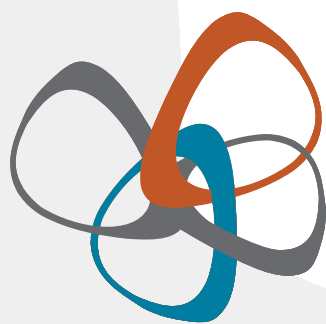


PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME



2018  **TCI**
EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

20.03 - 22.03 Sofia, Bulgaria

TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES



Statue of St Sofia

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CONTACTS

For questions related to TCI Network, membership and/or becoming a TCI member, please contact:

TCI Network

Passeig de Gràcia 129 | 08008 Barcelona – Spain

Anna Korten

akorten@tci-network.org and info@tci-network.org

www.tci-network.org | Tel: +34 93 309 48 34

For questions related to TCI European Conference 2018, please contact:

Consulting Cluster Veritas Ltd

34 Bogatitsa Str, Office A-01 | 1421 Sofia – Bulgaria

Teodora Jilkova

tjilkova@veritascluster.com | Tel: + 359 8888 444 91

WELCOME MESSAGES

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM TCI PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues and friends,

We are very pleased to organise this 2018 TCI European Conference together with our colleagues from Sofia. South Eastern Europe has become an increasingly active part of the European cluster community. The conference will be an important opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved as well as laying out the directions for what remaining challenges need to be challenged.

Bulgaria's Presidency of the EU Council in 2018 will be an opportunity to connect the discussions at the TCI Sofia conference with the broader debate about where EU cluster policy needs to go. Two aspects I expect the discussions in Sofia to address in particular:

First, how do cluster-based efforts need to be structured to align better with local circumstances, from the sophistication of firms to the capacity of government and the general conditions of competitiveness. Many of our members have seen the challenges in transplanting models that worked well in other regions to their location. In the EU this is a key issue, especially with EU policies providing a standard set of rules and frameworks. How can we draw on common learnings but also respond to unique local needs?

Second, how can cluster efforts become drivers of broader changes in locational competitiveness? Again, many of our members are not focused on developing an individual cluster but have the broader economic health of their location in mind. Others have been successful in developing their cluster but are faced with increasing demands from government to provide broader services outside of their cluster or region. What is the right approach to achieve broader impact while remaining anchored in the core cluster dynamics?

As always, the TCI conference in Sofia will also provide opportunities to engage with the full set of issues relevant for more effective cluster-based efforts, whether you are a policy maker, a manager of a cluster program, or a cluster initiative manager. You will find new learnings and, maybe even more importantly, new contacts to help tackle the yet unknown challenges of the future together.

Welcome to Sofia!

Christian Ketels
TCI President



WELCOME MESSAGE FROM SOFIA'S MAYOR AND CHAIRMAN OF THE LOCAL HOST

Dear Guests,

It is my pleasure to welcome you in Sofia on the occasion of the TCI European Conference "Turning challenges into opportunities", 20 – 22 March 2018.

The title of the Conference is in fact a very suitable motto for our city, which has risen above its past and, thanks to our efforts, has undergone a considerable transformation during the last 10 years. In this short period, Sofia has become the European capital with the highest GDP growth, according to a study by the Bloomberg Foundation. Our city is now in the top 3 of the European cities for start-up companies in the IT sector. Moreover, Sofia has won and invested the largest amount of European funds in urban development.

Our aim is to promote it as a green, attractive, open and inclusive city creating optimal opportunities for investment, business, integration and intercultural exchange, especially in view of the Bulgarian Presidency of the European Union during the first half of 2018. The motto of our capital, as the host of major events during the Presidency, is:

SOFIA SO MUCH TO SHARE

I hope that you will enjoy your stay in Sofia as we share it with you and will come back to our city as investors, tourists and friends.

Yordanka Fandakova
Mayor of Sofia



PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

18
MARCH
SUNDAY

Check-in & registration
Optional city tours

19
MARCH
MONDAY

Check-in & registration
First Time Attendees introduction programme
Experience exchange & 1:2:1 meetings

20
MARCH
TUESDAY

Cluster tours
Experience exchange & 1:2:1 meetings
Welcome reception

21
MARCH
WEDNESDAY

Full day conference programme
Experience exchange & 1:2:1 meetings
Networking lunch
Gala dinner

22
MARCH
THURSDAY

Conference sessions
Experience exchange & 1:2:1 meetings
Closing conference
Farewell

CLUSTER TOURS ARE ORGANISED IN A PARTNERSHIP WITH:

Sofia Tech Park



Plovdiv Municipality



Blagoevgrad Municipality



Welcome reception & gala dinner are organised and sponsored by Sofia Municipality



PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

The purpose of this conference is to encourage the exchange of knowledge and information among cluster practitioners and regions in the scope of international co-operation.

THE AUDIENCE

National and International participants, involved in the development & competitiveness of regions.

- Business leaders
- Cluster managers
- Policy makers
- Researchers
- Consultants
- Universities
- Regional/National Development Agencies
- Economic development agencies
- National ministries
- Competitiveness council
- Local Authorities



The TCI European Conference 2018 is promising to be varied. Delegates are invited to observe presentations from industry specialists, challenge business experts on issues of shared interest to every organisation and engage in lively discussions. Industry experts can share information, exchange best practices and develop business opportunities at many occasions during the conference.

If you are not familiar with the TCI Network and their activities, or this is your first conference, please consider taking part in the First time attendees introduction - this will certainly help to maximise the benefits of your participation, will guide you how to plan your sessions as well as to network and create business opportunities.



The TCI European Conference 2018 Committee will jointly design the final programme for the event. We have considered keynote sessions during the mornings for both conference days, while in the afternoons we will offer various parallel sessions, group discussions, opportunities for pre-scheduled 1:2:1 meetings and experience exchange.

CLUSTER TOURS

A full day of a TCI European Conference 2018 is dedicated to site visits to examples of active clusters in the region. Cluster tours are scheduled on Day 1 before the main conference, so there are no overlaps with the rest of the programme and participants can choose not to take part on the cluster visits when arranging their schedule for the conference week.

The cluster tours offer an immersion in the local cluster ecosystem through visits to leading cluster firms, through interaction with cluster teams and leading actors and through access to concrete learning experiences on innovative collaborative projects. Cluster tours reflect the achievements and also the problems faced by the cluster and give valuable insights to the participants on how they are organised and perform ([more information to be found on page 8](#)).

One of the Conference's aims is to foster networking and experience exchange among the delegates and support the development of the latest ideas on competitiveness, clusters and innovation. In line with the main theme of the conference, we have developed several exciting and challenging activities. Stay tuned and keep visiting the official conference website for further announcement (www.tci-europe2018.com)!

The Conference will be open to both, TCI members and non-members. We will take the challenge to welcome more students as ever before!

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE



We will encourage 1:2:1 meetings and open discussion, which will allow delegates to acquire long-lasting business relationships. Participants will also explore the power of analysing and data managing as a key factor in operational success, browse the regions of opportunities and potentials, with a special focus on successful cross-border networks.

We want all delegates to see the Conference as a platform for creative minds, a journey between the clusters of all continents, a hand-shake between “knowledge” and “experience”.

The final programme as well as the conference and meetings formats will be focused entirely on delegates' needs. An open Call for Proposals for presentations will be organised to allow practitioners to show their current work. The sessions in the program will mirror equally the interests of the host region and the rest of Europe. Global senior-level speakers will provide a unique setting in this conference edition, through keynotes and discussions. It is going to be exciting and educational. Each parallel session will be set to highlight the specifics of the topic, as well as to challenge and engage the audience.

SUB-THEMES PREVIEW

- Businesses are sustainable by being economically and socially sustainable
- On the global map-new countries and regions are becoming increasingly important
- Digitalisation changes-a look at possible opportunities for the clusters development
- The future face of clusters' branding in the scope of the marketing mix

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Knowing that all TCI Conferences are always appreciated for their exceptional networking environment, the European edition will offer an unforgettable gala dinner and award ceremony.

After the Cluster tours on Day 1, the delegates will be invited for a networking reception at a historical building in Sofia.

While gracefully mingling and networking with each other, they will continue their journey through the ancient history of Bulgaria.

GALA DINNER

Innovation, technology and sustainable development were some of the topics during the first conference day. To facilitate the formation of an ecosystem for the transfer of knowledge and ideas and to wrap up the presentations from the day, delegates will have the opportunity to experience a new journey - the culinary performance, accompanied by selection of exquisite Bulgarian wines, presented by Sommelier with every course.

During the evening, the TCI European Conference 2018 award ceremony will also take place. Live music and dance opportunities will follow the official part of the evening. Scheduled bus transfers will be announced in the official program of the conference for the comfort of all delegates.

WALKING TOURS

It is all about getting the inspiration to network and build new bridges. The tours are part of the optional program of the conference. Every tour will be a perfect introduction to the host city and its thousands of years of history. We advise delegates to indicate in advance if they want to take part in the tours. Based on the number of pre-booked places, we might schedule more slots and build the best route for gaining maximum experience.

STAY CONNECTED

Start your participation in the TCI European Conference well before the conference week. Use social media to add value to the Conference and expand your network.

Join us on:

 [@tcinetwork](https://twitter.com/tcinetwork), adding the hash tag of the conference #TCIEurope18

 www.linkedin.com/company/tcinetwork

 www.facebook.com/tci.network

CLUSTER TOURS

Playing a vital role within the conference program, the cluster visits are scheduled on Day 1 of the conference. We have defined the themes and sites for the visit, in a way that will showcase the overall development of the regions and will give the best examples of the cluster's operation. Each tour will feature valuable insights about the industry itself, its role within the regional development, the methods used to establish the cluster, challenges met along the way, as well as the successful stories. Though the focus is the learning experience, we will also take the advantage of the visits and will provide further insights from Bulgarian history and culture.



TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION TOUR (SOFIA CITY, SOFIA TECH PARK)

Science and Technology Park is a government-driven project, designed to advance research, innovation and technology growth in Bulgaria. The aim is to become a platform where members of the innovation ecosystem in Bulgaria can meet, share ideas and collaborate with each other. The Science & Technology Park is also a bridge between academia, business and government. When exploring the Park, different sub-tours could be organised, based on the delegates' interests, experience and knowledge.



INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY TOUR (SOFIA CITY)

The foundation "Bulgarian Cluster for Information and Communication Technologies" was created in 2005 as a platform for fruitful dialogue and collaboration between ICT business and the state administration. The foundation ICT Cluster is a cluster initiative supporting emergence and development of clusters in the field of ICT in Bulgaria. The organization's main objective is ICT SME growth and development through promotion of cooperation, building competitiveness and creation of new business opportunities. ICT Cluster is a horizontal organization. It has ambitions to create and to be a mentor of successful vertical clusters in different segments of ICT sector. ICT Cluster is recognized as one of the core centers of cluster knowledge in Bulgaria.



VISITING "INDUSTRIAL CAPITAL OF BULGARIA" (PLOVDIV CITY)

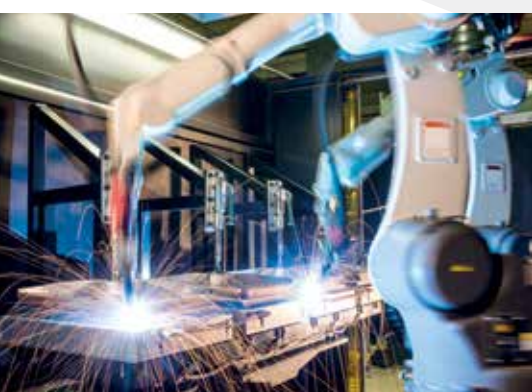
Special focus on Machine building & Automotive, Transport & Logistic

Trakia Economic Zone (TEZ) is one of the biggest economic projects in Bulgaria, a public-private partnership that includes seven major industrial zones in the region of Plovdiv and it is actively supported by 9 municipalities and 2 clusters.

Machine building & Automotive:

- Producing machines for food & drinks, home appliances, furniture, pharmaceutical and tobacco industries. The Machine building is rapidly growing, attracting renowned international holdings.
- Automotive – one of the fastest growing sectors in terms of the number of foreign investors operating in Plovdiv Region. Successful examples: Magna Powertrain, SMC Corporation, Sensata Technologies, SKF Group, ABB and many others. The production is entirely export oriented and meets all of the high standards of the market leaders.

Transport & Logistic. The Region is characterized with intermodal terminal for a higher quality of freight transport services offering combination of different transport types. Major Bulgarian and international companies in the sector have operations in the Region.



MECHATRONICS AND AUTOMATION TOUR (BLAGOEVGRAD CITY)

MECHATRONICS AND AUTOMATION cluster was formally established on December 22, 2006. On 14.05.2009 the Cluster was reregistered as a legal nonprofit organization. The Cluster is one of the first Bulgarian Clusters and consists of 22 companies, research organizations and NGOs in the field of mechatronics and automation. Members are high-tech companies; scientific bodies in the field of instrument building, hardware and software; leading Bulgarian NGOs. Mechatronics (or Mechanical and Electronics Engineering) is the synergistic combination of mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, control engineering, systems design engineering, hardware and software to create useful products.

VENUE & ACCOMMODATION



VENUE

The TCI European Conference 2018 will take place in Hotel Marinela. The five star hotel was designed by the legendary Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa. Marinela Hotel Sofia is one of the iconic buildings of Sofia and is located in the green zone of the capital. The delegates will enjoy the breathtaking views to the nightlights of Sofia and the beauty of the Vitosha Mountain. The interior combines tradition and comfort with innovation and modern design. One of the biggest advantages of Marinela hotel is its meetings & conference space. The complex has 13 meeting rooms, the largest ballroom and conference hall in the capital city and a remarkable room on the top floor with unique views of Sofia.

HOTELS & ACCOMMODATION

There are two official hotels: Hotel Marinela and Hilton Sofia.

HOTEL MARINELA – www.hotel-marinela.com

Address: 100, James Boucher Boulevard, 1407 Sofia, Bulgaria

The hotel is located on an area of 30,000 square meters, there are 442 rooms and suites, including the largest Presidential Suite in Bulgaria. Marinela Hotel Sofia is a place, which is unique for the whole Balkan Peninsula where everyone can escape from the busy city life, even though it is located in the very centre.

Room rate: €126 single / €137 double

Rate details: Rates are per room, per night, including breakfast, WIFI and VAT.

Category: *****

HILTON SOFIA - www.hilton.com/Sofia

Address: 1, Bulgaria Boulevard, 1421 Sofia, Bulgaria

Minutes from Sofia Congress Center and the famed Nevsky Cathedral, the Hilton Sofia combines outstanding service and location for business and leisure. It is also on a walking distance from Hotel Marinela, where the conference will be taking place.

Room rate: €142 single / €162 double

Rate details: Rates are per room, per night, including breakfast, WIFI and VAT.

Category: *****

HOTEL RESERVATION PROCEDURE

Reservations will be available from the official TCI European Conference website, with a link to the hotel reservation system and PROMO code to secure special rates for delegates.

www.tci-europe2018.com

We strongly advise you to consider and book your accommodation at earliest possible, as due to EU presidency, Sofia will be very busy and pre-occupied for the period January – June 2018.

USEFUL INFORMATION



ABOUT BULGARIA

Bulgaria is located in Southeast Europe, in the northeast part of the Balkan Peninsula. This geographic location places it on the crossroad between Europe, Asia and Africa. Bulgaria is situated closer to the Equator than the pole. It falls within the southern part of the temperate climate zone with subtropical influence. Bulgaria's favorable geographic location creates excellent preconditions for the development of tourism. Bulgaria is also a transport crossroad, affording access to Western Europe, the Near East and the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. A series of major European transport corridors pass through Bulgaria. These corridors include the international highways that connect Western and Central Europe the Near East and the Middle East.

Bulgaria borders to the north with Romania, to the east with the Black Sea, to the south with Turkey and Greece, and to the west with Macedonia and Serbia.

KEY FACTS BOX:

Area: 110,994 sq.m

Capital: Sofia

Government: Republic

Head of State: President Rumen Radev since 2017

Head of government: Boiko Borisov, since April 2017

Electricity: 220-24 volts AC, 50Hz. European plugs with two round pins are standard

Currency: Lev (BGN; symbol лв) = 100 stotinki. Notes are in denominations of 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. The Lev is tied to the Euro at a fixed rate; 1 EUR = 1.95583 lev

ATM: ATMs are widespread

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 0900 -1600

Currency exchange: Visitors are advised to exchange money at banks, at large hotels and independent currency exchange offices, where the rates are clearly displayed.

Bulgaria duty free: If you are travelling from within the EU, there is no limit on the amount or value of goods you may import, providing your goods are for personal consumption. If you are arriving from a non-EU country, the following goods maybe imported into Bulgaria by persons over 17 years of age without incurring customs duty:

- 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco (if arriving by air)
- 40 cigarettes or 20 cigarillos or 10 cigars or 50g (if arriving overland)
- 4L of wine and 16L of beer and 1L of spirit over 22% or 2L of alcoholic beverages less than 22%

Time zone: Eastern European Time, which is two hours ahead of Greenwich time.

ABOUT SOFIA

During the last years, the city of Sofia has rapidly accelerated its development as a European capital city. We are witnessing the progress of the city's digital entrepreneurship environment as well as sustainable growth of the circular economy. Moreover, Sofia is a safe, inspiring and culturally rich city that offer conference delegates the unique opportunity to explore world-class cultural attractions, monuments and natural environment.

ACCESSIBILITY

Sofia is a city well-connected from every corner of the world with direct flights from: Athens, Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Barcelona, Bucharest, Belgrade, Istanbul, Kiev, Larnaca, Madrid, Malaga, Malta, Milan, Moscow, Palma de Mallorca, Paphos, Prague, Rome, Vienna, Warsaw, Zurich, Doha, Tel Aviv, Trieste, Paris, Manchester, London, Dortmund, Eindhoven, Brussels, Dubai...and many more.

PASSPORT & VISA

To enter Bulgaria, a passport valid for at least three months beyond the length of stay is required by all nationals referred to table below, except (1) EU nationals holding a valid national ID card. EU nationals are only required to provide evidence of their EU nationality and identity in order to be admitted to any EU member state.

Nationals not mentioned in the chart below are advised to contact the closest Bulgarian Embassies & Consulates for visa requirements.

	Passport Required	Return Ticket Required	Visa Required
British	yes	no	no
Australian	yes	yes	no
Canadian	yes	yes	no
USA	yes	yes	no
Other EU	1	no	no

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

All the delegates will be able to register online at the 2018 TCI European Conference official webpage www.tci-europe2018.com.

Type of Registration	Early bird On or before 19 January 2018	Standard On or before 19 February 2018	Late /on site After 19 February 2018
TCI Member Delegate	€ 445	€ 545	€ 645
Non-TCI Member Delegate	€ 545	€ 645	€ 745

Registration fees are inclusive of VAT.

Registration fees include:

- Full access to all conference sessions, including conference cluster tours and clusters introductory sessions;
- Entrance to Exhibition area;
- Transfers between conference/dinner venues and for cluster tours;
- Lunches, coffee breaks, evening events and networking sessions as indicated in the conference programme;
- Conference bag and printed materials.

Registration fees do not include:

- Travel to and from Sofia;
- Hotel accommodation in Sofia;
- Airport transfers.

Registration fees of co-delegates and accompanying persons are to be published on Conference website in due course. To get information about available registration discounts and student deductions, please refer to www.tci-europe2018.com



A TCI Network conference

Host & organising alliance



the global practitioners network for competitiveness, clusters and innovation



In a partnership with



BULGARIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES PROMOTION AGENCY

TCI and the organising committee would like to thank the following supporters:

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@tcinetwork, adding the hash tag of the conference #TCIEurope18



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www.tci-europe2018.com

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