



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

From Research to Revenue: Facilitating Technology Transfer through Clusters

Summary



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

An initiative of the European Union





From Research to Revenue: Facilitating Technology Transfer through Clusters

To explore how clusters can act as effective enablers of technology transfer and commercialisation, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, organised the EU Clusters Talk "**From Research to Revenue: Facilitating Technology Transfer through Clusters**" on **23 April, 8:30 – 9:45 CET**. The session will present good practices from clusters across Europe, examine the tools and partnerships needed to support the commercial uptake of research results, and discuss how clusters can strengthen collaboration between academia, industry, and innovation support actors to close the innovation-commercialisation gap.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderator: Zivile Kropaite

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Panel debate
Angelica Ekholm, CEO, Dalarna Science Park
Athanasios Konstandopoulos, Chief Scientific Advisor, CHORUS
Fátima Carmona, Director of R&D and Projects, OnTech Innovation
Paolo Vercesi, Executive Director, AFIL
3. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Clusters are strategic enablers that connect academia and industry to accelerate market-ready innovation.
- Early industry engagement helps shift from proof of concept to proof of value, boosting real-world relevance.
- Cascade funding and bilateral meetings offer concrete pathways to bridge the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 3–7 funding gap.
- Hackathons and Digital Innovation Hubs help identify industrial challenges and co-create tailored tech solutions.
- Clusters must champion trust-building, cross-sector dialogue, and structured matchmaking to drive successful tech transfer.



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

After the introduction by moderator Zivile Kropaite, the following news items were presented:

1. Apply for the [call for applications](#) for the selection of members of the expert group on clusters policy.
2. Apply for the [call for expressions of interest](#) to co-host future editions of the “Clusters Meet Regions”.
3. Register for the [C2Lab in Denmark](#), 6-7 May 2025.
4. Register for [EU-South MED Matchmaking Event](#), 16-18 June 2025.
5. Save the date and register for the [next ECCP events](#).
6. Discover [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs \(EYE\)](#) and its new destinations.

2. Panel debate

The debate opened with a discussion on the barriers to technology transfer. Angelica Ekholm highlighted the systemic misalignment between academia and industry, with universities often prioritising publications over market-oriented outcomes. She also cited the **lack of early-stage funding**, and the time required to bridge the “valley of death” as key obstacles. Angelica shared examples from Sweden where student-led assessments of research potential have led to successful start-ups.

Athanasios Konstandopoulos offered a different perspective, arguing that publishing research and engaging with industry are not mutually exclusive. He stressed the importance of involving **industrial partners from the outset**, particularly to focus on proof of value rather than simply proof of concept. He underlined the need for access to prototyping and testing infrastructure and cautioned against over-specialisation in research that might narrow future applications. He also advocated for reconfigurable, cost-effective manufacturing solutions.

Fátima Carmona presented **OnTech Innovation’s collaborative model**, which integrates SMEs, universities and large companies into R&D consortia. She argued for a balanced partnership between academia and industry, and noted that many tech start-ups originate from university research. For Fátima, a major barrier remains the lack of funding at Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 2–3, especially in highly competitive calls.

Paolo Vercesi described the **challenges SMEs face in rapidly evolving markets** and emphasised the role of clusters in supporting innovation strategies. He suggested that researchers must demonstrate real-world value, while SMEs need guidance to integrate new technologies into solutions. Paolo underlined the potential of sustainability as an innovation driver, particularly in manufacturing processes. He also highlighted the benefits of cascade funding, bilateral meetings, and industrial visits as mechanisms to support proof-of-concept activities.

There was general agreement on the importance of **early engagement between researchers and industry**. However, Angelica warned that excessive industrial influence could limit academic freedom, whereas Athanasios maintained that commercial orientation does not necessarily



compromise research integrity. All panellists concurred that bridging the gap between TRL 3 and TRL 7–9 requires more accessible funding instruments, particularly for testing and validation stages.

While Paolo and Athanasios aligned on the **value of flexible manufacturing and shared test facilities**, Angelica highlighted **student-driven start-up support** as a more grassroots model. Fátima reinforced the necessity of **mutual benefit in partnerships**, stressing that successful innovation combines both theoretical and practical contributions.

Audience members raised the issue of **the lack of support between proof of concept and market launch**. Angelica acknowledged the difficulty of securing funding in this intermediate stage and suggested combining regional, EU and private investment, such as Sweden’s angel investor networks. Athanasios recommended leveraging the European Innovation Council Accelerator and exploring corporate VC funds, even outside Europe, to cover funding gaps.

Another question asked **whether involving customers earlier in the research cycle might help**. Angelica warned that this could constrain researchers’ creativity, but others agreed on the strategic value of market insight. Paolo cited examples where start-ups successfully reoriented their solutions to meet industrial needs, thanks to matchmaking organised by the cluster. Fatima promoted the role of **hackathons and Digital Innovation Hubs** as neutral platforms for identifying needs and designing solutions. Athanasios advocated for regular, low-pressure visits to companies, based on a successful Japanese model, as a way to build trust and discover emerging challenges without formal project frameworks.

The panel underscored the central role of clusters in facilitating **the transition from research to market**. Clusters were recognised as critical connectors that bridge institutional silo, such as those between academia and industry, by offering strategic guidance, shared testing facilities, and access to early-stage funding. They also play a key role in fostering trust among SMEs, researchers and investors through structured matchmaking and regular collaboration formats. Trust-building, long-term vision and hands-on support emerged as essential conditions for successful technology transfer in Europe.

3. 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. [Sectoral digital skills academies: Digital Skills Academy in GenAI](#); deadline 15 April 2025.
2. [WE-RISE Open Call #1](#); deadline 14 May 2025.
3. [Women TechEU initiative](#); deadline 2 September 2025.
4. Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters; published on [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#).