



EUCLUSTERS



TALKS ★

Launch. Grow. Lead:

The EU Strategy for Startups and Scaleups

25 June 2025

08:30-09:45 CET

Online



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Agenda

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, Team Member European Cluster Collaboration Platform
2. Startup and Scaleup Strategy
Omar Ennaji, Legal and Policy Officer, DG GROW, European Commission
3. Panel debate
Catalina Luca, Management Consultant, IMAGO-MOL
Gisela Sanchez, Head of European Affairs, Finance Innovation
Jonie Oostveen, Programme Manager, AgriFood Capital
José Vilar Gonzálbez, Head of Service, IVACE+I, Enterprise Europe Network
Stamatiki Kritas, Cluster Manager, HBIO; Managing Director, CEBR
4. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, Team Member European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Housekeeping rules

Jennifer Baker, presenter

- We will use **slido** to launch polls. Please scan the QR code to answer.
- Please use the **Zoom Q&A function to ask questions**, and the **chat function** to comment or share links.
- If you want to speak: Please **raise your hand** and we will give you the floor.
- Please note that the session is being **recorded** and that the recording will be **published** on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

NEWS FROM THE EUROPEAN CLUSTER COLLABORATION PLATFORM

2025 State of the Digital Decade

The [European Commission's 2025 report](#) reveals uneven progress towards the EU's 2030 digital goals.

Only **55.6% of Europeans** possess basic digital skills, and shortages of advanced ICT experts persist, especially in cybersecurity and AI. Reliance on non-EU providers and fragmented markets continues to pose risks.

The Commission urges stronger investment and simpler rules to boost innovation, with a target reassessment set for 2026.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



Commission seeks experts for AI Scientific Panel

The European Commission is establishing a **scientific panel of 60 independent experts to advise on the implementation of the AI Act (renewable 24-month term)**, particularly regarding general-purpose AI (GPAI).

The panel will guide the EU AI Office and national authorities on systemic risks, model evaluation, and cross-border oversight. Candidates must have a **PhD or equivalent expertise** in fields like AI risk, cybersecurity, or compute thresholds, and remain independent from AI providers.

[Applications](#) are open until **14 September 2025**.

While EU citizenship is not a requirement, 80% of the experts must be from the EU or EFTA Member States.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

Matchmaking in UAE Event 2025 – 1-3 October 2025



The [EU-UAE Matchmaking Event](#) will take place in Dubai from 1–3 October 2025, organised by the European Commission via the ECCP alongside UAE authorities and in the context of WETEX. It aims to foster cluster and business cooperation in sectors such as clean energy, water management, green mobility, smart cities, and agrifood. Up to **20 EU cluster representatives will be funded**. The first application deadline is **25 June 2025**, with two additional cut-offs if places remain.

[MORE INFO](#)

Matchmaking in India – 29-31 October 2025

The EU–India Matchmaking Event aims to foster collaboration between **European clusters, SMEs**, and Indian partners in key industries, including renewable/clean energy & storage, smart grid and energy infrastructure, electric mobility, and green finance and investment support.

! For Clusters: Financial support is available for up to 20 EU clusters, covering travel, accommodation, and registration **(reimbursement for 1 representative per cluster)**

! For SMEs: Participation costs are at **their own expense**. However, selected SMEs will benefit from free access to the Renewable Energy India Expo 2025 and will be informed about available discounted rates for accommodation and flights.

[**REGISTER NOW**](#)



Matchmaking in Taiwan – 21-23 October 2025



The [EU – Taiwan Matchmaking Event](#) will take place on-site in Taipei, Taiwan, during the week of 21–23 October 2025, held in the context of European Innovation Week and alongside TAITRONICS & AIoT Taiwan. The event will focus on sectors such as AI, robotics, sustainable energy, industrial IoT, semiconductors, and the circular economy.

Matchmaking in Vietnam – 4-6 November 2025



The [EU – Vietnam Matchmaking Event](#) will take place on-site in Bac Ninh, Vietnam, during the week of 4–6 November 2025 in the context of the **Vietnam Industrial & Manufacturing Fair**.

Don't miss this opportunity to engage directly with Vietnamese industry leaders and clusters and explore new collaboration opportunities in advanced manufacturing and industrial innovation



ECCP Events 2025



Online EU Clusters Talks

Biweekly: Wednesdays at 8:30 CET



Rzeszów, Poland

Clusters meet Regions | **3-4 June**



Cairo, Egypt

ECCP Matchmaking | **16-18 June**



Foligno, Italy

Clusters meet Regions | **24-25 June**



Cluj, Romania

Clusters meet Regions | **1-2 July**
& ECCP Matchmaking



Ajdovščina, Slovenia

Clusters meet Regions | **10-11 September**



Vaasa, Finland

Clusters meet Regions | **24-25 September**



Dubai, United Arab Emirates

ECCP Matchmaking | **1-3 October**



New Delhi & Greater Noida, India

ECCP Matchmaking | **29-31 October**



Taipei, Taiwan

ECCP Matchmaking | **21-23 October (tbc)**



Hanoi, Vietnam

ECCP Matchmaking | **4-6 November (tbc)**



Regensburg, Germany

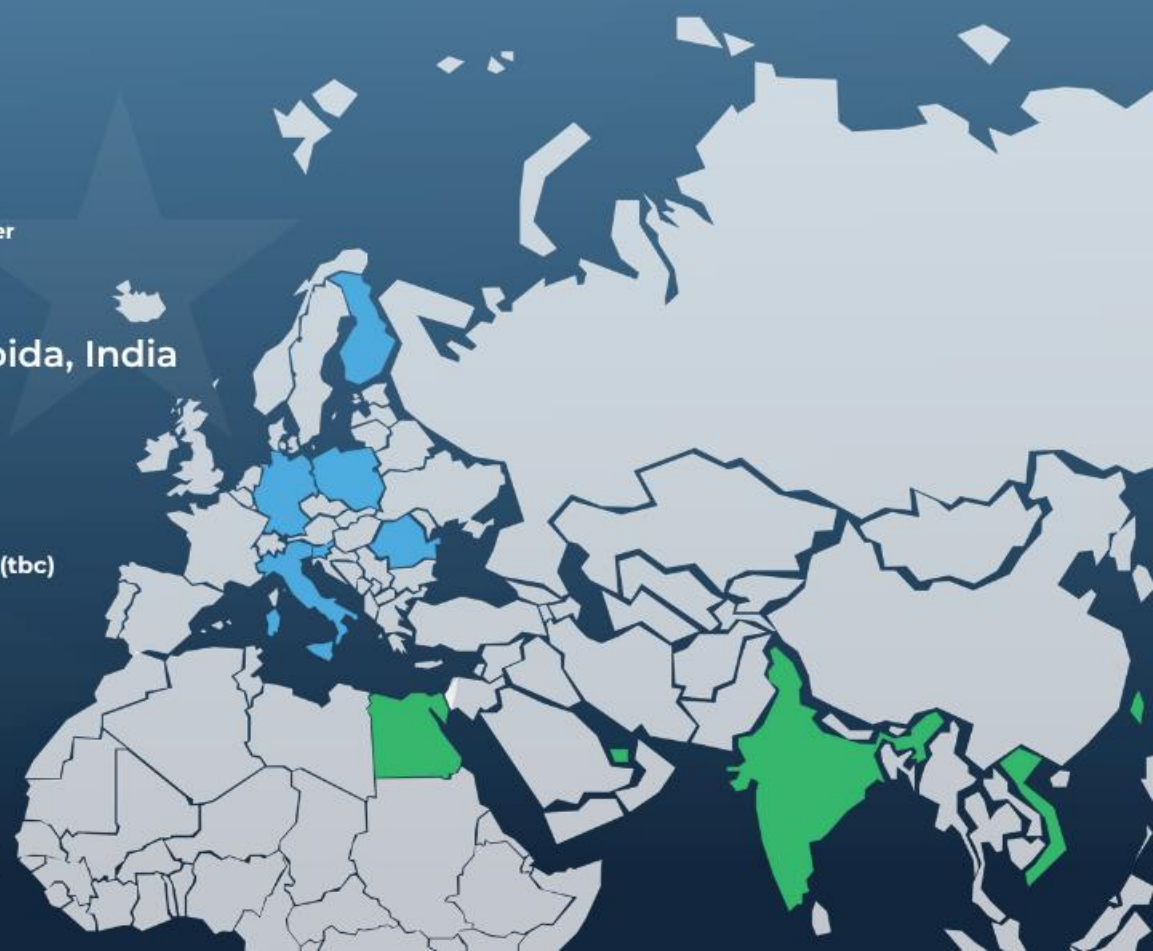
Clusters meet Regions | **26-27 November**



Clusters Meet Regions



ECCP Matchmaking International



Startup and Scaleup Strategy

Omar Ennaji, Legal and Policy Officer, DG GROW, European Commission

EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy

Omar ENNAJI

Member of the Task Force on Startups
and Scaleups (DG RTD)

Legal & Policy Officer (DG GROW)



Overview

1. The vision: choose Europe to start and scale
2. Key challenges
3. Building Blocks of the Strategy





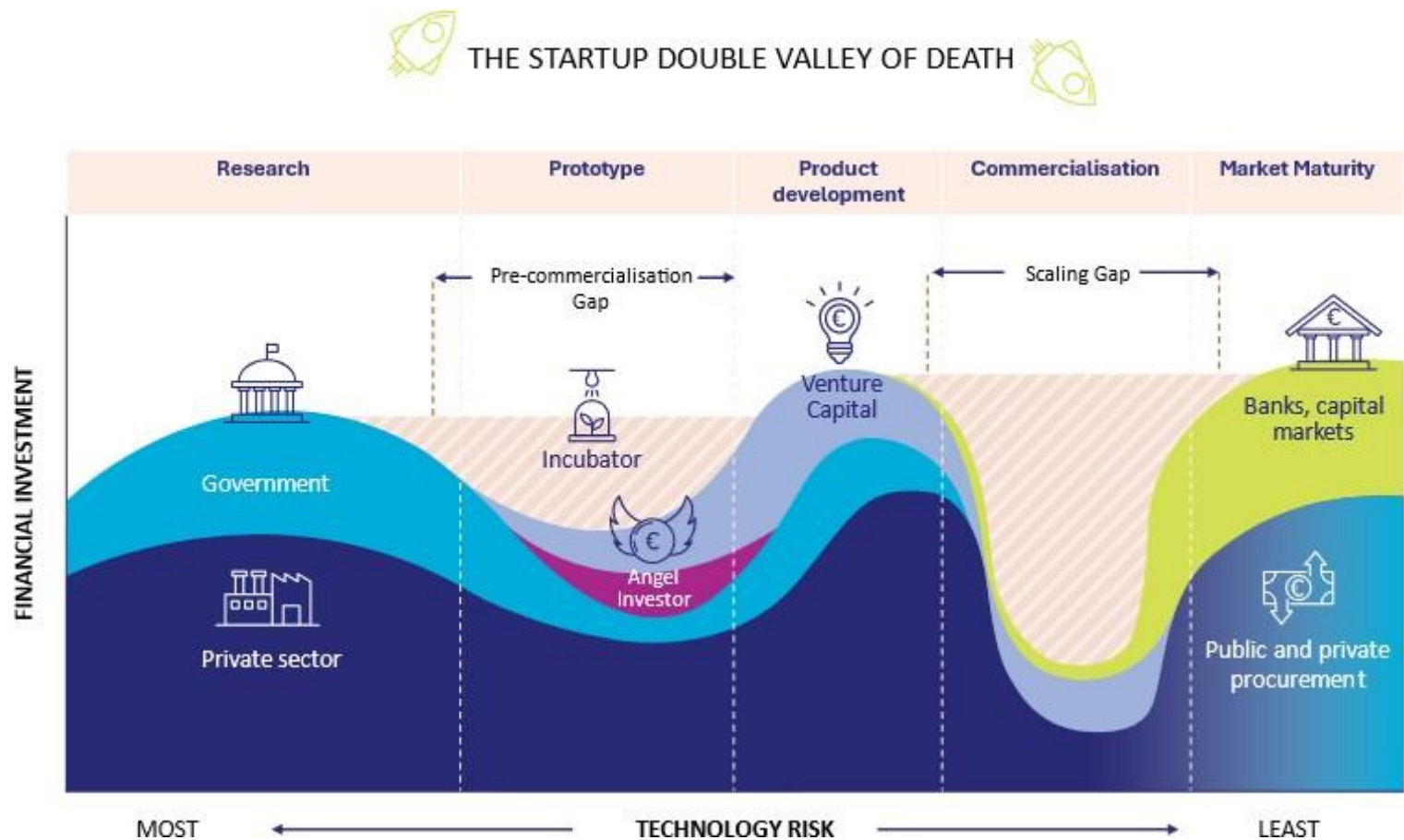
The vision: choose Europe to start and scale

- The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy aims to make Europe the best place in the world to launch and grow global technology-driven companies
- The strategy seeks to shift the European economy towards a more entrepreneurial, innovative model (from corporate driven economy to entrepreneurial economy)
- A thriving startup and scaleup ecosystem can transform Europe's economy – by increasing productivity, creating quality jobs and attracting talent and investments
- **Our competitiveness and ultimately prosperity depend on it**





Key challenges



Simplified illustration of the startup double valley of death



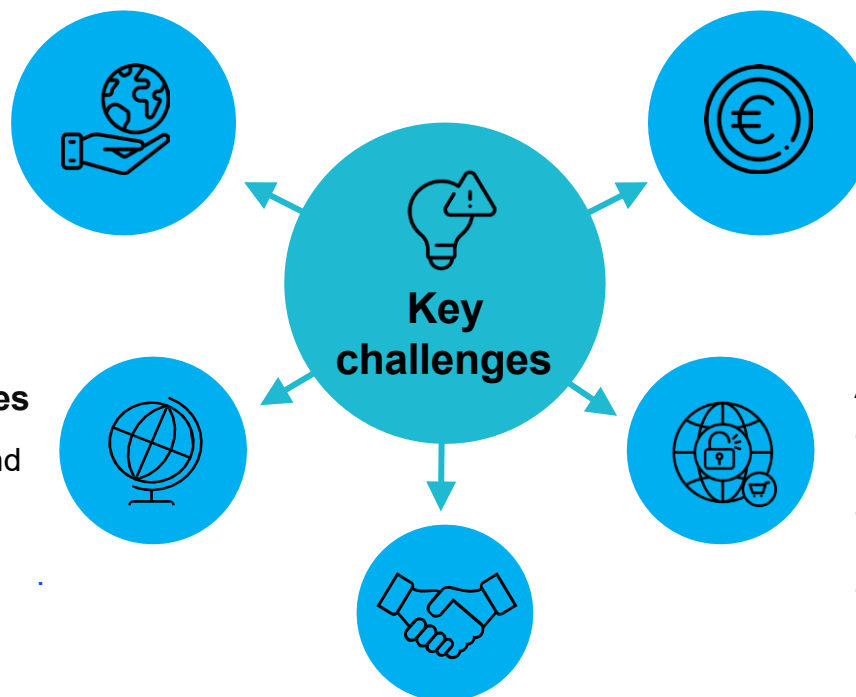
Key challenges

Regulatory and bureaucratic burdens and fragmentation

- Fragmented reporting requirements, taxation & employment conditions and high failure costs.
- Slow regulatory approval for new technologies and slow adaptation of existing regulatory frameworks to innovation.

Access to infrastructure, networks and services

- Difficult access to and fragmentation of research and technology infrastructures, business acceleration services, coaching and networking support.



Access to finance

- Underdeveloped EU financial market and a patchwork of national measures regulating various aspects of private investment
- The EU's VC market remains significantly underdeveloped compared to that in the US. The highest gap is observed at later-stage financing.

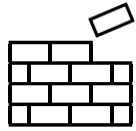
Access to markets

- Limited activity of corporates/industry as customers of startups.
- Low participation rate to public procurement in the EU, the link with corporates, expanding the customer base.
- Lack of commercialisation of research.

Access to talent

- Bureaucracy, regulations, tax rules and costs prevent startups and scaleups from tapping into the highly-skilled talent they need to develop innovative products and solutions.





Building Blocks of the Strategy

- The Strategy is structured according to different needs that an innovative company may face through its lifecycle:
 - Innovation-friendly regulation
 - Better finance
 - Fast market uptake and expansion
 - Support for the best talent
 - Access to infrastructure, networks and services
- Plus: a section dedicated to measuring progress for reaching the Strategy's aims



Innovation-friendly regulation

Actions:

- 28th regime for companies (Q1 2026)
- European Business Wallet (Q4 2025)
- European Innovation Act (Q1 2026)
- Voluntary “Innovation Stress Test” (Q1 2026)
- Reduce regulatory burdens in strategic sectors (as of 2025)
- Revision of the Standardisation Regulation (2026)
- Study on corporate restructuring (2026)



Better finance for startups and scaleups

Actions:

- Expand and simplify the European Innovation Council (EIC) (2025)
- Scaleup Europe Fund (2026)
- European Corporate Network (2026)
- European Innovation Investment Pact (2026)
- European investment instruments for security and defence startups and scaleups (2026)
- Framework for IP valuation (Q2 2027)
- Support for European business angels (2026)
- Review of the definition of “undertaking in difficulty” (as of Q2 2025)
- Review of the Horizontal and Non-Horizontal merger Guidelines (2027)





Fast market uptake and expansion

Actions:

- Lab to Unicorn initiative (2026)
 - European Startup & Scaleup Hubs
 - Blueprint for licensing, royalty- and revenue sharing and equity participation for academic institutions and their inventors
 - Legal and implementation guidance on the applicable State aid rules
- Pro-innovation procurement measures (2025-2026)



Support for the best talent in Europe

Actions:

- Blue Carpet Initiative (2025-2026)
 - Entrepreneurial education and upskilling through EIT
 - Blueprint for an academic career development framework
 - Best practices concerning the treatment of ESOs for startups, incl. legislative measures to harmonise certain aspects of their treatment
 - Recommendation to eliminate tax obstacles for remote cross-border employees for startups and scaleups
 - EU Visa Strategy
 - Pilot of Multipurpose Legal Gateway Offices
 - Roll-out of targeted information activities promoting the EU Blue Card Directive
 - Encourage Member States to put in place fast-track schemes for founder residence and work permits
 - Simplify and reinforce existing EURAXESS services for innovators
- Fair Labour Mobility Package (2026)





Access to infrastructure, networks and services

Actions:

- Charter of Access for industrial users to research and technology infrastructures (2025)
- European Innovation Act promoting the access of innovative companies to European research and technology infrastructures (Q1 2026)
- Guidance on the applicable State aid rules for universities and public research organisations to grant access to infrastructure (2026)





Measuring progress

Actions:

- Definition of startups, scaleups and innovative companies (Q1 2026)
- Annual startup and scaleup survey (as of 2026)
- European Startup and Scaleup Scoreboard (as of 2026)

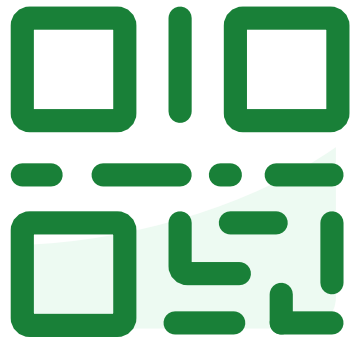


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#Startups**



Which challenge do you think most hinders startups and scaleups in the EU today?



Which actions could help to accelerate startup growth in the EU?



What specific support would help your cluster or organisation better engage with startups and scaleups?

Panel debate

Catalina Luca, Management Consultant, IMAGO-MOL

Gisela Sanchez, Head of European Affairs, Finance Innovation

Jonie Oostveen, Programme Manager, AgriFood Capital

José Vilar Gonzálbez, Head of Service, IVACE+I, Enterprise Europe Network

Stamatiki Kritas, Cluster Manager, HBIO; Managing Director, CEBR

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Women TechEU initiative

- This initiative supports **early-stage women-led deep tech startups** to bridge the gender gap in the European innovation ecosystem. It provides financial and strategic support to help startups advance their technology and business models, grow sustainably, and prepare for **future EIC Accelerator opportunities**.
- The selected consortium will be responsible for:
 - Designing and managing the **Women TechEU programme**, ensuring continuity and operational excellence
 - Launching at least two calls per year to select and fund eligible women-led startups
 - Organising the evaluation and award process using EIC Accelerator-style criteria
 - Building a network of Women TechEU grantees through landmark events and ecosystem integration
- Topic ID: HORIZON-EIC-2025-WOMENTECH
- Deadline: 2 September 2025
- Published on [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

Expanding Investment Ecosystems

- The objective of the call is to strengthen the integration of less connected innovation ecosystems (from 'emerging' or 'moderate' innovator regions) with stronger EU innovation hubs by increasing access to foreign venture capital, supporting **startup internationalisation**, and improving the flow of investment and knowledge across Europe.
- Expected impact:
 - More **foreign VC investments** in underfunded EU regions.
 - Improved investor **awareness of local startup opportunities** and regulatory conditions.
 - **Better startup understanding** of market expectations in leading EU regions..
- Topic ID: HORIZON-EIE-2026-01-CONNECT-02
- Planned opening date: 10 September 2025
- Deadline: 20 January 2026
- Published on [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

Scaling up deep tech ecosystems

- The aim of the call is to **leverage pan-European research infrastructures** (RIs) as anchors for **deep tech innovation**, enhancing collaboration with industry and SMEs, and maximising the market and societal impact of previous investments.
- To foster deep tech innovation around research infrastructures, projects must:
 - Identify breakthrough deep tech innovations with strong potential linked to pan-European RIs.
 - Assess their feasibility, scalability, and readiness for industrial deployment.
 - Select and cluster mature innovations with the highest market and societal impact.
 - Design and implement calls for pilot projects in 3 to 5 technological areas.
 - Manage grants for these pilot projects and evaluate outcomes to inform future scaling.
- Topic ID: HORIZON-EIE-2026-01-CONNECT-03
- Planned opening date: 10 September 2025
- Deadline: 20 January 2026
- Published on [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

Register for the next Talks

2 July

Make Companies Choose Europe:
Driving Competitiveness with the Single Market Strategy

... summer break

Continue the discussion



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THANK YOU

