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# Balkan and Black Sea ICT Clusters Network

E-NEWSLETTER

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July 2018

We would like to welcome you all to the first edition of our electronic newsletter on Balkan and Black Sea ICT Cluster Network (BBS ICT Network)

Established in 2015, the BBS Network gathers 25 members from 12 countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Greece, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Kosovo, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. Members are consisted of different BSOs such as associations, clusters, chambers of commerce or similar. It's a phenomenal initiative started by the representatives of the BSOs that know each other for many years, individuals that have collaborated on many joint projects, a group of people that have strong mutual trust and reliance. Perhaps that is why the initiative grows quickly and joint representations on target markets related to exports are already numerous.

The BBS Network gathers 1,117-member companies, with a total number of employees of 44,965, and over 90 academic institutions and/or research organisations.

The main goal of the BBS Network is to create framework to intensify collaboration of ICT Clusters and ICT organisations in the Balkan and Black Sea region aiming to meet common challenges affecting SMEs growth, innovation and business environment, and due to its activities, exchange best practices and success stories. The efforts of the Network aim at improving the innovation and business environment of the economies involved and at changing the outlook and perception of the regions and promote it as vibrant Digital and Innovation Hub of Europe. The Network is open towards enlarging and accepting new Members that are in line with its vision, objective and outlook.

Our mission is to strengthen collaboration between cluster initiatives in the ICT sector from the Balkan and Black Sea region and to act such as to increase the competitiveness of this sector on the global market by means of specific actions and projects. We strive for enlarging the network with new members from existing countries and from new countries.

Our vision is to see strong trans-national strategic alliances between ICT companies in the Balkan and Black Sea region in order to approach in partnership large scale innovation projects, develop together novel product-service systems and smartly collaborate to increase regional competitiveness and sophistication of the ICT services in the competition on the global markets. We look forward and act to see a paradigm shift in the business models of the ICT sector in the Balkan and Black Sea region, where polycentric innovations and tight partnerships for valorisation and capitalization of the local strengths into agile cross-border business models will happen.

At the moment the BBS Network is supported by the Regional Economic Growth (REG) USAID Project with an international consultant to support the BBS Net members to develop "Sustainability and Lobbying Strategy". Considering the fact that members are BSOs themselves, the funding is always scarce resource therefore the network needs

to be inventive and create different mechanisms in order to obtain financial self-sustainability. Consequently, and also supported by the REG USAID Project, the Network has so far submitted approximately 5 project proposals under European Commission calls for proposals and already was granted with 2 grants. The first success story is Green Ict development (GIVE) Project, which has started on 01.12.2017 and it is with duration of 24 months. General project objective is to build up strategic cluster partnership in the field of smart green technologies among the three vital industries - automotive, renewable energy and ICT. These projects enable the Network of BSOs to meet more frequently and to discuss other very important topics for the evolution such as: visibility, positioning and promotion of the network; joint representation on foreign events; development of BBS Net brand, logo, website, joint presentation, database of companies, register of IT workforce etc.

## LATEST NEWS

### BBS ICT NETWORK MOVEMENT

On the beginning of this year in Sofia, Bulgaria on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018 regular BBS Network meeting was held. On the meeting there were reviewed the activities and decisions taken by the Network in the past 2017 and discussed the action plan for 2018. Mrs. Marina Blagojevic presented the results of a survey conducted among the members of the Network. The survey touched very crucial questions regarding the future development of the BBS ICT Clusters Network like: membership and membership fees, legal representation of the Network, website and its business model, statistical data and general presentation of Network, creation of working groups working on different topics and etc. For chairing organization for 2018 was elected Foundation of Cluster Information and Communication Technologies. Four organizations applying for membership in the Balkan and Black Sea ICT Clusters Network were presented: ICT Cluster – Varna, ICT Cluster – Burgas, Georgian Cluster National Platform and Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The four candidates were unanimously accepted as members of the Network. Future activities, opportunities for cooperation and project collaboration were discussed. Through USAIDREG project, a consultant is engaged in the development of the “Sustainability and Lobbying Strategy for the ICT Clusters of the Balkan and Black Sea Regions”. The strategy will be used in the future as a joint guidance, and will cover the issues of the permanent secretariat, working groups, etc.



After the first BBS Network meeting in Sofia there were numerous presentations of the BBS ICT Network on regional events such as:

- February, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Sofia, Bulgaria, EASME meeting
- February, 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Barcelona, Spain, Mobile World Congress
- March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Skopje, Macedonia, European Commission high level meeting on Innovation and Technologies
- March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Sofia, Bulgaria, TCI EU Conference
- March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Kiev, Ukraine, Transylvania Automotive and Mechanical cluster conference
- March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Sofia, Bulgaria, EU Parliament meeting
- March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018, London England, Conference related to Western Balkans
- March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Skopje, Macedonia, Ceremonial MASIT Annual Assembly



- April 17th and 18th, within the SEE Automotive Conference - Connect & Supply 2018 in Novi Sad – Serbia



- April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Skopje, Macedonia, Western Balkan Summit



- Technology Forum, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Thessaloniki, Greece, when BBS Net was represented by 10 companies and 2 BSOs



- May, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Sofia Bulgaria, Balkan Wine Festival



On 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2018 regular meeting of Balkan and Black Sea ICT Clusters' Network took place in Cluj Napoca, Romania. The partners have been hosted by Cluj IT, in the continuation of Green Ict development (GIVE) project meeting. During the meeting the Draft of Sustainability Strategy for Balkan and Black Sea ICT Clusters' Network was presented by Anita Tregner Mlinaric and discussed among the members. The document is supported by Regional Economic Growth (REG) USAID project and is very important for future Network development and activities related to ICT Clusters from the Balkan region. The new member of the Network is the Smart Green Technologies Cluster from Latvia.



GREEN-TECH CLUSTER IS THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE BBS ICT NETWORK



CLUJ IT CLUSTER LAUNCHES THE FIRST ACTIVITIES FOR THE ELABORATION OF THE INFORMATIZATION STRATEGY OF THE CLUJ COUNTY COUNCIL



Green and Smart Technology Cluster from Latvia is the new member of BBS ICT Network. Green-Tech Cluster is the first organization member of the BBS Network that developed cross-sectoral cooperation bringing together companies, educational and research institutions, as well as other organizations that partly or fully operate in the industries of green and smart technologies.

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In the context of the accelerated development of the smart solutions market dedicated to computerization at administrative level, the Cluj County Council started a process of modernization of its services, communication and management of specific information related to the institution's activity. During the next 6 months a team of

experts, members of Cluj IT Cluster, will work together with representatives of the Cluj County Council for the implementation of the institution's IT strategy. "The digitization of internal processes, those positioned at the interface with the citizen, subordinated structures and partner organizations represents an essential step in innovation at public institution level targeted towards increasing the quality of services, reducing the public servant effort, eliminating errors, increasing the transparency and efficiency of work in the administration. Through this project, the Cluj County Council gives a positive signal regarding the institution's orientation towards a more efficient and intelligent management of its resources and the projects it coordinates." Stelian Brad, Project Manager and President of Cluj IT Cluster.

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HOW S FIA TECH PARK COLLABORATE WITH CLUSTERS AND COMPANIES

S FIA TECH PARK 3D CREATIVITY AND NEW PRODUCTS RAPID PROTOTYPING LAB





Since its launch in 2016, Sofia Tech Park has been very active in attracting and setting collaboration with the existing clusters in Bulgaria. STP is promoting:

- Sharing and disseminating knowledge and good practices;
- Project elaboration, including joint projects;
- Support for campaigns and initiatives;

Sofia Tech Park has cooperation agreements with - [Bulgarian ICT Cluster](#), [Bulgarian Cluster Telecommunications](#), [Electric vehicles industrial cluster](#), [Automotive cluster Bulgaria](#), ICEM (electromobility) and others.

Representatives of the clusters took part in the Research and development and innovation consortium (RDIC) of Sofia Tech Park, as well as in the creation of the Laboratory Complex and the strategy for the creation and development of the Science and Technology Park project in Sofia, from the beginning of the project.

ICEM has helped to design and plan part of the park's infrastructure - charging stations for electromobility. They support various STP projects, have participated in joint initiatives. Companies from the sector participated as exhibitors in the European Night of Scientists initiative in Sofia Tech Park and other campaigns.

Some of our joint projects - Bulgarian Innovation and Technology Hub (Bulgarian DigiTech 4.0) approved by the European Commission, joined by RDIC teams (with 4 of laboratories) and the STP, ICT Cluster Bulgaria, Foundation MOVE.BG, Center of Excellence - (CETUS) from Technical University - Sofia.

More - <https://ithubconnect.com/>

Consulting Cluster Veritas Ltd organizes TCI European Conference 2018 in Sofia Tech

The laboratory complex is one of the key elements of the Sofia Tech Park, consisting of 11 laboratories and managed by an independent R&D&I consortium, established specially on purpose to boost the collaboration between research and industry.

The main objective of the rapid prototyping laboratory is to develop research capacity for the application of innovative technologies for materialization of virtual 3D models with complex forms in a very short time. Moreover, lab's mission is to create innovative practices and to build unique and accessible opportunities for research and development in the field of 3D creativity through systems for quick physical manifestation of new ideas and products in order to shorten the time to market.

The 3D printer with integral metal (or anyone else from the lab) can be used in various projects of companies, universities and research. It's one of the twelve 3D printers of such type in the world. It uses technology of adding and removing material that makes it unique compared with currently operating machines. More - <http://public.sofiatech.bg/lasertec-65-3d-pdf-data.pdf>

Companies use the 3D printer to develop prototypes of their products or to create prototyping of tools and blanks for their production.

Park- [www.tci-europe2018.com](http://www.tci-europe2018.com)

Automotive cluster is a part of community in Incubator of Sofia Tech Park and they support events and initiative. The organization has investment intentions in the areas for future development of the STP, as well as for joint activities with the Park Complex's Laboratory.

Head of the Lab is prof. George Todorov from the Technical University – Sofia.

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## REGIONAL PROJECTS

As a result of the continuous trials to gain sustainability, the network has been granted with a COSME funded projects. Green Ict development (GIVE) has started on 01.12.2017 and it is with duration of 24 months. General project objective is to build up strategic cluster partnership in the field of smart green technologies among the three vital industries - automotive, renewable energy and ICT. The smart green technologies encompass all industrial and human activities which generate positive impact to the environment applying Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Today, traditional manufacturing industries as automotive and renewable energy should find smart solutions to answer to global environmental challenge they face by applying ICT. GIVE partnership is very challenging because it has eight partners from six different countries, two different European regions and three vital industries. The specific objectives of the GIVE project are: to create a favorable framework for establishing a sustainable cross-industry strategic cluster partnership across Europe among three vital industries- ICT, automotive and renewable energy by implementation of partnership building and collaboration activities. to build up sustainable strategic cluster partnership based on development of GIVE internationalization strategy and implementation roadmap . to promote GIVE partnership and increase online promotion of GIVE partners by implementation of identity shaping, communication, promotion and online media activities. The GIVE strategic cluster partnership aims to create sustainable cross-industry, cross-cluster and cross – regional collaboration focusing on development of new value chain in the field of green smart technologies focusing on automotive and transport sectors and on the support of SMEs internationalization on the third markets.



GIVE partners have met last week in Cluj Napoca, Romania in order to participate at a focus group on cross – industrial collaboration among ICT, Automotive and Green Industry. The activity is part of the WP2 of the project aiming to contribute to the elaboration of Intelligence Market Report and GIVE Internationalization strategy. The focus group discussions were based on the results of GIVE project survey where companies from 6 countries and 3 sectors have participated. The common interests were grouped in two areas of further intervention of the ESCP - smart transport and electromobility and smart cities. Next focus group will be in Sofia in September, and it will be focused on barriers for internationalization of SMEs.

**The partners are the following organisations:**

- ✓ [ICT CLUSTER](#), Bulgaria (Lead partner)
- ✓ [Albanian ICT Association](#) (AITA), Albania
- ✓ [Automotive Cluster Bulgaria](#)
- ✓ [Automotive Cluster Serbia](#)
- ✓ [MASIT ICT Chamber of commerce](#), Macedonia
- ✓ [ICT Cluster of Central Serbia](#)
- ✓ [Cluj IT Cluster](#), Romania
- ✓ [KBI Green and Smart Technology Cluster](#), Latvia

If you are interested in more information related to the GIVE project, please follow us on the following social networks:

- [Facebook page](#)
- [LinkedIn group](#)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS 2018

### MASIT CONFERENCE 2018



As a leader in connecting the ICT sector in Macedonia, MASIT has so far successfully managed to organize 14 regional conferences on ICT, each of them attended by more than 200 participants coming mainly from ICT companies, but also including high officials from the Government and Ministries, Academia, Donor organizations and other relevant stakeholders from the South East Europe region. Having gathered its experience and wide contacts not only domestically, but also regionally and internationally, MASIT is announcing its 15th annual conference this year with an ambition to bring together all interested parties and address relevant hot topics that are raised in the past several years.

This year the main topic of the annual MASIT conference is Digital transformation in Macedonia: Challenge or Reality? In the framework of the Conference the main subtopics that will be elaborated are the following:

- Internet of things
- Cyber Security
- Cloud Computing

For more info and registrations please visit MASIT web site on the following [link](#).

More information about BBC is available on our website [www.bbs-ict.com](http://www.bbs-ict.com)

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