU runs a survey in support of a study that focuses on regulatory, financial, administrative, and strategic enablers and barriers affecting industrial net-zero and decarbonisation clusters. This effort aligns with the objectives of the [Net Zero Industry Act](#) (NZIA). [Access the survey](#).

European public consultation on 'European Innovation Act' – Deadline: 3 October 2025

With the [European Innovation Act](#), the European Commission aims at creating an innovation-friendly environment that supports innovative companies to grow in the EU. Access the public consultation [here](#).

The European Clusters Alliance to launch its 1st ECA Conference

The 1st edition of the ECA Conference will take place on **10–11 December 2025** in **Madrid**. The aim is to bring together high-level policy-makers from the European Commission, the European Parliament, national and regional cluster agencies, cluster organisations and project consortia from across Europe to focus on improving cluster services and policy frameworks in alignment with the new European priorities — notably the new **MMF programme** and the **Competitiveness Fund**. The Conference will be the main networking event for the European cluster community in 2025, offering plenaries, co-creation labs, thematic visits and consortium meetings. Participants will actively discuss and co-design proposals for the future cluster service landscape and help shape a new set of public support

mechanisms to be proposed to public authorities across Europe. Full programme and registration details will be published soon on the [ECA website](#).

Agenda

 30 Sept. – 02 Oct. 2025 | Vilnius (Lithuania)
UrbanMobility Days 2025 | organised by the European Commission | [Further information and registration](#)

 03 - 04 October 2025 | Talence (France)
Hack2BRIDGE Aerospace & Defense Hackathon | organised by the BRIDGESMES project consortium | [Further information and application](#)

 06 - 07 October 2025 | Graz (Austria)
Hack2BRIDGE Electronics Hackathon | organised by the BRIDGESMES project consortium | [Further information and application](#)

 08 October 2025 | Esslingen (Germany)
Automotive Supplier's Day 2025 | organised by e-mobil and Cluster Electric Mobility South-West | [Further information and registration](#)

 14-10 October 2025 | Dublin (Ireland)
TCI Global Conference | organised by TCI Network | [Further information and registration](#)

 23-24 October 2025 | Bruneck (Italy)
Automotive Transformation Conference | organised by the Drive2Transformation consortium | [Further information](#)

 26-27 November 2025 | Regensburg (Germany)
Clusters Meet Regions Regensburg | organised by ECCP and Cluster Logistics & Mobility | [Further information](#)

 04 December 2025 | Belfort (France)
Forum Hydrogen Business For Climate: Safe & Scale - Secure and accelerate | co-organised by Pôle Véhicule du Futur | [Further information and registration](#)

 10-11 December 2025 | Madrid (Spain)
ECA Conference 2025 | organised by the European Cluster Alliance | [Further information](#)

Legal notice

Links preceded by the  are also available on the EACN website with a limited access to employees from EACN clusters and their members.

This is the internal newsletter of EACN. Input comes from the Executive Board members, the Secretary General as well as from EACN cluster members.

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