

The President's Foreword

Dear all,

I hope you could all benefit from some restful days to close a challenging and exciting year 2025. And we are now already looking ahead to a new challenging year, as the situation of the European automotive industry, but also for clusters in general, did not improve. From EACN Side, we'll do our best to support you in your daily tasks and to excel in your services.

January takes also place our annual General Assembly. This year again, it was a privileged moment to look back on a year full of activities and events. More details can be found below.

Mid-December, the European Commission published its Automotive Package 'Taking action for a clean and competitive automotive sector'. This package includes five key proposals:

- ▲ Revision of the CO2 standards for cars, vans, and heavy-duty vehicles,
- ▲ greening corporate fleets,
- ▲ a Battery booster strategy,
- ▲ an automotive omnibus, and
- ▲ revised car labelling rules.

This package will for sure accompany our work during this new year, and we start discussing its impacts during our February EACN Coffee Break.

Yours

Bruno Grandjean, President

Insight EACN

Participation in the first ECA Cluster Conference

The 1st ECA Cluster Conference in Madrid gathered about 150 persons from cluster organisations and the European Commission to discuss advancements and to prepare clusters expectations for the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034.



Łukasz Górecki (SA&AM), Thomas Röhr (EACN), Josep Nadal and Elina Melik-Stapanyan (CIAC), and Patricia Solá (CEAGA)

EACN Secretary General Thomas Röhr had been invited to participate in a round table discussion on the advancement of industrial pathways. This was a good opportunity to highlight the automotive sector's challenges, with a focus on SMEs. Especially Tier-2 and lower suffer from customers whose only interest lays in minimising costs through outsourcing manufacturing and purchasing to low-cost-countries. By this, OEMs and Tier-1 contribute to weakening the European automotive ecosystem.



Thomas Röhr, EACN Secretary General, during the round table on industrial pathways

Łukasz Górecki, Cluster Manager of SA&AM, addressed concerns from Polish clusters about the fact that the '[General Block Exemption Regulation](#)' (Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014) limits operation/financial support to innovation clusters to 10 years (paragraph (50)). Many clusters arrive at the end of this 10-years delay and might lose their public support, indispensable to operate their activities of general interest.



Łukasz Górecki (SA&AM), Dunja Podlesnik and Tanja Mohorič (GIZ ACS), Thomas Röhr (EACN) and Patricia Solá (CEAGA)

Prior to the conference, EACN could also share its expectations to contribute to the discussions about the next Multiannual Financial Framework in form of a joint [EACN Input Paper](#) to the position papers, that ECA will present to the European Commission.

It was also a pleasure to meet colleagues and friends from SA&AM, GIZ ACS, CIAC, and CEAGA.

EACN General Assembly & Activity Report

EACN hold its 2026 General Assembly on 20 January 2026. Cluster managers and staff met to review what had happened in the past year through the report of the president that resumed the [2025 EACN Activity Report – Stronger through collaboration](#).

After the General Assembly, participants discovered and discussed about “Challenges for regional/national automotive ecosystems” through presentations from Bartosz Mielecki, Polish Automotive Group, Tanja Mohorič, GIZ AC Slovenia, Tuulia Haveri, VAMOS Ecosystem/FI, and Josep Nadal, CIAC/ES.

2026 Challenges for the regional/national automotive ecosystems

▲ Our speakers



Tanja Mohorič
GIZ ACS
Slovenia



Bartosz Mielecki
Polish Automotive Group
Poland



Tuulia Haveri
VAMOS Ecosystem
Finland



Josep Nadal
CIAC
Spain

EACN General Assembly 2026
20 January 2026

Round table speakers after the 2026 EACN General Assembly

Speakers addressed different and similar topics, such as skilled employees, high energy costs, OEM preferences for low-cost countries, uncertainties about the market evolution, but also funding difficulties for cluster work. The overall outcome was that despite the inhomogeneity of clusters and ecosystems, challenges and difficulties are very similar across Europe.

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Upcoming events from EACN Members

CIAC organises the 11th edition of the Innovation Corner, 5 May 2026

CIAC opens the call for the 11th edition of the Innovation Corner, a space where the most disruptive projects meet the industry that is transforming the mobility of the future. 2026r is also the **10th anniversary of Advanced Factories**. A decade being the essential meeting point for advanced industry... and the perfect setting to give visibility to the solutions that will mark the next leap in the sector.



Companies, start-ups, technology centres, and universities selected by the jury will have the opportunity to make a 3-minute presentation before professionals, decision makers, press and leaders who define the future of the automotive industry. The Innovation Corner will take place on 5 May 2026 at the Barcelona Fair. [Further information and registration](#).

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North East Automotive Expo 2026, 24 September 2026

North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA) organises on 24 September its annual North East Automotive Expo 2026 in Beacon of Light, Sunderland, North East England. The Expo brings together companies across the supply chain, including leading OEMs, tiered suppliers, technology innovators, and industry stakeholders to showcase cutting-edge developments, foster collaboration, and explore opportunities for growth in the automotive supply chain.



NEAA invites companies and other stakeholders from EACN clusters to strengthen international partnerships and drive forward innovation across Europe's automotive ecosystem. Benefits: >100 exhibitors, networking & B2B meetings, discovering of latest technologies and sustainable solutions, exploration of trade opportunities. [Highlights from 2025](#).

We are happy to discuss offering a specific exhibitor area to host companies/countries interested in attending. If of interest, please reach out to discuss this further. [Further information](#).

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Members' lounge

Gold Excellence Label for CAAR

Congratulations to the Aragon Automotive Cluster CAAR that successfully renewed the ESCA Gold label, recognising the excellent cluster management quality. During the audit process in December, CAAR presented three success stories:

- ▲ The Mobility and Industry Suppliers Meetings (MISM), which will hold its 9th edition on 21 May 2026
- ▲ Mobility Talent (MOBIT), an experiential event aimed at school pupils, vocational training students and engineering undergraduates; and
- ▲ the attraction of public funding for member companies in sustainable mobility calls at both regional and national levels.



[Further information \(in Spanish\)](#)

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ZONE Cluster is scaling up

ZONE Cluster is for new challenges, major steps forward, shifts in scale, and above all, for the continued expansion of our collaborations, services, and cluster membership.

One of its key projects for 2026 is the continuation of the Hungarian EDIH (European Digital Innovation Hubs) initiative, the **“Data-EDIH 2.0: Data-Driven Innovation for SMEs and the Public Sector”**. The project was recognised as a high-quality project proposal in a highly competitive evaluation process and contributes to the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) objectives, following evaluation by an international panel of independent experts. The nine-member consortium is led by the ZONE Cluster. The Hungarian EDIH aims at making a significant contribution to the digital transformation of SMEs and public sector organisations, with a particular focus on automotive companies. The three-year project focuses on the real-life business adoption and integration of data-driven and artificial intelligence-based technologies into business processes, products, and services. A flagship service of the ZONE Cluster is the “test before invest” offering.

AI Factories and new partnerships

Our activities are built on a broad and thriving international network of corporate and academic partnerships, which enables us to participate in numerous international consortia and initiatives. In 2025 alone, we submitted, managed, or successfully secured projects together with 52 (!) international partners, all aimed at supporting the transformation of the mobility and automotive sector, strengthening its digitalisation and innovation capabilities, and advancing human resources transformation.

The three-year Data-EDIH 2.0 project also aims to support Hungarian market players in connecting to European AI Factory ecosystems. We believe in the power of European cooperation and actively seek opportunities and European partners to enable our cluster and the companies we support to connect to these specialized hubs that integrate supercomputing capacity, data, and expertise to support the development of artificial intelligence for startups, SMEs, universities, and public institutions across Europe.

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CEAGA promotes new collaborative projects to increase innovation in the sector

Collaborative innovation has become a key lever for industrial transformation, and in this context CEAGA is strengthening its role as a promoter of high-impact strategic projects. Recently, the Spanish Ministry of Industry, within the call for Innovative Business Groups (AEI), selected three projects involving CEAGA. All three have been recognised as “Insignia Projects”, a category of excellence in which only nine initiatives have been approved across Spain:

- ▲ **BATeCHAIN**: Battery supply chain: Creation of a Spanish ecosystem for the manufacturing of more efficient and sustainable batteries, integrating innovation in materials, processes and supply chain digitization. The Galician SME LK Mobility is participating.
- ▲ **TECHDUAL**: Technological diversification and dual capabilities: Development of an unmanned ground vehicle (UGV) integrating clean propulsion, enhanced security and advanced digital management. The Galician companies Optare Solutions and TSE are participating.
- ▲ **CIRCULINK**: Boosting the circular economy: An intelligent digital platform designed to facilitate the transition towards a territorial circular economy through the use of AI.

Alongside these “Insignia Projects”, CEAGA is reinforcing its leadership in collaborative innovation within the framework of the R&D&I project call, promoting and participating in several strategic initiatives.

On the one hand, CEAGA is leading the INTEGRA-AI project, focused on the design of an intelligent and predictive integrated planning system. The project involves CEAGA, CAAR, Kaizen Institute, Grupo Tecnogap Atlántico and Maier Ferroplast.

In addition, the Cluster is participating in three other initiatives, in which it will play a key role in disseminating results, contributing to knowledge transfer and project visibility:

- ▲ **REACT-IME**, led by Functional Print, with the participation of the Galician company Valver.
- ▲ **ADITECH**, led by Aragon Automotive and Mobility Cluster (CAAR)
- ▲ **BIOMOTIVE**, led by Aragon Automotive and Mobility Cluster (CAAR)

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4th Polish Automotive Clusters Forum (FPKM)

At the beginning of December 2025, the 4th Polish Automotive Clusters Forum (FPKM) took place in Gliwice, serving as an important platform for integration and exchange of experience within the Polish automotive cluster community. All four automotive clusters participated in the event: the host Silesia Automotive & Advanced Manufacturing (SA&AM), the Polish Automotive Group (PGM), the Lower Silesian Automotive Cluster (DKM), and the East Automotive Alliance (WSM).



FPKM Participants in front of SA&AM Headquarter

On the first day, participants took part in a study visit to EMT Systems, a modern training centre specializing in automation, robotics, and mechatronics. The visit included presentations of the training infrastructure,

state-of-the-art training stations, and a practical approach to developing engineering competencies. The second day of the Forum focused on substantive workshops held at the SA&AM headquarters. Good practices, ongoing initiatives, inter-cluster cooperation, and European projects were presented. Discussions covered key topics such as industry competency needs, joint FPKM projects, and the internationalization of activities.

Once again, the Forum confirmed the importance of cooperation within Poland’s automotive sector, with Gliwice becoming a two-day hub for integration, knowledge exchange, and shaping a shared vision for the future of the industry. Special thanks were extended to the SA&AM team for the professional organization of the event.

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Pôle Véhicule du Futur joined the Automotive Regions Alliance (ARA)

Pôle Véhicule du Futur adheres the Automotive Regions Alliance and rejoins CAAR and e-Mobil bw as partner.

The Automotive Regions Alliance is a political network of regions and cluster organisations committed to the successful transition of the European automotive and supply industry. ARA engages for a just, fair and successful transition in Europe’s automotive regions!

EACN and ARA are currently exploring an opportunity to present ARA to EACN members.

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VAMOS Ecosystem Activities: Driving Collaboration and Innovation into 2026

In December, the VAMOS ecosystem hosted an impactful workshop day focusing on mobility and innovation, where participants gained valuable insights from Miguel Pinto, President of Mobinov — the Portuguese Automotive and Mobility Cluster. Pinto shared perspectives on how Mobinov is strengthening cooperation, competitiveness, and technological leadership in the automotive and mobility sector, especially in response to digital and green transitions that are reshaping the industry. His contributions highlighted the importance of dynamic cluster ecosystems in fostering knowledge exchange and sustainable growth across borders.

Shortly after, the entire VAMOS team took part in one of the world’s most influential technology gatherings —

CES 2026 in Las Vegas — alongside partners from ITS Finland, ITL Estonian, and the Tampere Automotive Cluster. CES 2026 once again brought together global innovation leaders showcasing practical technology solutions spanning artificial intelligence, robotics, smart mobility, digital health, and energy efficiency. The event highlighted how rapidly emerging technologies are moving from concept to real-world application, with AI and mobility innovations strongly featured across industries.

The joint VAMOS–ITS Finland–ITL Estonia–Tampere Automotive Cluster presence at CES 2026 demonstrated seamless collaboration between Nordic and Baltic mobility innovators. By combining expertise, networks, and shared ambition, the consortium showcased the value of cross-cluster partnerships in connecting regional ecosystems to global trends — from smart vehicles and sustainable transport to AI-enabled mobility services. The partners returned with fresh inspiration and new connections, reinforcing how joint international visibility and cooperation continue to be powerful drivers for future-focused growth.

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Project corner

RESIST II Eurocluster Expression of Interest Webinar on 3 February at 12h00 CET



The Expression of Interest is open to SMEs from Europe and associated countries operating in the Mobility, Transport and Automotive (MTA) ecosystem. Through this call, RESIST will select up to 30 SMEs to take part in a dedicated support programme designed to prepare them for future innovation opportunities. Selected SMEs will receive support through one-to-one mentoring sessions, including a Resilience Check, an individual needs assessment and the design of a tailored roadmap. In addition, these companies will be included in an SME catalogue, increasing their visibility and partnership opportunities, and will be invited to relevant project events, such as webinars and matchmaking sessions. This support will also help SMEs prepare stronger applications for the RESIST Innovation Open Calls that will be launched at a later stage.

The RESIST II Eurocluster consortium organises a [Webinar on the Expression of Interest](#) on 3 February 2026 at 12:00 CET to explain how SMEs in the mobility, transport, and automotive sectors can express their Interest to get tailored support through the Eurocluster’s services.

Deadline to apply for the [Expression of Interest Call](#): 28 February 2026

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IDEALIST Hack&Match Event #4: Advanced Technologies for Manufacturing Industries

The IDEALIST consortium, including EACN member CAAR (ES), co-funded under Horizon Europe, has launched a Call for Challenges for its next Hack&Match, connecting industry players with tech providers to tackle advanced manufacturing needs in areas like robotics, additive manufacturing, and autonomous systems. [Submit Your Challenge by 13 February](#).

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Drive2Transform Webinars

Automotive Cybersecurity | 04 February



The consortium of the Interreg Central Europe project Drive2Transform invites interested parties to you their free online event **“Automotive Cybersecurity Learn how to build secure data ecosystems”**. The event will take place on 4 February from 10:00 – 12:00 CET and present insights from the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI), Deggendorf Institut of Technology (DIT) and KooSys GmbH. [Further information and registration](#).

Best practices in building and activating automotive transformation networks | 17 February 2026



How do successful clusters and agencies support the automotive transition? This online training session provides exclusive insights into the strategies of different **Business Support Organizations (BSOs)** across Central Europe. It focuses on practical methodologies to build, activate, and manage innovation networks with best practices on how to connect industry, science, and policy effectively. Covered topics include Knowledge Platforms, B2B Matchmaking, Science-to-Business connections, Tech Transfer, and Data & Tools. The event will take place on **17 February 2026 (9:00-12:00 CET: Presentations, 13:00-14:00 CET: Multilateral Exchange with Q&A).**

[Registrations](#)

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Project TRIREME | Skills Cards and Courses

The TRIREME Skills Cards describe new and evolving job roles in the automotive sector, highlighting the key competencies required and their links to the EQF (European Qualifications Framework) and ESCO classifications. They are designed to support companies in recruitment and upskilling, help education and training providers update their curricula, and assist policymakers in better aligning education with labour-market needs. At this stage, the Skills Cards are still under development and **stakeholders' feedback are essential** to validate and refine their content, ensuring they accurately reflect real industry needs and future skill demands.

Students, workers, and jobseekers can use the Skills Cards to better understand career pathways and the skills required to progress within the sector. Find out more here: <https://project-trireme.eu/en/skillscards>

You can explore the TRIREME training courses here: <https://project-trireme.eu/en/courses>

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News from partner institutions

Skills (R)evolution in the Automotive-Mobility Ecosystem

Within the framework of the ERASMUS+ **TRIEME** project and **ahead of the upcoming**



consortium meeting, ASA is organizing an international conference in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, on 21 April 2026. The conference will focus on future skills for the Automotive-Mobility Ecosystem. The event will address skills intelligence, new training needs, and the social impact of the twin digital and green transition. It will highlight priorities such as digitalization, sustainability, circular economy, resilient value chains, and new business models. Co-organized with the European Chips Skills Academy (ECSA), the conference underscores the growing convergence between the automotive and semiconductor sectors and the need for coordinated European skills strategies. Find more here: <https://automotive-skills-alliance.eu/conference/>

APRA European Symposium in Thessaloniki | 17-19 March 2026

The Automotive Parts Remanufacturing Association



regroups about 150 members in

Europe, including, e.g., Polish Automotive Group. Members focus on refurbishing automotive parts for reuse. The association organises APRA European Symposium on 17-19 March in Thessaloniki. This will also be an opportunity to discover the different European co-funded projects with APRA participation: <https://www.reuman.eu/>, <https://zevraproject.eu/>, and <https://www.recreatecomposites.eu/>. [Further information and registration.](#)

Other information

Automotive package

On 16 December 2025, the European Commission published a new set of measures to support the automotive sector in moving towards clean mobility. The [Automotive Package](#) includes five proposals on the revision of CO2 standards, greening corporate fleets, a battery booster, an automotive omnibus, and a revised car labelling. The proposals build on the [automotive action plan](#) and [strategic dialogue on the future of the automotive industry](#).

New ECA Guidebook: Cluster shaping Industrial Strategies

In December, ECA published a guidebook 'Clusters Shaping Industrial Strategies' featuring 60+ cluster good practices across Europe – building value chains, supporting SMEs, skills, innovation uptake and policy delivery for EU priorities. Examples also include some from SA&AM, UAMC, Cluster Mobility & Logistics, and Autoklastr. [Download the Guidebook.](#)

Greenet Policy and Synergy Database

Greenet, the network of NCP published a document aiming at supporting applicants, by saving time in identifying and citing the most relevant policy frameworks, to build a clear rationale for how and why their project delivers meaningful impact in a broad and holistic way. Additionally, this document highlights relevant synergies for each destination of cluster 5 'Climate, Energy and Mobility'. [Further information and download.](#)

ECCP Summary Report 2025: Clusters as Engines of Europe's competitiveness

The [ECCP Summary Report 2025](#) highlights the role of **European industrial clusters** in advancing competitiveness, innovation, and collaboration across key sectors. It underscores how cluster cooperation facilitates **cross-sector partnerships, technology transfer, and innovation scaling** that benefit automotive value chains — for example through enhanced uptake of **advanced technologies**, digitalisation, and sustainable manufacturing practices.

Commission Work Programme 2026 released


In the [Commission Work Programme 2026](#), the European Commission reaffirms support for the **automotive sector** as part of its strategy to strengthen Europe's economic independence and industrial competitiveness. The programme continues initiatives from the **Strategic Dialogue on the Future of the Automotive Industry** and includes proposals to support **small affordable electric vehicles**, enhance **battery manufacturing**, and simplify regulatory frameworks affecting the sector. It also aims to improve the affordability of **zero-emission vehicles** through measures such as **social leasing** and to bolster the industry's transition to **clean mobility** while maintaining competitiveness in global markets.


New Roland Berger Study on how automotive suppliers can secure long term success


With the automotive supplier industry facing a perfect storm of challenges, it is the time to act. The new


Roland Berger study '**Automotive suppliers: Three imperatives to transform your operating model and secure long-term success**' outlines three imperatives that enable suppliers to transform their operating model and future-proof their organization. [More information.](#)


Agenda


 **RESIST** 03 February 2026 | Online
RESIST II Webinar 'Expression of Interest' | organised by RESIST II Consortium | [Registration](#)


 04 February 2026 | Online
Webinar on Automotive Cybersecurity | organised by the Drive2Transform consortium | [Further information and registration](#)


 10-12 February 2026 | Brussels (Belgium)
RTR Conference 2026 | Organised by 2Zero, Ertrac, CCAM & EC | [Further information](#)

 17 February 2026 | Online
Webinar on Capacity Building for Business Support Organizations (BSOs) | organised by the Drive2Transform consortium | [Registrations](#)

 17 – 19 March 2026 | Thessaloniki (Greece)
APRA European Symposium | organised by APRA | [Further information and registration](#)


 21 April 2026 | Cluj-Napoca (Romania)
International conference on future skills for the Automotive-Mobility Ecosystem | organised by the Automotive Skills Alliance | [Further information](#)

 05 May 2026 | Barcelone (Spain)
11th CIAC Innovation Corner | organised by CIAC | [Further information and registration](#)

 18-21 May 2026 | Budapest (Hungary)
Transport Research Arena (TRA) 2026 | [Further information](#)



 24 September 2026 | Beacon of Light (United Kingdom)
North East Automotive Expo 2026 | Organised by NEAA | [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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