



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Smart Support: AI Tools for Effective Cluster Management

Summary



EU Clusters Talks
21 May 2025, 8:30 – 10:30 CET

An initiative of the European Union





Smart Support: AI Tools for Effective Cluster Management

To explore how cluster organisations can leverage AI to support their work, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, organised the EU Clusters Talk "**Smart Support: AI Tools for Effective Cluster Management**" on 21 May, 8:30 – 10:30 CET. The session examined potential use cases and practical AI tools for clusters, gave an overview of EU regulation and responsible AI usage, and discussed practical tips on the effective use of AI in day-to-day operations and strategic planning.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderator: Andrew Lansley

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Potential use cases
Antonio Novo, President, European Clusters Alliance and General Manager, Cluster IDiA
3. Practical European and international AI tools for clusters
Esther Díez Pérez, Head of Sector – Data, AI, and Innovation Policy, DG DIGIT, European Commission
4. EU regulation and responsible AI usage
Antonio Novo, President, European Clusters Alliance and General Manager, Cluster IDiA
5. Panel debate
Georgiana Mihailovici, General Secretary, OpenHub Creative Cluster
Raffaele Vitulli, President, Basilicata Creativa, and Project Manager, European Digital Innovation Hub "Heritage Smart Lab"
Genoveva Christova, President, Bulgarian Furniture Cluster & Createch Cluster
Gian Angelo Bellati, President, Venetian Cluster
Céu Filipe, Director, AEP Inovação, Enterprise Europe Network
6. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Generative AI is already streamlining cluster operations, including drafting minutes and automating internal workflows, delivering efficiency gains while preserving the need for human judgment.
- Prompt engineering is a critical skill for clusters, allowing more accurate, relevant, and impactful results from AI tools.
- AI can enhance member engagement by personalising communication through CRM systems, as long as GDPR compliance is maintained.
- The EU offers purpose-built AI tools that are secure, multilingual, and tailored for public institutions and clusters, such as eTranslation, Briefing, and Reply.



- Clusters must train both staff and members in responsible AI use, focusing on ethics, data protection, and strategic integration.
- AI supports strategic planning and risk analysis, helping clusters simulate future scenarios and support Smart Specialisation Strategies with tools like Mistral.
- Human oversight remains essential. AI should act as a co-pilot, not an autopilot, particularly in content creation, decision-making, and public communication.
- Data privacy and ownership require active management, especially when using third-party tools. It is important to regularly review settings, hosting, and terms of use.
- EU regulation on AI is based on risk levels, requiring clusters to assess how they use AI and ensure appropriate safeguards when handling sensitive data.
- Clusters can lead the way in AI adoption by sharing practices, experimenting with secure tools, and co-developing sector-specific guidance.

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

After the introduction by moderator Andrew Lansley, the following news items were presented:

1. Register for the [EU INDUSTRY DAYS 2025](#), 5–6 June 2025 in Rzeszów, Poland.
2. Register for the [CmR Rzeszów, Poland](#), on 3-4 June 2025.
3. Apply for the [call for expressions of interest](#) to co-host future editions of the “Clusters Meet Regions”.
4. Register now for the [Matchmaking in India](#), on 29-31 October 2025
5. Save the date and register for the [next ECCP events](#).

2. Potential use cases

Antonio Novo, President, European Clusters Alliance and General Manager, Cluster IDiA

Antonio Novo began his presentation by identifying **administrative automation** as the most immediate and widespread use of generative AI, particularly for drafting communications, summaries, and meeting minutes. Novo cautioned, however, that while these tools offer time-saving benefits, human oversight remains critical to ensure quality and contextual accuracy. He then moved on to describe **workflow optimisation** as a high-impact application, especially in automating internal processes such as email triage and information routing. Though more advanced, this practice is becoming increasingly accessible.

He highlighted the value of AI tools in customer relationship management, specifically in personalising member engagement through CRM systems, provided that GDPR compliance and ethical data practices are maintained. Antonio Novo underlined the **potential for AI to support partner searches and opportunity mapping**, referencing EU-led developments like the STEP platform as examples of integrated solutions already in motion.



Another major area discussed was **idea development**. While idea generation should remain human-driven, generative AI can play a valuable supporting role by helping teams refine concepts, identify existing precedents, and improve framing. Market intelligence was also featured as a key application area. Though web-based insights remain surface-level, AI can contribute comprehensive overviews, especially when combined with internal and external domain knowledge.

Antonio Novo explained **how generative AI is being used for data-driven scenario planning and risk mitigation**. Drawing from his own experience contributing to regional smart specialisation strategies, he demonstrated how tools like Mistral can simulate alternative futures based on different strategic actions. This approach, while not definitive, serves as a creative input for strategic reflection.

In terms of **communication and outreach**, AI was acknowledged as helpful for adapting messages to various audiences and for multilingual translation, though Novo again stressed the importance of human review to ensure excellence. He cited recent developments, such as high-quality translation plugins for websites, as simple but powerful tools to improve reach and accessibility. AI was also noted as useful for event planning, from generating new formats to structuring logistics and improving matchmaking functionalities.

Finally, he addressed the use of AI in **skills development**, where it can support the creation of training content and the analysis of learning needs. Moreover, he emphasised that the way in which prompts are formulated plays a decisive role in the quality of AI output, suggesting the need for future sessions focused specifically on prompt engineering.

Antonio Novo concluded by reiterating that **generative AI should be seen as a co-pilot rather than a replacement for human judgment**. While it brings significant efficiencies and inspiration across a range of operational areas—from administration and engagement to strategic planning and capacity building—its outputs must be curated and critically assessed. He encouraged participants to explore AI’s potential creatively but responsibly, sharing experiences and challenges to foster collective advancement. The session ended with a call to continue experimenting with AI in a collaborative spirit, always anchored in ethical use and strategic thinking.

3. Practical European and international AI tools for clusters

Esther Díez Pérez, Head of Sector – Data, AI, and Innovation Policy, DG DIGIT, European Commission

Esther Díez Pérez, started with a demonstration of a chatbot available through the [EU Publications Office](#), which facilitates the navigation of EU legislation and publications by enabling users to interact using natural language. A second search tool, enhanced by contextual AI, was highlighted for its ability to refine queries using related terms and retrieve comprehensive results across various bodies of EU knowledge, including legislative texts and scientific publications. Notably, this tool is also available as open-source software for integration into other repositories.

Moving on to **multilingual services**, Díez Pérez presented the [eTranslation application](#), which supports translation across **32 languages**. Trained on decades of EU institutional texts, this tool ensures high-quality output tailored to the specific jargon and tone of public administration,



particularly in less commonly spoken languages. She emphasised its advantage over mainstream platforms, especially in contexts requiring confidentiality or domain-specific accuracy.

Among the **generative AI applications**, Díez Pérez showcased several tools designed for non-technical users. These included Briefing, an AI-powered tool that generates structured summaries based on uploaded documents, and Reply, which assists in drafting email responses using predefined prompts and internal reference documents. Both tools prioritise secure data handling and are hosted entirely within EU servers, offering additional assurance when dealing with sensitive but non-classified information.

Further tools introduced were designed for web content creation and accessible communication. These platforms generate outputs suited for digital publication and adapt complex texts for audiences with varying levels of comprehension. By using internally prepared, multi-page prompts, these tools offer users a simplified experience while ensuring consistent quality and relevance.

Esther Díez Pérez also previewed an internal conversational AI tool being tested within the Commission, with **plans for open-source release from 2026**. This tool is expected to offer a more customisable and secure alternative to popular third-party systems like ChatGPT or Gemini, especially when handling sensitive institutional content.

In concluding the core section, she offered **guidance on responsible AI use**, especially when using third-party tools. Key recommendations included limiting the input of personal or confidential data, critically verifying AI outputs for accuracy and bias, respecting intellectual property rights, and treating AI-generated content as a source of inspiration rather than final output.

Esther Díez Pérez concluded by reiterating the European Commission's commitment to providing practical, secure, and purpose-built AI tools that empower clusters and public institutions without requiring technical expertise. She encouraged stakeholders to explore these resources via the provided links and manuals and emphasised the importance of AI literacy in safely and effectively integrating these tools into daily operations. Finally, she highlighted several open training initiatives and [best practice repositories](#) to support users in developing responsible and strategic use of AI within their organisations such as eReply or Webtext.

4. EU regulation and responsible AI usage

Antonio Novo, President, European Clusters Alliance and General Manager, Cluster IDiA

Antonio Novo introduced **several European and international AI tools**. These included Mistral AI from France, known for its similarity to OpenAI models but with European data compliance; Aleph Alpha from Germany, which provides more industrial-oriented AI services; and Freepik, a Spanish platform offering visual resources. HumanFirst was mentioned as an example of European AI talent succeeding internationally. Novo emphasised the importance of exploring these solutions for their reliability and alignment with European standards.

On **OpenAI's ChatGPT**, he noted its dual use as both a chatbot and a development platform. He advised caution when using the free version due to the risk of unintentionally sharing data externally, especially as settings may change without notice. As a **safer alternative**, he pointed to the use of ChatGPT via Microsoft Azure Europe, although he recognised this is more technically complex and



costly. Novo also discussed Microsoft Copilot and Google Gemini, remarking on their growing integration with workplace tools and voice interfaces. He briefly referenced Amazon Web Services as the industrial standard for AI applications, albeit less accessible for smaller organisations.

In terms of **use cases**, he shared practical applications of AI for idea generation, proposal writing, content creation and visual design. He recommended tools like Canva, Stability AI, and Adobe Photoshop's AI models for enhancing communication materials. However, he warned against relying solely on generative tools for content, underlining the need for human review and careful prompt engineering. He also mentioned training resources such as DeepLearning.AI for users looking to improve their prompting skills.

Antonio Novo stressed the importance of **organisational preparedness**. He urged cluster managers to train both their internal teams and members in responsible AI usage. He presented examples from Cluster IDiA, where 19 tailored courses have been developed with regional support. He also reminded the audience to check non-profit discounts offered by AI providers like OpenAI, Microsoft, Google and Canva, and advocated for piloting any AI integration before full-scale deployment.

When addressing the [EU AI Act](#), Novo acknowledged its risk-based approach to regulation. He explained that certain applications (such as biometric facial recognition in public spaces) are strictly prohibited, while others may fall under high-risk categories depending on the data processed. He warned that AI chatbots requesting sensitive information such as religion or sexual orientation could be classified as high risk. Therefore, each organisation must assess the data it handles and the AI systems it uses, ensuring compliance with applicable safeguards. He reiterated the importance of storing data within the EU when possible and designating a compliance officer in cases involving sensitive data or high-risk systems.

He concluded the presentation with guidance on assessing cloud services, storage solutions, and system transparency. He encouraged human oversight of AI-generated outcomes, particularly in decision-making contexts. In response to a final exchange with the moderator, Novo confirmed that **international standards such as ISO/IEC 42001** are available to help organisations align their governance practices with globally recognised frameworks.

5. Panel debate

Andrew Tennessee highlighted how their team uses AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and CoPilot for management tasks, content generation, financial error checking, and marketing. He emphasised the importance of **understanding how large language models are trained** and the need for training in data science and prompt engineering. His organisation also focuses on **human-centric and safe AI usage**, including awareness of threats such as AI poisoning.

Katcher Isinger from AI Regensburg described their focus on **integrating AI into both external upskilling programmes and internal workflows**. She mentioned use cases like proposal summarisation, marketing, and market research. Katcher underlined the need to maintain individuality in communication despite the widespread use of generative tools and stressed the importance of prompting techniques and internal prompt libraries. She positioned AI as a sparring partner, recommending iteration across different tools to refine results.



Ola Sweden, CEO of OpenTech, presented a more strategic perspective. His team uses AI widely across **content generation, presentations, legal templates, and CRM data entry**. He identified real productivity gains in streamlining member data input into cluster systems using AI to extract and categorise relevant information. Ola advocated for assigning responsibility within organisations to stay ahead of AI developments, even in small teams, and called for a balance between curiosity and pragmatic focus on productivity-enhancing use cases.

All panellists agreed on the **usefulness of generative AI tools** for enhancing productivity, automating repetitive tasks, and supporting creative work. There was alignment on the necessity of reviewing and verifying AI outputs, especially given risks such as hallucinations and bias. Speakers also shared a common understanding that prompt engineering and training are essential to maximise the value of AI.

While all supported exploratory use, there were nuanced perspectives on data privacy. Andrew and Katcher emphasised **internal training and safe usage**, whereas Ola was more pragmatic, noting that most users are already embedded in systems such as Google or Microsoft that process their data under foreign legislation. This led to a subtle divergence in **risk tolerance**. Ola further suggested that the strategic challenge for Europe may be whether to migrate away from non-European providers entirely, although he acknowledged this was beyond the scope of the panel.

An audience question addressed the **challenge of maintaining efficiency when AI outputs require manual verification**. Katcher responded by noting that expectations must be realistic, especially during the learning phase, and emphasised the long-term benefits of mastering prompting and context-setting. Another key issue concerned how companies should manage data and intellectual property when using AI. Ola suggested that if companies are already using tools governed by non-European legislation, they are de facto sharing data. He advised reading legal terms carefully and being conscious of information flows, though he acknowledged the broader strategic implications for European data sovereignty.

The panel finalised the panel underlining the **growing role of AI tools in cluster management** and reinforced the need for thoughtful adoption strategies. Real gains can be made in areas such as content creation, marketing, CRM management, and proposal support. However, these benefits depend on effective team training, prompt literacy, and maintaining a balance between exploration and data responsibility. Participants agreed that AI must augment, not replace, human expertise, and that the integration of these tools should be paired with ongoing learning and strategic oversight.

6. Funding opportunities

Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

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

1. [AI-generated digital twins for science](#); deadline 18 September 2025.
2. [Leveraging artificial intelligence for creativity-driven innovation](#); deadline 16 September 2025.



3. [Roadmap for next generation computing technologies from IoT device level to edge to cloud to HPC \(CSA\)](#); deadline 2 October 2025.
4. Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters; published on [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#).