



An initiative of the European Union

**CLUSTERS MEET  
REGIONS**

**AJDOVŠČINA**  
SLOVENIA

**10 - 11**  
**SEPTEMBER 2025**

**AGORADA + DISCUSSES THE KNOWLEDGE PARK AS A CATALYST FOR  
THE GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITION IN THE NORTH ADRIATIC REGION**



AGORADA+ 2025  
EURADA EVENT



OBČINA AJDOVŠČINA  
Municipality of Ajdovščina



## **Clusters meet Regions Ajdovščina**

**AGORADA+ discusses the Knowledge Park as a catalyst for the green and digital transition in the North Adriatic region**

**10 - 11 September 2025**

**Hall of the First Slovenian Government**

**Trg 1. Slovenske Vlade 1, 5270**

**Ajdovščina, Slovenia**

Master of ceremony: Teodora Jilkova, Veritas Cluster, ECCP team member

## Day 1: 10 September 2025

### *Regional innovation ecosystems and thematic cross-border collaboration*

09:00	<b>Registration and welcome coffee</b>
09:30	<b>Opening plenary session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Tadej Beočanin</b> - Mayor of Ajdovščina</li><li>• <b>Robert Drobnič</b> - Director of Regional Development Directorate, Slovenian Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development</li><li>• <b>Christophe Guichard</b> – Policy Officer, DG GROW - European Commission</li><li>• <b>Teodora Jilkova</b> – ECCP Team Member / Veritas Cluster</li></ul>
10:30	<b>Setting the scene</b> <b>Presentation of the input paper on Slovenia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Dr. Jan-Philipp Kramer</b> - Head of EU Services, Prognos / ECCP Team Member</li></ul>
10:50	<b>Panel discussion 1 – The Knowledge Park of Ajdovščina as a driver of regional innovation: strategic dialogue on the role of clusters in the region</b> <p>This high-level panel will explore how clusters drive regional innovation and smart specialisation through collaboration between industry, academia, and policymakers. The focus will be on enhancing industrial ecosystems and regional competitiveness in the context of the green and digital transitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Dr. Peter Wostner</b> – IMAD (Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development)</li><li>• <b>Dr. Matjaž Valant</b> – Vice-Rector for Sustainable Development and Technologies, University of Nova Gorica</li><li>• <b>Tine Tomažič</b> – CEO, Textron Pipistrel</li><li>• <b>Boštjan Jerončič</b> – CEO, Incom</li><li>• <b>Hermína Ogrič</b> – Business Director, COBIK</li></ul>

	Moderator: <b>Žiga Lampe</b> - Head of the Strategic Development Department at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia
<b>11:30</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>11:45</b>	<p><b>Panel discussion 2 - The green transition and hydrogen solutions in the North Adriatic</b></p> <p>This panel explores the role of hydrogen technologies in driving the green transition in the North Adriatic region. Experts will discuss current initiatives, cross-border cooperation, and opportunities for sustainable industrial development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ketty Segatti</b> – Head of Unit for Research, Innovation and European Funding, Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia</li> <li>• <b>Janez Furlan</b> – Head of Department for Economic and Development Affairs, Municipality of Ajdovščina</li> <li>• <b>Brigita Štolfa</b> – Director, Northern Primorska Chamber of Commerce and Industry</li> <li>• <b>Aleksander Gerbec</b> – CEO, ECUBES Ltd.</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <b>Jurij Giacomelli</b> – Director META Circularity, C&amp;D Manager NAHV</p>
<b>12:45</b>	<b>Networking lunch</b>
<b>14:00</b>	<p><b>Panel discussion 3 – Innovation for sustainable food systems: from biotech solutions to climate-resilient supply chains</b></p> <p>The panel discussion will focus on how innovation and advanced technologies are transforming food systems to become more sustainable, resilient, and climate-smart. Speakers will discuss solutions ranging from biotechnology and circular approaches to new value chains that strengthen food security and promote regional economic growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maria Valentina Vanceo</b> – EU Project Manager, Veneto Cluster</li> <li>• <b>Andoni Hildago</b> – Value Chain Transformation Lead, CLIMATE KIC</li> <li>• <b>Luca Capra</b> – Deputy Director Startup &amp; Innovation Area, Trentino Sviluppo</li> <li>• <b>Gregor Zupin</b> – CEO, Microbium</li> </ul>

	<p>Moderator: <b>Dr. Egon Pavlica</b> – Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Nova Gorica</p>
15:00	<p><b>Co-creation workshop - Building smart innovation ecosystems</b></p> <p>The workshop will bring together Slovenian companies, research institutions, clusters, and support organisations with the aim of fostering the creation of international project consortia in strategic technologies that strengthen Europe's competitiveness and technological sovereignty. The focus will be on <b>biotechnologies, hydrogen solutions, and climate-resilient systems</b>.</p> <p>Participants will gain insights into EU centralised funding opportunities, learn from practical Slovenian experiences in international projects, and explore future opportunities under the 2028–2034 EU budget. The interactive format will allow participants to share their perspectives, identify common interests, and connect with potential partners from both Slovenia and international ecosystems.</p> <p>The session will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and framing of EU opportunities</li> <li>• A practical case study (SRIP PMiS) – from idea to EU funding</li> <li>• Interactive polling and discussion to identify priorities and next steps</li> </ul> <p>Facilitators:</p> <p><b>Peter Medica</b> – Senior Policy Officer, Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development, Smart Specialisation Coordination Unit</p> <p><b>Mr. Matjaž Logar</b> – Director, SRIP PMiS</p>
15:55	<p><b>Wrap up Day 1 and Information about Day 2</b></p>
17:30 – 22:00	<p><b>Cultural Evening – GO!2025</b></p> <p><i>Departure from Ajdovščina Bus Station</i></p> <p><b>Presentation of the European Capital of Culture 2025 &amp; Experience of an Innovative Wine and Culinary Product from the Vipava Valley, including dinner in a castle wine cellar</b></p> <p>Cross-border cultural showcase and networking evening, offering participants a unique opportunity to discover the vibrant <a href="#">GO!2025</a></p>

	<p>program, connect with local culture, and enjoy authentic regional gastronomy in a special setting.</p> <p><i>(Note: The local host team will do their best to optimize logistics. Timing of the evening program is fixed due to coordination with external partners. Depending on accommodations, brief hotel returns may be possible.)</i></p>
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## Day 2: 11 September 2025

### ***RDAs and Clusters Powering Europe's Twin Transition and Autonomy***

<b>09:00</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>9:30</b>	<b>Opening session</b> <p>Outcomes of the workshop on building an innovation ecosystem of Day 1</p>
<b>10:00</b>	<b>Roundtable - Agents of change: how regional development agencies are powering Europe's twin transition</b> <p>In this roundtable, regional and innovation agencies will discuss best practices implemented at local and regional levels to accelerate the twin transition within their respective ecosystems. Participants will also explore practical examples of interregional cooperation in the North Adriatic Region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lia Gover</b> – Senior Project Manager, Informest</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Amna Potočnik</b> – Head of Regional Development Research Group, RRA Podravje-Maribor</li> <li>• <b>Kornelija Mlinarević</b> – Director, Development Agency Zagreb for Coordination and Encouragement of Regional Development</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Federica Marchesich</b> – Communication Expert, Friuli Select</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <b>Marina Dujmović Vuković</b> - Director, ZADRA NOVA</p>
<b>10:45</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>11:15</b>	<p><b>Panel discussion – RDAs and clusters: what role for advancing strategic autonomy in the North Adriatic?</b></p> <p>This session focuses on harnessing local knowledge and innovation capacities. Strategic autonomy is not just about independence at a national or continental scale: it must be deeply rooted in the specific strengths, needs, and identities of local territories. This is where place-based approaches come into play, and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are crucial actors in this process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Francesco Molica</b> – Director, EURADA</li> <li>• <b>Vedran Kružić</b> – Director, Regional Development Agency of the Primorje</li> <li>• <b>Tanja Ivek</b> – Senior Advisor, Zagorje Development Agency (ZARA)</li> <li>• <b>Maria Valentina Vanceo</b> – EU Project Manager, Veneto Cluster</li> <li>• <b>Carmen Sillero Illanes</b> – Senior Economic and Policy Analyst, Joint Research Centre, European Commission (online)</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: <b>Roberta Dall’Olio</b> – Senior External Consultant, EURADA</p>
<b>12.15</b>	<p><b>Closing remarks and upcoming ECCP events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bogdan Česnik</b> – Director, RDA Ajdovščina</li> <li>• <b>Christophe Guichard</b> – Policy Officer, DG GROW – European Commission</li> <li>• <b>Arianna Dellacà</b> – Senior Advisor, EISMEA – European Commission</li> <li>• <b>Teodora Jilkova</b> – ECCP Representative / Veritas Cluster</li> </ul>

12.30	Networking Lunch
Site visits	
13:30 – 15:00	<p><b>Pioneering aviation, smart manufacturing &amp; future-ready agri-food</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pipistrel:</b> based in Ajdovščina, is a pioneer in the development and production of energy-efficient aircraft. The company is globally recognized for its innovations in electric aviation and its commitment to sustainable flying. With numerous international awards and a strong presence in global markets, Pipistrel continues to shape the future of green aerospace technology.</li> <li>• <b>Incom:</b> based in Ajdovščina, is one of Slovenia's leading producers of ice cream and frozen desserts. The company successfully exports its innovative products under the Leone brand to numerous international markets. With a strong focus on quality, research, and sustainable production, Incom has become a key player in the global frozen dessert industry.</li> <li>• <b>Municipality of Ajdovščina:</b> representatives of the Municipality of Ajdovščina will present innovative solutions developed together with companies and institutions for the needs of smart farming - irrigation systems, civil protection, protection of agricultural products against pests, digitisation of sales channels of agricultural products.</li> </ul>