



# 11th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns

BIDDING PACKAGE

OCTOBER 2025

## **INCLUDES:**

- Bid Submission Format
- Conference Outline and Requirements
- Annex 1 Letter of Commitment Template
- Annex 2 Budget Template

**Please carefully check and consider all information and confirm your commitment to meet all requirements, including all budget elements, through a letter headed paper stating the organisation's interest and readiness to host the conference.**

Prepared by the ICLEI European Secretariat.

Please direct all questions and bid to:

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## 1. Bid submission format/evaluation

### Bid submission format

The bid submission should include the following sections:

#### 1. Details of contact persons:

- **Legal representative:** Formal representative who will sign future agreements and contracts
- **Staff contact:** Contact for bidding submission and further contacts

2. **A letter of commitment** on letter headed paper stating the organisation's interest and readiness to host the conference. See Annex 1 for the Template Letter of Commitment.

3. The **main body** of the submission should contain:

##### 3.1 An executive summary (max. one page), including:

- reasons for interest in hosting the conference
- foreseen benefits for the host organisation
- successes and interest related to local sustainable development (max. one page)
- examples of key events organised by the host organisation

##### 3.2 An explanation of how the host organisation intends to meet the requirements as summarised in the "Conference Outline and Requirements" below; i.e.:

- summary of funding sources and, if applicable, an indication of contributions from other parties, including in the region and/or at national level, both from public authorities as well as from private entities (max. half page)
- available budget; indicate available budget using Annex 2 Budget template
- short description of potential venue(s) including aspects that will make the conference sustainable (max. one page)
- first ideas for exhibition, catering, evening events (max one page)
- possible accommodation facilities (max. half page)

##### 3.3 An indication of the host's staff capacity regarding the host's responsibilities as listed under Roles and Cooperation (see pages 4 and 5). (max. one page)

Supporting documents such as venue leaflets, transport connections and maps can be included in Annexes.

### Evaluation

Rather than any specific format to be met, the commitment of the potential host and the ability to carry out a venture of this size jointly with ICLEI Europe will matter most in the evaluation. Details and modes of cooperation can be discussed jointly once a host has been selected.

We hope this information helps you in preparing the bid, and we look forward to receiving your bidding documents for the 11<sup>th</sup> ESCT conference.

**Deadline for submission of bids: 16 February 2026**

## 2. Conference Outline and Requirements

FRAMEWORK	
<b>Title of the Conference Series</b>	European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns
<b>Date</b>	2027 (details to be discussed)
<b>Duration</b>	<p>The conference will consist of a “core event” of a maximum of 3 days. Additionally, there may be pre- and post-conference elements as appropriate.</p> <p>Initial structure:</p> <p><i>Day 1: Morning:</i> Pre-conference events (could start day before)</p> <p><i>Day 1 Midday – Day 3: Midday:</i> Core event (including site events)</p> <p><i>Day 3 afternoon:</i> Post-conference events</p>
<b>Framework</b>	<p>ICLEI Europe is opening a bidding process for the next European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns. Cities in Europe are invited to express their interest in hosting and funding this unique event, which is tentatively planned for 2027. The core event of a maximum duration of 3 days leaves the possibility for pre- and post-events.</p> <p>The next European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns builds on the success and legacy of European local governments to exchange views and experiences, and commit to advancing sustainability in Europe. It follows the series of conferences held in Aalborg 1994, Lisbon 1996, Hanover 2000, Aalborg 2004, Seville 2007, Dunkerque 2010, Geneva 2013, the Basque Country 2016, Mannheim 2020 and Aalborg 2024. These conferences mark milestones for the progress and achievements in local sustainability in Europe, amongst others through the launch of the Aalborg Charter, the Aalborg Commitments, the Basque Declaration, the Mannheim Message and the Aalborg Conditions. The platform brings together the key policies on urban sustainability and offers a legacy to the previous conferences. The <a href="#">Aalborg Conditions (2024)</a> reflect on 30 years of progress from the <a href="#">Aalborg Charter (1994)</a> and <a href="#">Aalborg Commitments (2004)</a>, outlining the potential and needs of local governments for integrated climate and sustainability strategies across Europe. Outcomes of the European Sustainable Cities and Towns conferences have been influencing political agendas and driving actual policies and urban transformation for more than three decades. <b>For more information:</b> <a href="https://conferences.sustainablecities.eu">conferences.sustainablecities.eu</a></p>
<b>Languages</b>	English will be the main language during the conference. Simultaneous interpretation for plenary sessions is not a must, but is considered advantageous. The same goes for one parallel session during the entire conference.

PURPOSE AND CHARACTER	
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The host of the European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns will build on an established movement of European local governments that are committed to implementing sustainable development. The purpose of the Conference is to share practical tools, challenges and inspiring ideas to step up the local transformation to sustainability. It will build up the common spirit, exchange and cooperation, and facilitate the dialogue across levels of governance and with relevant stakeholders from business, NGOs and research to support the local sustainability agenda.</p>

	The conference will build on the outcomes of previous conferences, notably the latest Aalborg Conditions (2024). Specific objectives for the 11th conference edition need to be decided between ICLEI, the host city/region and relevant actors within the European policy context. These objectives should reflect topical issues of the current political debate in the time leading up to the event. A message or outcome document for the upcoming conference will need to be further discussed and considered.
<b>Character</b>	The conference serves as a true platform for exchange and is organised to promote creativity and synergy between participants and aims to provide motivation, information, and enthusiasm. Personal interactions on site and a warm atmosphere are considered key. The set-up should therefore differ from that of a traditional conference. An open atmosphere in which exchange and overall learning can happen is essential. Bidding cities/regions are asked to be creative in identifying and proposing potential venues and online platforms.
<b>Benefits to the local host</b>	There are many benefits to be gained from hosting an ESCT conference. The conference can be used as a leverage for the local/ regional sustainability transformation following the conference. The conference also contributes to the city's/region's profile in terms of marketing its vision on sustainability, touristic attractiveness and general public relations. Bidders are requested to indicate in their bid the benefits they anticipate to obtain from hosting the European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns.
<b>A sustainable event</b>	The conference organisation should duly apply sustainability criteria before, during and after the conference. Potential host cities/regions should outline how they intend to ensure the event to be sustainable, including among others the approach to CO <sub>2</sub> compensation to offset participants' air travel.

## ROLES & COOPERATION

<b>Partnership</b>	The ESCT conference shall be organised in cooperation between ICLEI and the host city/region. ICLEI and the host city/region may in mutual agreement invite other organisations and networks to be involved in the conference preparation.
<b>Roles and cooperation</b>	<p>Tasks and responsibilities will be shared between ICLEI and the host city/region.</p> <p><b>ICLEI</b> leads the conference planning, programme development and implementation, speaker invitations and management, development of the website in line with <a href="https://conferences.sustainablecities.eu">conferences.sustainablecities.eu</a>, selection and content maintenance of the online conference platform, registration management and overall participants' management.</p> <p><b>The host city/region</b> leads on the securing of financial resources with the support of ICLEI Europe, and the communication with in-country national contacts, input to programme preparation, local logistics, venue, local/ regional/ national media contacts and processing and monitoring of incoming participant fees through its bank account.</p> <p>Conference preparations and implementation shall be carried out professionally and in team spirit by all parties involved.</p> <p>A share of tasks will be defined and agreed by the partners involved.</p>
<b>Responsibilities of the local host team</b>	<p>A local host team should be composed of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· A senior local official who would be available as the main contact and decision-maker during the entire planning and implementation phase. This person's main task would be to facilitate and support the contacts to the host and all national</li> </ul>

	<p>partners, and to prepare local contracts and continuously supervise the work with local service providers. This person must be able to communicate effectively in English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 additional staff should provide continuous administrative support (such as political and media relations and technical support); a gradually increasing support capacity will be required. Towards the conference implementation, all staff should be able to dedicate a minimum of 75% of their Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) capacity to the event (see also budget file). The team should include staff with strong English language competency.</li> <li>In the last 4-6 weeks, 5-10 staff persons should support the preparations.</li> <li>During the event, 10-20 local conference support staff (ideally from the municipality) and around 20 volunteers will be needed. This team should be able to communicate effectively in English.</li> <li>The main tasks the host team will be expected to undertake are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall on-site management</li> <li>Contacts to co-funders and sponsors</li> <li>Provision of support staff</li> <li>Input into the programme, considering that the conference will have a European focus with a close link to European policies</li> <li>Exhibition</li> <li>Side events</li> <li>Cultural elements and entertainment</li> <li>Press relations</li> <li>Local logistics (e.g. venue/studio, translation, catering, accommodation, 'sustainable event' concept)</li> <li>Conference implementation support (e.g. reception &amp; information desk, participants care, establishment of IT-services, security)</li> <li>Documentation (e.g. photographer)</li> <li>Post-conference wrap-up</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Character of cooperation and communication</b>	<p>Professional management and a sense of 'working as a team' is required from both sides. Careful planning and highly motivated implementation guarantee high quality and timeliness. A commitment to meeting the time plan and to respecting the jointly defined deadlines is required.</p> <p>A communication procedure will be established to ensure a smooth working procedure and effective decision-making.</p>
<b>Proposed cooperation with partners</b>	<p>Cooperation partners may be proposed by the bidding city, especially in the case of co-funding. Partners such as local government associations of the host country, regional governments, national ministries, etc. are welcome.</p>

## PARTICIPANTS

<b>Number of participants</b>	We are expecting 450-500 participants in total.
<b>Target groups</b>	<p>Political and technical representatives of all European cities/regions interested in, or working on, policies, strategies and actions for sustainable development, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signatories of the Aalborg Charter and the Aalborg Commitments;</li> <li>Endorsers of the Basque Declaration;</li> <li>Signatories of the Mannheim Message;</li> <li>Signatories of the Aalborg Conditions;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signatories of the Covenant of Mayors;</li> <li>• Applicants, finalists and winners of the European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards;</li> <li>• Local governments involved in projects and initiatives related to ICLEI Europe's topical areas, such as CIVITAS, Smart Cities, Network Nature, Resilience, Procurement, international cooperation/ Global Gateway etc.</li> </ul> <p>Further target groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European institutions, agencies and banks</li> <li>• Representatives of strategic partner organisations, including other local government associations, NGOs, project partners, etc.</li> <li>• Representatives of national governments, esp. of the hosting country and beyond</li> <li>• Funders and donors of local government projects</li> <li>• Selected national and international experts</li> <li>• Selected business and the media</li> <li>• Representatives from the local/ regional host and national governments</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	<p>Participants should reflect a regional and gender balance; however, a relatively higher number of representatives from the host country/ region may be expected. A balanced geographical attendance may be supported by offering funding support to participants from countries with lower economic performance. Reach and engagement of online participants is also required.</p>
<b>Participation fee</b>	<p>The participant registration fee will be agreed on between the organising partners. It should be an amount that is affordable to participants from all countries. The host should be ready to administer the participant fees, i.e. have a bank account available to which participants can transfer the fees, be able to provide invoices and together with ICLEI have a system in place to monitor the paid fees.</p> <p>The proposed fee categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full fee for private sector</li> <li>• Full fee for public sector / NGO / non-profit</li> <li>• Reduced fee for ICLEI Members</li> <li>• Reduced fee for parallel session speakers</li> <li>• No fee for host city staff, ICLEI staff, ICLEI Regional and Global Executive Committee members, VIP invitees, plenary and key speakers.</li> </ul>

## PROGRAMME

<b>Components of the core event</b>	<p>Components of the core event are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plenaries with high-level speakers</li> <li>• Panel discussions</li> <li>• Workshops to exchange experiences</li> <li>• Mayors programme (including a Mayors only session and lunch)</li> <li>• Open exchange in more informal small groups</li> <li>• Exhibition</li> <li>• Local site visits / field trips</li> <li>• Evening programme on invitation of the local host</li> </ul> <p>The final programme will be developed under the responsibility of ICLEI.</p>
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## FINANCIAL ASPECTS

<b>Financial support</b>	ESCT conferences can only take place with the generous support of the host city and partners/ sponsors. Bidders should be able to guarantee the provision of the conference budget. The budget may include contributions from other parties, including in the region and/or at national level, both from public authorities as well as from private entities. ICLEI Europe will provide support in the development of the overall budget concept for the conference and in obtaining additional partners. ICLEI Europe will also conduct its own sponsoring efforts in close coordination with the host.
<b>Budget categories</b>	<p>The following budget categories need to be reflected in the conference budget:</p> <p><u>Covered by the host and partners and arranged through a contract with ICLEI:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programme, speakers, announcements, website technical development and maintenance, overall support, partner involvement, participants management (ICLEI staff and other costs).</li> <li>2. Mailing, communication costs etc.</li> <li>3. Conference material and marketing: logo, prints of announcements, conference material for participants, website and app set-up and maintenance, etc.</li> <li>4. Conference facilitator remuneration and speakers travel/ accommodation/ fee</li> <li>5. Travel support to participants from countries with lower economic performance</li> <li>6. ICLEI staff travel for the preparation and implementation</li> </ol> <p>The contribution of the local host to these costs is expected to be 350.000 EUR depending on the details of the arrangements. In addition to the mentioned host city contribution, ICLEI will strive to find additional resources to cover costs through partners and sponsors. The partner/ sponsor approach will be coordinated with the host city.</p> <p><u>Local costs covered by the host directly</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Local office (local staff, local office costs by host city)</li> <li>8. Studio/Venue and technical equipment</li> <li>9. Interpretation (# of languages to be proposed)</li> <li>10. Further local implementation (excursions, local transport)</li> <li>11. Catering</li> <li>12. A system for collecting participant fees and provision of related invoices, if needed</li> <li>13. Documentation and follow up</li> <li>14. Miscellaneous</li> </ol> <p>These costs depend on local circumstances.</p> <p>A Budget Template is provided.</p>
<b>Previous experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Local costs are usually administered directly by the host. All other costs are subject to agreement.</li> <li>· Sponsorships with local business/ banks/ organisations and partnerships with for example other government levels may cover parts of these costs to any extent possible.</li> </ul>



## LOGISTICS

<b>Venue</b>	<p>The venue should be located reasonably close to the city centre or alternatively in a special or unique environment. The location should offer a friendly, informal atmosphere, including many possibilities for small meetings and exchange. Venue rooms should have daylight, good acoustics and be flexible in their structure, in order to allow creative set-ups (if necessary).</p> <p>The venue shall offer a plenary room for a minimum of 500 (and up to 1,000 people), 3 subplenary rooms of approximately 150-200 persons each, and at least 8-10 further rooms for 50-80 people (mixed size) each. It should be certified ISO 14000 (or similar). All efforts should be made towards greening the event. All rooms should be equipped with LCD projector, computer connected with the LCD projector, overhead projector, screen and sound system. The entire venue should have wifi.</p> <p>Further, a room for the conference secretariat should be available (more details will be provided later).</p> <p>Open spaces between the rooms are important to allow for a central registration area, coffee breaks, small corners for spontaneous meetings and areas for the dissemination of material.</p> <p>If the above cannot be found in one venue, the facilities should be close to another, in order to avoid transfer problems.</p>
<b>Exhibition</b>	<p>The conference exhibition will offer cities and regions, and partner organisations the opportunity to display information on their work, their communities and their achievements in the area of environmental and sustainable development.</p> <p>The Exhibition should be centrally located within the venue and offer space for at least 30 stands of at least 1-2 m<sup>2</sup> each.</p> <p>The fee for renting stands for public organisations/ projects should mainly be meant to cover costs. It should include the basic material needed (stand walls, 1 table and electricity). Extra technical equipment for each stand will be covered by the exhibitor. The stands can also be part of sponsorship packages for business, in which case other financial arrangements may apply. A number of stands must be provided free of charge to key conference partners (to be defined).</p>
<b>Conference app</b>	<p>The use of an app to engage participants during the conference can be a useful feature to support the successful delivery of an event. A conference app is recommended to facilitate networking and communication between participants as well as between participants and organizers. The app can also serve to reduce the production of paper materials considerably.</p>
<b>Transport</b>	<p>The conference area should be connected to the train station, airport and the city centre by an efficient and reliable public transport system. Should this not be the case, transport will have to be organised from and to the train station or airport on the arrival and departure days. Furthermore, transport to the city centre, at certain times, should be facilitated. On arrival at the train station and airport, participants should find someone to welcome them and to provide directions.</p>
<b>Accommodation</b>	<p>All participants should be able to choose between approximately 4 hotels close to the venue (ie: 5-15 minutes walking distance). Hotels should implement ecological standards, ie: ISO 14000 certification or other sustainable certification. Hotels will need to be of various categories with varying price ranges. Hotel categories and prices should reflect the fact that local governments' budgets are limited and representatives from low-income countries may wish to attend.</p>



<b>Catering</b>	Lunch should be provided for at least the core event days and served within the venue. Coffee breaks should take place close to the meeting rooms. Plans for a welcome reception and a dinner should also be included in the bid. Menus should reflect the variety of participants and their cultural-religious background. A variety of vegetarian/ vegan dishes should be on offer, and if possible- The food provided should come from local, fair trade, organic food producers. In addition, requests from registered participants for catering for religious preferences have to be fulfilled.
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## TIMELINE

16 March 2026	Deadline for submission of bids
Late March 2026	Decision on host city
End of April 2026	Contract finalised Start of conference preparations, depending on the conference dates.

## FOR ALL QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT

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