ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match Event

" Design the Future, Hack the Waste: The Full-Lifecycle Mobility Challenge"

From visionary eco-design to the gritty realities of end-of-life recovery, we are tackling the sector's toughest bottlenecks. Join the mission to rethink, reuse, remanufacture, and recycle the entire value chain, conquering the complex challenges of plastics, advanced composites, batteries and others.

RULES OF THE COMPETITION

What are the Hack&Match events:

The "Hack&Match" events represent **a smart, easy and quick way to help European companies willing to answer market needs or to scale market opportunities find potential concrete ideas and solutions through 2 consecutive days teaming-up with tech-savvy European SMEs and/or experts in the topic**.

Organiser

This Joint ERCI/ELCA Hack&Match Event is jointly organised by the ERCI (European Railway Clusters Initiative) and the **ELCA (European Lightweight Cluster Alliance).**

European Railway Clusters Initiative (ERCI) is the leading meta-cluster of the railway industry in Europe uniting 18 innovation clusters from 17 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, United Kingdom). They connect the ideas and interests of over 2.000 small and medium-sized businesses in the Railway industry as well as of large companies and research organisations based in the territorial ecosystems in Europe. ERCI is their voice and lobby at European level.

European Lightweight Clusters Alliance (ELCA) is a collaborative initiative that aims to accelerate the adoption of lightweight materials in strategic industries. Mobility is the primary focus of the alliance, but applications in other lightweighting-related sectors are also targeted; including energy, health care, defence and construction. The alliance is creating a unique inclusive business framework for exploring lightweight-driven market opportunities. The main players from established industries and research institutions can collaborate and facilitate activities to put the lightweight technologies into practice.

The focus of the ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match Event:

From visionary eco-design to the gritty realities of end-of-life recovery, we are tackling the sector's toughest bottlenecks. Join the mission to **rethink, reuse, remanufacture, and recycle the entire value chain**, conquering the complex **challenges of plastics, advanced composites, batteries and others**.

Eligibility of participants

The Hack&Match events are meant to boost European SMEs through the use of all Advanced Technologies for Resilience and Adaptability of SMEs. The participants can therefore be:

CHALLENGE PROVIDERS:

- SMEs (including start-ups)
- Mid-Caps
- Large companies

SOLUTION PROVIDERS:

- Tech-savvy SMEs, start-ups
- Researchers
- Technology centres
- EDIH, Digital Innovation Hubs
- Accelerators and other similar scale-up organisations.

Participants don't need to be/have been involved in the project's other actions to participate in this Hack&Match event.

How does it work?

1) **CHALLENGE PROVIDERS APPLY FROM MAY 18th TO JUNE 12nd 2026.**

Any eligible organisation is invited to submit through the dedicated form one or more challenges (needs) which it is facing and would like to find solutions at the moment.

2) THEN WE WILL LAUNCH A "CALL FOR SOLUTIONS" TO APPLY FROM JUNE 15th TO JULY 10th, 2026. We will invite organisations throughout Europe to team-up with you to help you find one or more solutions to the needs submitted.

3) THEN WE WILL INFORM BOTH TYPES OF APPLICANTS ABOUT THE COMPOSITION OF THEIR TEAM AND SEND THE INSTRUCTIONS TO JOIN. The applicants will be informed **FROM JULY 13th TO 20th, 2026.**

4) GET PREPARED FOR COLLABORATING DURING 2 DAYS OF HACK&MATCH TO SOLVE NEEDS - SAVE THE DATES FROM NOW. The Hack&Match event will run **from JULY 21st to 22nd, 2026** in **100% online mode**.

Participants must ensure their presence at least in these moments:

- **21 JULY - From 9:00 to 10:30:** Kick-Off Meeting - Expert Key-note Speech - Presentation of the teams - Explanation of the rules and working modalities.
- **21 JULY - From 10:30 to 11:30:** Team-up with your Solution Provider(s) - Reciprocal presentations - Explain carefully your needs - Start finding one or more solutions. Start drafting the slides and word document to explain the solution. **Agree with your Solution Provider(s) the next online meeting times to develop your solution**.
- **22 JULY - By 15:30** you must return to the organisers the 2 deliverables explaining the solution(s) developed.
- **22 JULY - From 16:00 to 17:30:** Organisers' recap of the solutions of each Team.

All discussions and collaborations will be possible online in Teams, segmented according to where the ideas/solutions aim to impact. The Teams will be composed by **minimum 2 and maximum 8 persons, including representatives of the Challenge provider, of the Solution Provider(s) and the Tutors**. During the Hack& Match period, the defined Teams will exchange and define innovation challenges, mainly based on your expressed needs, and try together to find and deliver at least one idea/solution.

The representatives of ERCI and ELCA cluster partners will act as **Tutors** to help the participants achieve the most effective participation and results before and during the Hack&Match event.

As a follow-up of the Hack&Match event, and according to your answers and inputs during the Hack&Match phase, we will help you connect with further SMEs which want to find solutions and innovate on the same topics, also with readily-available solutions. That kind of cooperation in a later phase might grow into beneficial business relations.

Why should you participate?

Participating in the ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match event represent:

- for traditional European SMEs – and also larger ones – operating in the target industrial ecosystems an opportunity to get an overview of the different Advanced Technologies that can be implemented in their companies to develop new features/innovations in their products/services, increase productivity, reduce costs, develop new digital business models and facilitate their green transition
- for tech-savvy SMEs, an opportunity to promote their solutions/knowledge and open-up new potential collaboration
- for any other organisation, an opportunity to co-develop ideas and promote partnering opportunities.

Modality of participation: Links

Registration will take place in two waves:

- **From May 18th to June 12th, 2026 → Call for Challenges** for the Hack&Match topic "**Design the Future, Hack the Waste: The Full-Lifecycle Mobility Challenge"**
  Register link: https://forms.gle/HVfPysrKrME5QRYs6

- From **June 15th to July 10th, 2026 → Call for solutions** in priority from Tech-savvy SMEs
  Register link: https://forms.gle/5vueKYkKNPhegDA66
  (Note: This link will be active only from June 15th, 2026)

More than one entry per company, with different participants, is allowed per company both for the Call for Challenges and the Call for Solutions.

Any incomplete entry containing false information or not meeting the criteria defined in these rules will not be considered if the organisers decide.

The participants will then receive an email from DITECFER (representing ERCI & ELCA) confirming their participation in the event.

The costs (human effort, etc.) incurred by the participants to participate in the Hack&Match event remain at their own expense.

The ERCI/ELCA partners will organise by themselves the competing Teams according to the answers to the registration form. The Organisers can change the Teams at any time during the event, if deemed suitable to ensure a quality result for the participants.

All the work on the project should be done during the Hack&Match time. The Teams can use an idea they had before the event. The Teams can work on a statement that they have worked on before. In such a case, the participants must clearly define what was previously developed and newly created. Adding new features to existing projects is allowed. However, the Jury members will only consider new functionalities or features added during the Hack&Match in determining the winners.

The Teams can receive advice and support from the ERCI/ELCA Tutors during the 2 days of the Hack&Match.

Two (2) deliverables will be asked to the Teams at the end of the event:

- 1 application form (text document, 3 pages maximum) presenting – according to a given template – which problem the Team decided to solve, presentation of the solution, its benefits, how to implement the idea, etc.
- 1 presentation (powerpoint document, 5 slides maximum) summarizing the concept of the solution.

More information about deliverables and awarding criteria will be given to all participants at the beginning of the event.

And the winner is…

A European Jury composed by ERCI/ELCA clusters' representatives and expert third parties not having been directly involved in the Hack&Match will evaluate the solutions submitted by the Teams.

The Jury members will reward **the most innovative and valuable idea** in relation to the ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match Topic. Scoring will be based on several criteria which will be communicated to the participants during the event.

After determining the winner, the Jury will also award **a special "Coup de Coeur" prize** to a second Team whose work has caught the attention of most Jury members.

The results will be announced during the Awarding Ceremony of ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match event at InnoTrans 2026 exhibition (date to be defined) following a deliberation meeting with the Jury members.

The decisions of the Jury members are final and without appeal.

Teams or companies can be disqualified from the competition at the Organisers' discretion. Reasons might include but are not limited to breaking the Competition Rules or other unsporting behaviour.

ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match Event – Agenda Recap

From 18/05/2026 to 12/06/2026	**Opening of registrations 👉 Call for challenges** Registration form is available here from 18/05/2026: https://forms.gle/HVfPysrKrME5QRYs6 *Target: in priority traditional companies of ERCI and ELCA metaclusters, but is allowed also to any other European interested company.*
From 15/06/2026 to 10/07/2026	**Opening of registrations 👉 Call for solutions** Registration form will be available here from 15/06/2026: https://forms.gle/5vueKYkKNPhegDA66 *Target: in priority Tech-savvy SMEs, but also other organisations.*
21/07/2026 from 09:00 to 10:30 CEST	**Launch event of the ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match event (online)** Programme: - Short presentation of the ERCI & ELCA - Keynote Speech on the topic - Presentation of the Hack&Match event agenda & functioning - Meet the Teams - Launch of the H&M event and teamwork part
21/07/2026 at 10.30 CEST to 22/07/2026 at 15:30 CEST	**Teamwork part** *Each participant will have time to discover the other companies/organisations in its Team and to exchange regularly with them in order to identify common problems and possible solutions together. The ERCI & ELCA clusters' representatives will be present throughout the Hack&Match event to help, support and challenge the participants in their collaborative innovation process. All exchanges will take place 100% online on MS Teams platform.*
22/07/2026 at 15:30 CEST	**End of the Teamwork part** *Each Team must deliver its results by filling 2 deliverables, provided by the organisers during the teamwork part, summarising the challenge they have decided to address and the solutions they wish to implement to solve it.*
22/07/2026, 16:00 to 17:30 CEST	**Closure meeting** *Last meeting of the event, with all participants, organisers and experts. A brief presentation of the solutions is made. An opportunity for the ERCI & ELCA partners to thank all the stakeholders for their involvement and to give the next steps of the event and of the project. A post-event satisfaction survey will be sent to participants.*
From 23/07/2026 to 31/07/2026	**Jury evaluation** *All presented solutions will be evaluated by the Jury team created in advance and composed by the ERCI & ELCA Clusters representatives and experts.*
22-25/09/2026 at InnoTrans 2026 (dtb)	**Awarding ceremony** *During the InnoTrans 2026 exhibition will be announced the winners of the Joint H&M event (Winner and Coup De Coeur Winner).*

The organisers have the right to change the announced programme without any liability.

Intellectual property

The participants promise to produce, during the competition, creations that comply with the laws and regulations in force in Europe and over which they alone hold the rights. Furthermore, the participants guarantee, in particular to the organisers, against any act of counterfeiting and fraudulent use of intellectual property rights owned by third parties.

All participants retain all intellectual property rights to their intellectual and material creations developed by Hack&Match event.

By registering, the participant authorizes the organisers, free of charge and 5 (five) years, to exploit, and in particular to distribute, reproduce and exhibit its image, fixed by all means and on any medium, including photographic or video, made during the event as part of their internal and / or external communication, and especially on social networks where the organisers are present.

Responsibility

Participation in the competition is the whole responsibility of the participants.

The organisers cannot be responsible if one or more participants cannot connect when registering. Similarly, the organisers cannot be responsible if one or more participants cannot participate in the Hack&Match event due to any technical fault or problem linked to an impediment or congestion of the network.

The organisers reserve the right to cancel the ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match event, shorten it, extend it, postpone it, or modify the conditions at any time if required. However, they shall not be held liable in this respect.

The organisers cannot be responsible for any damage, material or immaterial, which may be caused directly or indirectly to the participants, their property, and their computer equipment and/or data stored there during the event.

GDPR & personal data

The contact details of any person who registers and participates in the Hack&Match event will be collected and processed electronically. In accordance with the art. 13 Regolation EU n. 679/2016 as in force, the persons wishing to participate are informed that the communication of their contact information is mandatory for the validation of the participations (failing this, the participation will be considered as null and void) and that they are only communicated to the organisers, for the only purpose of the competition and of the project Reporting. The participants, particularly the winners, authorize the organisers to publish or disseminate their first and last names on their communication media.

Each person who has registered on this Hack&Match event has the right to access, modify, rectify, and delete information concerning him/her by writing an email to: contact@eurailclusters.com.

General regulations

Registration and participation in the ERCI/ELCA Joint Hack&Match event imply full acceptance of the eligibility conditions and the terms and conditions of participation in the competition. Registration and participation in the competition also imply full acceptance of these rules.

The organisers will decide any difficulty relating to the interpretation or application of these rules without appeal. Any registration or participation that does not comply with these rules or with the spirit of the competition can lead to a deletion of the award.

The organiser reserves the right to cancel or modify these rules for reasons dictated by internal or external circumstances or force majeure. In the event of a pure and simple cancellation, no charge of any kind may be made against the organiser. In the event of a change to these rules, the organiser undertakes to inform the candidates of the content of the rules at the latest two weeks before the assessments are held.

Any dispute concerning one or more points in the rules and any dispute arising from this competition will be decided without appeal after deliberation by the Jury.