



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

The Industrial Accelerator Act: Speeding Up Strategic Projects

Summary



EU Clusters Talks
11 March 2026, 8:30 – 9:45 CET

An initiative of the European Union





The Industrial Accelerator Act: Speeding Up Strategic Projects

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, hosted the EU Clusters Talk “**The Industrial Accelerator Act: Speeding Up Strategic Projects**” on 11 March, from 8:30 – 9:45 CET. The session explored the key objectives and policy directions of the forthcoming revision of public procurement rules.

Agenda of the meeting

Moderation: Karen Clements

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Industrial Accelerator Act
Immavera Sardone, Policy Officer, DG GROW, European Commission
3. Panel debate
Fabrizio Guarrasi, Innovation Manager, Lombardy Energy Cleantech Cluster (LE2C)
Hugo Durand, Territorial Relations Officer, EDF; CleanTech Vallée
Tobias Lechtenfeld, Executive Director, Tech for Net Zero
4. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- The Industrial Accelerator Act aims to strengthen Europe’s industrial base by boosting demand for European low-carbon products and clean technologies.
- Industrial Acceleration Areas are a central instrument of the Act to support investment and cluster development.
- Creating stable demand for green industrial products is seen as a breakthrough element for innovative companies.
- Clusters are expected to play a key role in connecting industrial ecosystems and supporting the implementation of the Act.
- Effective implementation will depend on reducing administrative complexity and ensuring practical execution at Member State level.



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Nina Hoppmann, team member, European Cluster Collaboration Platform

The following news items were presented:

1. [Public consultation](#) on the draft for a new General Block Exemption Regulation, deadline on 23 April 2026
2. [EU-Ukraine Business Summit](#) on 22-23 April 2026
3. Meet the Euroclusters: slides and recordings are available on the presentation of the Euroclusters in [Strand 1](#) and [Strand 2](#)
4. Clusters and Europe's Competitiveness: [ECCP Summary Report 2025](#)

2. Industrial Accelerator Act

Immavera Sardone, Policy Officer, DG GROW, European Commission

Immavera Sardone presented the Industrial Accelerator Act, a legislative proposal adopted by the European Commission to strengthen the EU's industrial base and competitiveness. The initiative responds to the long-term decline of manufacturing in Europe—currently around 14% of EU GDP—and the growing dependency on external suppliers for key technologies such as batteries and solar panels. The Act aims to increase the **share of manufacturing to 20% of EU GDP by 2035**, while improving economic resilience, strategic autonomy and supporting the transition to a low-carbon industrial economy.

She explained that the proposal is structured around **four main pillars**. The first pillar focuses on **simplifying and accelerating permitting procedures** for industrial projects. Measures include the digitalisation of administrative processes, the introduction of a European Business Wallet for managing licences and official documents across Member States, and the principle of “one project, one submission”, which bundles procedures to reduce administrative complexity. Faster timelines and greater procedural transparency are intended to reduce investment risks and support companies—especially SMEs—in establishing manufacturing activities.

The second pillar introduces **Industrial Manufacturing Acceleration Areas**, a new instrument designed to **promote strategic industrial clusters across Europe**. Member States will be required to designate at least one such area on their territory, focusing primarily on strategic sectors identified by the Commission. These include energy-intensive industries such as steel, cement, glass, metals and paper, net-zero technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines and batteries, and parts of the automotive value chain. However, Member States may also extend these areas to other manufacturing activities beyond the minimum list. The objective of these acceleration areas is to **create “go-to” locations for industrial investment**, where companies benefit from a more supportive regulatory and infrastructural environment. Projects located in these areas would receive faster permitting procedures, stronger coordination between authorities and improved access to infrastructure, financing and skills. A key innovation is the introduction of aggregated baseline permits, meaning that permits related to general infrastructure—such as transport links, energy connections or land-use planning—can be prepared in advance at the level of the area. This allows



individual companies to focus only on project-specific approvals, such as environmental impact assessments, thereby significantly speeding up investment decisions. The policy also emphasises energy and infrastructure planning, recognising that access to energy networks is often a major bottleneck for new industrial projects. Member States are therefore encouraged to prioritise the energy needs of these areas in cooperation with transmission system operators. In addition, the acceleration areas are expected to **strengthen local industrial ecosystems**, with particular attention to the participation of SMEs and mid-caps, and to link with European initiatives such as the Pact for Skills in order to support workforce development and regional skills partnerships.

The third pillar of the Act aims to create lead markets for European industrial products through the **introduction of the “Made in Europe” principle**. When public money is used—for example through public procurement, renewable energy auctions or support schemes—preference will be given to low-carbon products manufactured in Europe or in partner countries with reciprocal market access. This measure is designed to stimulate demand for European clean technologies and reduce investment uncertainty for manufacturers.

Finally, the fourth pillar introduces **conditions for large foreign investments in strategic sectors** such as batteries, electric vehicles, solar technologies and critical raw materials. Investments exceeding €100 million, particularly from countries with more than 40% of global production, may be required to meet specific conditions related to local employment, technology transfer, research and development activities and local sourcing of components. These requirements aim to ensure that foreign investments generate positive spillovers for European industrial ecosystems and value chains.

Immavera Sardone concluded that the Industrial Accelerator Act represents a new approach to EU industrial policy, combining regulatory simplification, cluster-based industrial development, demand-side market creation and safeguards for strategic sectors. The proposal now enters the legislative process, where it will be negotiated by the European Parliament and the Council before potentially becoming EU law.

3. Panel debate

The panel discussion explored the opportunities and challenges of the proposed Industrial Accelerator Act, focusing on its potential impact on innovation, industrial investment, and the role of clusters in strengthening Europe’s industrial ecosystems.

Tobias Lechtenfeld, reporting from the perspective of a deep-tech startup founder, **welcomed the creation of demand for green industrial products**, describing it as a breakthrough element of the legislation. By introducing mechanisms that prioritise locally produced industrial inputs in public spending, the Act could create stable market demand for innovative low-carbon products. He further acknowledged the effort to reduce barriers to manufacturing, particularly through measures aimed at simplifying permitting procedures, but remained cautious about the real impact. Since permitting processes are largely managed at regional or national levels, the speaker expected that implementation may vary significantly and that the reforms may be diluted in practice.

He expressed **concerns about the provisions related to foreign direct investment**. While he agreed with the objective of reducing investment risks, he argued that the proposed restrictions could unintentionally discourage foreign investment. He sees a risk that Europe could lose valuable



investment if the regulations significantly limit foreign participation. Immavera Sardone clarified that the measures are very narrowly targeted, applying only to large investments above €100 million coming from companies based in countries that control at least 40% of global production capacity in a given technology. According to the Commission's estimates, this would affect only a small number of cases—around 10 to 12 major investments per year. She emphasised that the EU remains open to foreign investment and recognises its importance for economic growth and innovation. The objective of the new rules is not to discourage investment, but to ensure that very large strategic investments generate stronger benefits for Europe, such as local jobs, innovation spillovers and stronger value chains.

Hugo Durand highlighted the important role of European clusters in helping companies benefit from the opportunities created by the Industrial Accelerator Act. **Stronger interconnections between clusters across Europe** could help businesses identify new markets and partners, making it easier to generate demand for emerging clean technologies and industrial products. He also noted the importance of simplifying permitting procedures, arguing that reducing administrative complexity can significantly support innovation and competitiveness. Simpler procedures lower the time and resources required for regulatory processes, enabling clusters and companies—especially smaller ones—to focus more on business development and technological innovation.

Regarding the **Industrial Production Acceleration Zones**, Hugo Durand supported the idea but stressed that implementation must be **fast and practical**. Instead of creating entirely new zones from scratch, the policy should **prioritise existing industrial regions**, particularly those already connected to strategic sectors and energy production. As an example, he pointed to regions in France around nuclear power plants, where strong industrial ecosystems already exist and where new energy projects are being developed next to existing infrastructure to maximise efficiency and industrial potential.

Fabrizio Guarrasi agreed that these areas should be seen as the most strategic element of the Act. He argued that clusters should play a central role in their development by fostering **cross-border collaboration and connecting regional industrial ecosystems**. As many regions do not have the full value chain for sectors such as clean technologies, hydrogen or industrial symbiosis, acceleration areas could help link complementary capabilities across regions and countries. He expressed the need to understand the **timeline for the creation of these areas** to ensure that implementation happens effectively. The **real impact will depend on strong execution by Member States and active involvement from clusters**.

Immavera Sardone explained that the Industrial Acceleration Areas differ from the Net-Zero Industry Act valleys. The new proposal goes further by requiring Member States to designate such areas, rather than leaving it voluntary as in previous initiatives. A key innovation is the introduction of aggregated baseline permits, meaning that certain infrastructure-related requirements—such as transport connections or basic environmental prerequisites—could be prepared in advance at the area level. This would make these zones more attractive to investors, while project-specific assessments, such as environmental impact studies, would still be carried out individually. She encouraged **clusters and stakeholders to support the initiative** and explain its benefits to national and regional authorities, as the acceleration areas could strengthen local industrial ecosystems, support SMEs and create a more level playing field across the EU.



Tobias Lechtenfeld spoke about the **complexities that top-down regulations** bring with them, as well as the need for deeper reforms to remove structural barriers within industrial ecosystems and certification systems. He argued that the most effective regulations are those that function automatically and minimise bureaucracy. He compared the EU approach with the US Inflation Reduction Act, where incentives are delivered through simple tax credits that companies can claim directly through their tax declarations, without complex administrative procedures. He said that EU policies often rely on top-down and highly complex regulatory frameworks, which can create additional administrative layers and potentially slow down innovation instead of accelerating it. Hugo Durand agreed that **speed and simplicity** must be central to the implementation of the Industrial Accelerator Act. His main concern is that new rules must be accompanied by the removal of old ones. In his view, creating acceleration zones or new regulatory frameworks will have limited impact if Europe does not also eliminate outdated procedures, overlapping requirements and layers of administrative complexity that have built up over time. In response, Immavera Sardone pointed to recent **Omnibus proposals** across several policy areas, which aim to reduce reporting burdens and streamline existing regulations. She confirmed that there is increasing awareness within the Commission of the need to avoid duplication and unnecessary administrative layers.

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. [EU launches new call for Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs local partners](#); deadline 21 April 2026
2. [Innovation Fund: Net Zero Technologies - General decarbonisation](#); deadline 23 April 2026
3. [Pilot access schemes to Technology Infrastructures for European startups, scaleups and innovative SMEs \(CSA\)](#); deadline 21 April 2026