



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Call for Expression of Interest

EU – UAE Matchmaking Event in
Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2025

An initiative of the European Union





Call for Expression of Interest For Clusters



EU – UAE Matchmaking Event

In the context of
[WETEX](#)

1 – 3 October 2025
Dubai, United Arab Emirates



OBJECTIVES

The European Commission (EC), through the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP), will host the **EU–UAE Matchmaking Event** in **Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE)** on **1 – 3 October 2025**. This event will be organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Energy of UAE. It will take place in the context of the [WETEX](#).

The **EU – UAE Matchmaking Event** will bring together cluster organisations and SMEs from the European Union (EU), non-EU countries participating in the Single Market Programme/COSME Strand¹, and UAE-based institutions and companies. The objective is to stimulate Cluster to Cluster (C2C), Cluster to Business (C2B), and Business to Business (B2B) cooperation across sectors aligned with the green and digital transitions.

The **EU– UAE Matchmaking Event** aims to foster collaboration between **European clusters, SMEs, and UAE partners** in key industries, including:

- **Clean & Renewable Energy** (solar, hydrogen, wind, energy storage, sustainable fuel for maritime and aviation)
- **Energy Efficiency**
- **Water & Waste Management**
- **Green Mobility** (EVs, charging infrastructure, hydrogen transport)
- **Smart Cities & Infrastructure** (IoT, automation, smart grids)
- **Agrifood** (A dedicated programme tailored to participants from the Agrifood sector is available in the *Agenda* section under *Extended Value for Agrifood Sector Participants*.)

The event will offer:

- A high-level seminar, matchmaking sessions, and site visits to **strengthen EU–UAE cluster cooperation**.
- Opportunities to identify **shared interests, value chain synergies, and market opportunities** for SMEs and businesses.
- A platform to enhance **EU–UAE collaboration in research, development, and innovation (RDI)**, linking academia, research institutions, and industries through clusters.
- **Exclusive guided tour of the exhibition(s)**, providing insights into the most relevant exhibitors aligned with the sectors covered by this call.
- **Curated stand visits**, enabling participants to engage directly with key exhibitors selected based on their industry focus.
- **Opportunity to take part in a pitching session**.
- **Possible participation in the [Word Green Economy Summit](#) (tbc)**

The call for expressions of interest is being launched to identify a European delegation made up of representatives from cluster organisations ([please see section “Who can participate” below](#)) who are willing and committed to participate in the EU-UAE Matchmaking Event.

By submitting an expression of interest in response to this call, you are indicating your acceptance of the call's terms.

Further details about the event, the eligibility requirements, and how to submit an expression of interest can be found below.

¹ [list-3rd-country-participation_smp_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

This call is published on [the ECCP website](#).

Expressions of interest to participate in this event must be **submitted electronically by:**

- **25 June (Wednesday) 2025, 23:59 Brussels time – first cut-off date**
- **15 July (Tuesday) 2025, 23:59 Brussels time – second cut-off date**
- **3 September (Wednesday) 2025, 23:59 Brussels time - third cut-off date**

through the following link in B2Match: <https://www.b2match.com/e/eu-uae-matchmaking-event-2025/sign-up?invitation=1KPLzzugqlQBFOFaMSpRx5GD5E=>

The second and third cut-off dates will ONLY be available in case places are still available after the evaluations of the previous cut-offs *(see more details in section Selection process below)*.

The expression of interest should include the following:

- A fully completed Cluster questionnaire on [B2Match](#) on the profile of the cluster.
- Proof/evidence of the completed cluster profile and registration in the ECCP (i.e. link to your cluster profile)

Please ensure that you submit full, accurate, and up-to-date information and contact information.

The organisers reserve the right to ask for additional information from the applicants, if necessary.

Late applications after 3 September could be accepted if they are submitted through B2Match before 16 September 2025, 23:59 Brussels time at the latest and the eligibility criteria are fulfilled. Costs of participation for such late applications are borne by the participants.

To take the maximum of your participation and benefit from all planned pre-event activities and meetings available during the EU-UAE Matchmaking Event, we encourage you to send your Expression of Interest at your earliest possible and avoid last minute registrations.

This call is targeting only cluster organisations and business network organisations. A separate call exists for SMEs. So, if you are an SME you should respond to the call that is available at:

<https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/content/eu-uae-matchmaking-event-2025-call-expression-interest-smes>

CONTEXT OF THE INITIATIVE

The Event will take place in the context of the ECCP activities. The European Commission facilitates international cluster cooperation through the ECCP including the organisation of specific cluster matchmaking events and policy development actions. The objective is to support cluster organisations to develop partnerships and business cooperation in European and global markets, for the benefit of their members, especially of SMEs. The events are currently funded under the EU Single Market Programme (SMP)/COSME Strand. As the cornerstone of the European strategy in support of SMEs' internationalisation through clusters, the ECCP provides a wide range of information and services to facilitate the interaction between clusters not only within Europe, but also with international partners.



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

This invitation is addressed to cluster and business network organisations interested in collaborating with UAE counterparts in the following sectors:

- **Clean & Renewable Energy** (solar, hydrogen, wind, energy storage, sustainable fuel for maritime and aviation)
- **Energy Efficiency**
- **Water & Waste Management**
- **Green Mobility** (EVs, charging infrastructure, hydrogen transport)
- **Smart Cities & Infrastructure** (IoT, automation, smart grids)
- **Agrifood** (A dedicated programme tailored to participants from the Agrifood sector is available in the *Agenda* section under *Extended Value for Agrifood Sector Participants*.)

The event will provide **funded participation for up to 20 cluster representatives**. Additional participants may join **at their own expense**, subject to confirmation.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible, applicants must:

- The cluster or business network organisation must be registered in the **European Cluster Collaboration Platform** (ECCP) (www.clustercollaboration.eu) (or have applied for registration at least one week before the application deadline²) **with a complete profile** (a link to the complete cluster profile of each applicant (registered) on the ECCP should be provided through the application in [B2Match](#))
- The cluster or business network organisation must be engaged in providing or channeling cluster or network support services to SMEs and certify that they meet the description of 'innovation clusters' in the "EU Framework for State Aid for Research, Development, and Innovation"³; and
- The cluster or business network organisation must be a legal entity established in a European Union Member State or other country participating in the Single Market Programme/COSME Strand (see the list of non-EU participants [here](#))

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated qualitatively using the following selection criteria:

- Cluster activity in the target sectors
- The potential to maximise matchmaking and collaboration prospects via participation in

² Deadline: 25 June 2025, 23:59 Brussels time - first cut-off date, 15 July 2025, 23:59 Brussels time – second cut-off date, 3 September 2025, 23:59 Brussels time – third cut-off date

³ for more information, please follow the link:

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN).



this mission.

- The desire and capacity to collaborate more closely with UAE cluster and business network organisations.

The selection of applications will be based on the afore-mentioned criteria and information provided in the application form; in cases of equal merit, the balanced geographical and sector coverage of the EU and SMP/COSME Strand participating countries will be considered. Furthermore, in cases of equal merit, organisations participating for the first time at the ECCP matchmaking event will have priority. Moreover, priority will be given to those organisations that have not previously **without justification** cancelled the participation in matchmaking events organised by the ECCP.

Selected clusters in the first cut-off must explicitly reconfirm the intent to participate to the event by **4 July 2025** at the latest and confirm that the flight ticket for the purpose of participating at the event has already been bought **by 15 July 2025 at the latest**. In case the confirmation is not received by the indicated date, the organisers reserve the right to exclude the selected organisation from the European delegation and invite organisation(s) on the reserve list instead. The confirmation dates for selected clusters from the reserve list and/or in the second/third cut-off are provided in the next section 'Selection Process'.

SELECTION PROCESS

This Call for Expression of Interest has three cut-off dates (deadlines):

- **25 June (Wednesday) 2025, 23:59 Brussels time – first cut-off date**
- **15 July (Tuesday) 2025, 23:59 Brussels time – second cut-off date** (the second cut-off date will be available only in case of still available places after the first round of evaluation after the first cut-off date).
- **3 September (Wednesday) 2025, 23.59 Brussels time - third cut-off date -** (the third cut-off date will be available only in case of still available places after the first and second rounds of evaluation after the first cut-off dates).

The organisers reserve the right to **close the application process once the maximum participant capacity is reached**.

First cut-off

Applicants will receive a notification whether their application is selected, put on the reserve list or rejected within one week after the first cut-off date.

Applications on the reserve list may be edited and resubmitted for the next cut-off date(s) – the last submitted application will be considered in the evaluation.

Applications that have been rejected can be improved and re-submitted for the next cut-off date(s).

Second cut-off (only available if places left)

Applicants will receive a notification whether their application is selected or rejected within one week after the second cut-off date.

Applications on the reserve list may be edited and resubmitted at the latest before the deadline of the third cut-off – the last submitted application will be considered in the evaluation.

Applications that have been rejected can be improved and re-submitted for the next cut-off date.

Third cut-off date (only available if places left)

Applicants will receive a notification whether their application is selected or rejected within one week after the third cut-off date.

Applicants that are not selected may participate at their own cost if they fulfil the eligibility criteria of this call.

Applications on the reserve list of the first cut-off will be evaluated together with the applications received by the second cut-off date.



Cluster and Business Network Organisations selected to participate in the Event must send a commitment e-mail agreeing to attend the preparatory and technical webinars, the on-site seminar, conduct at least four meetings, attend the on-site visits and engage in the final 30-minute debriefing session.

ALL IMPORTANT DEADLINES TO BE CONSIDERED

First Cut-off Date	25 June 2025
Reconfirmation of the selected Clusters in the first cut-off date	4 July 2025
Selected clusters in the first cut-off date must confirm flight tickets	15 July 2025
Second Cut-off Date (only available if necessary)	15 July 2025
Reconfirmation of the selected Clusters in the second cut-off date	25 July 2025
Selected clusters in the second cut-off date must confirm flight tickets	5 August 2025
Third Cut-off Date (only available if necessary)	3 September 2025
Reconfirmation of the selected Clusters in the third cut-off date	10 September August 2025
Selected clusters in the third cut-off date must confirm flight tickets	15 September 2025
Late Applications	At the latest by 16 September 2025

ACTIVITIES & AGENDA

The EU – UAE Matchmaking Event will include the following activities:

For all participants

Prior to the mission:

- **Preparatory Webinar** – an opportunity to receive information on undertaking business with UAE and guidance on how to participate successfully in the planned event. (date tbc)
- **Technical Webinar** – a session helping future participants of the matchmaking event to make the most of their profiling in the B2Match tool and explain the procedures to optimise the booking of meetings. (date tbc)



During the mission:

- **Visit to WETEX** - guided exhibition tour, thematic sessions, and exposure to UAE industry leaders. A 1-hour EU pitching session will be explored. **(1 October 2025 (tbc)).**
(Note: Participants from the **Agrifood sector** are **not required to attend on 1 October** and may join the official programme starting on **2 October 2025**.)
- **EU-UAE Business Seminar & Matchmaking Day (2 October 2025 (tbc))**
(Note: All delegates, including those from the Agrifood sector, will participate in this key day.)
 - **Seminar** on knowledge exchange to foster EU-UAE cooperation. (
 - **Pitching and Matchmaking meetings** between cluster organisations and SMEs from EU (and non-EU countries participating in SMP/COSME Strand) countries and UAE. (
 - Debriefing session to collect **feedback and testimonials** from cluster participants.
- **Site Visits (3 October 2025 (tbc))**
(Note: All delegates, including those from the Agrifood sector, will participate in this key day.)
Delegates will participate in field visits to innovation hubs and leading sustainability infrastructure projects. Agrifood sector participants will follow a dedicated track, including tailored site visits to agricultural innovation centres, vertical farming demonstrations, and smart food systems facilities in Dubai and/or Abu Dhabi. Additional B2B or institutional meetings may also be arranged.

Extended Value for Agrifood Sector Participants

In addition to their full participation in the official matchmaking programme (2–3 October), **Agrifood delegates** will have a **unique opportunity** to extend their stay and attend [Agra Middle East 2025](#), the leading agricultural exhibition in the Middle East.

- **Dates:** 6–7 October 2025
- **Venue:** Dubai World Trade Centre
- **Profile:** The region's most prominent agrifood trade show, showcasing innovations in vertical farming, aquaculture, and sustainable agriculture.
- **Scale:** 150+ exhibitors, 6,000+ visitors from 180+ countries
- **Access:** Free for professionals with pre-registration

⚠ Please note:

This optional extension falls outside the scope of the official ECCP-funded programme, and any associated costs must be covered by the participants themselves. Participation on **1 October 2025** is **not mandatory** for Agrifood sector participants, who may instead join the mission starting on **2 October 2025**.

Nevertheless, this represents a **rare and strategic opportunity** to combine a high-level international mission with participation in a specialised regional exhibition — maximising sectoral exposure, strengthening institutional ties, and opening new market channels for European agrifood innovation. ECCP will assist participants with registration and practical information to ensure a smooth transition between events.

Attendance to the seminar, the matchmaking event, the debriefing session, expo and the site visits are compulsory for all participants.



COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Please note that this event is completely free of charge for all activities on 1-3 October.

Successful applicants will get the reimbursement of the following expenses:

- **Return flight to Dubai** (without local transport), will be compensated based on actual costs but **up to the limit of 950€/participant** and the cost of the economy fare for the selected EU participants. Any upgrade on the fare will be at the cost of the participant.
- **A maximum 3-night stay in a hotel** will be funded as 100% of the actual costs but up to the limit of **125€/night** for the selected EU participants.

Only one representative per organisation is eligible for reimbursement.

Please note that any Agrifood-specific activities taking place after the official programme (i.e. on 6–7 October 2025) fall outside the scope of the ECCP-funded agenda, and all related costs must be borne by the participants themselves.

Essential requirements to qualify for reimbursement of expenses:

- Attendance is required for the entire agenda (1 October – 3 October 2025), except for participants from Agrifood-related clusters and SMEs, who will follow a different schedule
- Completing at least four bilateral matchmaking meetings
- Attending local on-site visits
- Joining and engaging in the event's debriefing session
- Completing an online post-event survey immediately after the event.
- Submitting a follow-up questionnaire (four months post-event) with detailed insights on collaboration outcomes

Important Notes:

- Reimbursement is strictly conditional on submitting the post-event survey with comprehensive, detailed feedback that sufficiently covers all required areas.
- A quality check will be conducted on all submitted feedback. If necessary, participants may be asked to provide additional details before final approval.
- Reimbursement will be processed only after the first survey is submitted and the feedback meets the required quality standards for final approval.

The organising team will take care to inform duly selected participants on possible agreed discounted rates for accommodation, as well as available airline offers.

Cluster organisations participating in the EU – UAE Matchmaking Event will not have to pay fees to attend the exhibitions at [WETEX](#).



FINAL REMARKS

Should you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact the ECCP team at eumatchmaking@clustercollaboration.eu.

For further information about cluster cooperation and assistance, please visit the [ECCP Website](#).

Your personal data is processed in accordance with **Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725** on the protection of individuals regarding the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.