



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Comprehensive Security: Building Resilience and Industrial Innovation Across Sectors

Summary



EU Clusters Talks
8 October 2025, 8:30 – 9:45 CET

An initiative of the European Union





Comprehensive Security: Building Resilience and Industrial Innovation Across Sectors

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, hosted the EU Clusters Talk “**Comprehensive Security: Building Resilience and Industrial Innovation Across Sectors**” on 8 October, from 8:30 – 9:45 CET. The session outlined the main dimensions of comprehensive security, provided practical examples, and discussed how clusters can contribute to – and benefit from – this transformative agenda.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderation: Zivile Kropaite

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. The innovation journey towards territorial preparedness
Carmen Sillero Illanes, Senior Policy Analyst, Joint Research Centre, European Commission
3. Panel debate
Alexandre Yurchak, CEO, Ukrainian Cluster Alliance
Harriet Lonka, Project Lead, Comprehensive Security Cluster North Savo
Petri Nykänen, Director, Tampere Region Safety and Security Cluster
Simone Sparano, Head of European Affairs, UnionCamere Campania, Chairman of the EEN Aerospace & Defence Sector Group
4. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Comprehensive security requires multi-actor cooperation, integrating preparedness, continuity management, critical infrastructure protection and smart specialisation to strengthen resilience.
- Businesses and clusters are essential partners alongside authorities to drive the preparedness in the European countries.
- Funding and alignment remain major barriers for deeper European cooperation.
- A unified European approach is needed to improve interoperability across sectors, and advance a shared path towards resilience, preparedness and comprehensive security.



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Nina Hoppmann, team member, European Cluster Collaboration Platform

The following news items were presented:

1. [Rebuild Ukraine](#) Conference and Expo, 13-14 November, Poland.
2. [Call for papers: Research Conference on the EU Single Market](#); Submitting deadline 17 November.
3. The [2025 Eurostat regional yearbook package](#) has just been published
4. [ECCP Investment Survey](#) launched to collect information on major investments attracted by European clusters for the Summary Report 2025.
5. Register for [C2Lab and Cluster Summit Finland in Kuopio](#), 28–30 October 2025.

2. The innovation journey towards territorial preparedness

Carmen Sillero Illanes, Senior Policy Analyst, Joint Research Centre, European Commission

The presentation traced how European regions are approaching innovation in a moment marked by geopolitical tension, rapid technological change and the need to strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy. Carmen Sillero Illanes explained that **competitiveness and preparedness must advance together**, and that the current level of investment in security and defence technologies presents a unique opportunity for territories to stimulate industrial growth while contributing to wider European resilience. To understand how different ecosystems respond to this challenge, the Joint Research Centre carried out the REGDUALOSA project, making case studies of three regions with contrasting characteristics: Estonia, Podkarpackie in Poland, and Andalusia in Spain. Each territory illustrated a distinct pathway for integrating dual-use technologies into their innovation strategies.

Estonia's experience of a major cyberattack became a catalyst for the development of a comprehensive **cybersecurity strategy** involving ministries, society and business, supported by strong links with NATO initiatives. This approach enabled the creation of an innovation environment where experimentation, testing and training reinforce a thriving cyber-technology sector. Podkarpackie, a region with a long aerospace tradition, is now cultivating a dynamic cluster in **unmanned systems**, closely connected to universities and certification centres. Its proximity to Ukraine and the rapid development of drone technologies position it as a facilitator of innovation capable of benefiting the entire continent. Andalusia, also rooted in aviation and defence, is seizing opportunities from the growth of the **space sector** and its collaboration with the Spanish Space Agency. This diversification creates openings for SMEs, with clusters playing a crucial role in helping smaller companies take part in larger European and global projects.

Across all territories, several common weaknesses emerged: fragmented markets, complex governance structures, dispersed funding schemes, dependence on non-European suppliers, and difficulties in keeping pace with fast-moving technological innovation. Many SMEs lack familiarity with defence requirements such as certification, procurement rules or NATO standards, making cluster support and clearer pathways into defence markets essential. More coordinated multi-level governance and stronger territorial collaboration are also necessary, since technologies such as



drones, cybersecurity and space increasingly rely on integrated approaches rather than isolated sectoral development. Carmen Sillero Illanes stressed the importance of moving beyond a narrow focus on dual-use technologies toward a **broader concept of territorial preparedness**, which involves anticipating crises and using them as moments of system reconfiguration that can unlock innovation. Integrating preparedness into Smart Specialisation Strategies, making better use of updated Cohesion Policy rules that now allow defence-related measures, addressing skills gaps and developing alert mechanisms for emerging needs all form part of this new approach.

3. Panel debate

Harriet Lonka outlined North Savo's work to build a comprehensive security cluster that strengthens regional resilience by **connecting preparedness, continuity management, critical infrastructure protection and broader societal functions** to the region's smart specialisation strengths. Unlike the more industrial Tampere region, North Savo contributes to national security mainly through food security, with most of its population working in micro-enterprises. Alongside defence needs, dual-use challenges emerge in cyber security, food production and farming. A broader perspective is therefore required to prepare society for different crises and reinforce resilience. She stressed that **vital areas such as energy, water and food are central to regional preparedness**, yet authorities cannot ensure resilience alone due to limited resources and demanding statutory duties. Businesses thus play a key role in creating systems and solutions that support authorities while generating economic value.

She explained that North Savo has joined the European Network for Defence-Related Regions (ENDR). Their aim is to bring smart specialisation and regional development more prominently into defence-related collaboration. The region is also developing a proposal for a **thematic Smart Specialisation Platform** on comprehensive security and resilient value chains, together with international partners, under the industrial modernisation framework. This work seeks to align and strengthen various networks to support cluster creation and future meta-cluster initiatives at national and European level.

Petri Nykänen from the Tampere region explained that their work is rooted in the Finnish comprehensive security model, which assigns responsibility for security to all parts of society rather than authorities alone. Businesses, NGOs such as the Red Cross, research institutions and citizens are all considered essential actors. Their objective is to **enable effective multi-actor cooperation** and to embed comprehensive security across all sectors, including regional and city strategies. As Europe's security environment evolves, particularly in light of lessons learned from Ukraine, they see a need to adapt and reinforce Finland's already strong system. From a regional perspective, they recognise that while certain critical organisations are well prepared, there is still a need to expand the model to a broader range of businesses. Ensuring that enterprises can continue functioning during prolonged crises is seen as essential to maintaining societal resilience.

The question of whether the Finnish model is exportable was addressed with caution. Some elements may be difficult to replicate because they rely on specific societal structures. However, the key principles—**identifying regional threats, involving all stakeholders, and developing joint preparedness exercises or continuity projects**—can be adapted to different regional contexts. Petri Nykänen sees knowledge exchange with other European clusters as highly valuable. Yet funding for



deep, cluster-to-cluster collaboration remains limited. While resources exist to support individual clusters and their members, securing financing for broader European cooperation is more difficult.

Alexandre Yurchak from the Ukraine Cluster Alliance, described Ukraine as a global example of resilience: despite constant drone and missile attacks, cities continue functioning and businesses remain operational. Comprehensive security, in their view, requires **integrating military, economic, technological and societal resilience**, something that has emerged through the mobilisation of government, business, volunteer organisations and citizens. The Alliance’s “Clusters4Defence” brings together over ten dual-use and defence-focused clusters, working on innovation, supply-chain improvements, digitalisation and skills. Numerous projects are already under way, supported by both internal resources and regional authorities. Rapid developments include advances in tactical medicine, cyber security collaborations and an expansion in drone and robotics production.

He stressed that clusters have become central actors in Ukraine’s war-time innovation ecosystem. Before the war, the country counted fewer than twenty drone manufacturers; today there are more than six hundred, and over 1,500 SMEs are developing new technologies within the ecosystem. Government initiatives have also helped maintain industrial resilience by relocating more than a thousand enterprises from high-risk regions. In cyber security, the Ukrainian cluster collaborates closely with state agencies and European partners, including Spanish organisations that helped train the national cyber authority. The Ukrainian Cluster Alliance has already developed more than forty collaborative projects designed for cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic partners, but **funding remains the principal barrier**.

Simone Sparano, representing the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and chairing its Aerospace and Defence Sector Group, explained that the Network has been active in security-related work for more than a decade. Their approach emphasises a holistic vision of security in which all sectors—ranging from food and forestry to automotive and maritime—must be interconnected and prepared for emergencies. For EEN, dual-use technologies represent an essential bridge between civil and military domains, and they actively support SMEs in recognising these opportunities, adapting their technologies and accessing instruments such as the European Defence Fund. A major challenge for SMEs entering the defence sector is **navigating a landscape shaped by differing national rules and complex procedures**. EEN works to overcome these barriers by helping companies understand dual-use concepts, match technologies across sectors, and interpret regulations through its extensive regional presence.

To conclude, Harriet Lonka emphasised the importance of humility and **joint learning**, calling for collective action to understand how comprehensive security can contribute to Europe’s resilience. She urged clusters to play an active role in advancing comprehensive security across sectors and territories. Petri Nykänen concluded by emphasising the role of clusters in bringing authorities, businesses—including SMEs—and civil society together to share information, develop skills and build preparedness jointly. By doing this at regional level, clusters contribute to strengthening both their own territories and the European Union as a whole, helping to create a more resilient and adaptable system. Alexandre Yurchak welcomed new EU instruments like the Competitiveness Fund and emphasised that Ukraine strongly values any form of collaboration or integration with European cluster networks. Simone Sparano stressed that Europe’s innovation and security ecosystem lacks sufficient alignment. He called for deeper integration across all levels of the ecosystem and for the



European Union to take a stronger role in connecting clusters, SMEs and regional authorities to define a shared path towards resilience and preparedness.

4. Funding opportunities

Nina Hoppmann, team member, European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Closing the EU Clusters Talk, Nina Hoppmann shared the following examples of funding opportunities:

1. [EIC call to support UA tech SMEs and start-ups](#); deadline 26 November 2025.
2. [Accelerating uptake through open proposals for advanced SME innovation](#); deadline 12 November 2025.
3. [Uptake Acceleration Services](#); deadline 12 November 2025.
4. [Expanding Investment Ecosystems](#); deadline 20 January 2026.