



EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Europe's Technological Future: Driving Innovation for Economic Security

Summary



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

An initiative of the European Union





Europe's Technological Future: Driving Innovation for Economic Security

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform, on behalf of the European Commission, organised the EU Clusters Talk "**Europe's Technological Future: Driving Innovation for Economic Security**" on **26 February, 8:30 – 9:45 CET**, to explore how clusters support the technological advancements in Europe, discuss needed support mechanisms for companies, and give an outlook to future development in the critical technology areas.

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. Input from the European Commission
Valentina de Vito, Policy Officer, DG CNECT, European Commission
3. Panel debate
Aiga Irmeja, Executive Director, Latvian IT Cluster
Alfonso Gabarrón González, CEO, Spanish Association of Semiconductor Industry
Dr. Daniel Stadler, CEO, EIN Quantum NRW
Roberta Lauro, Funding, Internationalisation and Networking Officer, Distretto Campania Bioscience
4. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, team member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Key messages

- Clusters are vital to implementing the EU Economic Security Strategy through innovation, coordination and industry engagement.
- Clusters must lead the adoption of critical technologies such as AI, semiconductors, quantum and biotech.
- SME access to advanced technologies depends on cluster-led platforms, partnerships and shared expertise.
- Cluster networks form the invisible infrastructure powering Europe's technology knowledge transfer.
- Cross-border collaboration is essential for impact; clusters are key to scaling solutions.
- Regulatory sandboxes help cluster SMEs de-risk biotech innovations and accelerate approvals.
- The EU is listening. Clusters should actively shape industrial policies through platforms like the Industrial Forum.
- Europe can succeed, but only if clusters lead the innovation charge.



1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform

Nina Hoppmann, team member, European Cluster Collaboration Platform

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

1. Presentation of the EC's [2025 work programme](#).
2. Apply for the [Young European Entrepreneur Award](#).
3. [Public consultations open](#) for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).
4. Save the date for the [EU-Ukraine Business Summit](#).
5. Register for the [C2Lab in Zaragoza](#), 19-20 March 2025.
6. Register for [CmR Eindhoven, Netherlands](#), 26-27 March.
7. Register for [CmR Heilbronn, Germany](#), 9-10 April.

2. Input from the European Commission

Valentina de Vito, Policy Officer, DG CNECT, European Commission

Valentina introduced the [European Economic Security Strategy](#), adopted in June 2023, aimed at assessing and managing risks to economic security while maintaining an open economy. The strategy is structured around three pillars — protect, promote and partner — informally referred to as the “three Ps”.

Regarding the **protection pillar**, she highlighted existing tools such as foreign direct investment (FDI) screening and export controls, as well as the development of new mitigating measures. The **promote pillar** advocates for strengthening competitiveness through the reinforcement of the single market, the industrial base, research, and the skills necessary for critical technologies. The **partner pillar** seeks to foster cooperation with like-minded countries, especially G7 partners, using tools such as free trade agreements and the Global Gateway strategy.

The strategy identifies four major categories of risk: disruptions to supply chains, technological security (including technology leakage), cybersecurity of critical infrastructure, and economic coercion or strategic dependency.

She then presented a **recommendation on critical technologies** for economic security, based on three criteria: transformative potential, risk of civil-military dual-use, and potential misuse for human rights violations. The first technologies prioritised were semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology, with DG CNECT leading work on the first three. Valentina made a clear call for collaboration from the private and academic sectors, underlining that the true technical expertise lies with them.

The "**January package**" was introduced as the first tangible outcome of the strategy. It comprises three white papers (two on trade and one on dual-use technologies), a proposal to revise the FDI screening regulation, and a Council recommendation on research security. The latter aims to strengthen cooperation among Member States to safeguard sensitive research activities.

Operationally, she explained that **new governance mechanisms** have been established, including a Commissioners' project group on economic security, technical-level task forces and in-depth risk

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assessments. Additionally, scenario-based analysis is being introduced to anticipate short-term risks more effectively.

Although initial efforts have focused on four technology areas, she noted that work is now beginning on mapping and reflecting upon the remaining six, and other possible areas of relevance. The outcomes of these assessments will form the basis for future mitigation measures, which will require negotiation by the European co-legislators.

Valentina concluded by emphasising the evolving nature of the Economic Security Strategy and encouraged active engagement from private stakeholders via channels such as the **Industrial Forum** led by DG GROW, as well as through bilateral contacts. She stressed that input from the private sector is crucial to ensure regulatory measures are realistic and effective.

3. Panel debate

Aiga Irmeja emphasised the **Latvian IT Cluster's recent focus** on innovation transfer and the application of AI technologies, especially within SMEs. She highlighted the role of the AI Studio, developed in partnership with a business school, to support companies in understanding and implementing AI in ways that improve competitiveness. She stressed that the **adoption of AI** should begin with personal experimentation and productivity tools, especially for micro-enterprises, and noted the importance of showcasing successful case studies to inspire confidence.

Alfonso Gabarrón González described the rapid development of the Spanish Semiconductor Association, which grew from four to eighty-nine members in three years. He presented the association's work as a national node within the **European Chips Act**, providing a platform to help users navigate the semiconductor ecosystem. He warned that technological advancement risks excluding SMEs and stressed the need for easy access to information. Alfonso also outlined how the Chips Act and national investments are attracting foreign manufacturers to Europe, enhancing resilience in key sectors such as defence, automotive and home appliances.

Dr. Daniel Stadler gave a comprehensive overview of **quantum technologies**, pointing out their distinct development timeline and transformative potential, especially in areas like cybersecurity and complex optimisation. He argued that quantum is not just about the technology itself but about solving unsolved industrial problems. He likened clusters to invisible infrastructure, enabling efficient knowledge transfer between research and industry, and stressed their essential role in innovation ecosystems. He also explained that while skilling in quantum remains complex, **practical upskilling pathways are emerging**, especially for users rather than deep researchers.

Roberta Lauro explored the **cross-sectoral applications of biotechnology**, from personalised medicine and alternative proteins to circular economy innovations. She described bio-manufacturing as the shared foundation for innovation in life sciences and explained how her cluster integrates traditional manufacturing with innovation, supported by EU-funded projects like EPICENTRE and APPROVE. The speaker also emphasised the importance of venture capital integration in the post-project phase to support market entry and regulatory sandboxes as valuable tools for de-risking biotech innovation.



Audience questions focused on **practical issues** like how small businesses can begin to adopt AI and whether Europe is doing enough to compete with other global players in AI and emerging technologies. Aiga Irmeja suggested that SMEs should start with personal AI tools and learn from existing success stories. She also affirmed that Europe is capable of developing its own large language models, despite regulatory and linguistic challenges. Andrew Lansley prompted further discussion on Europe's collective capacity, with Aiga Irmeja affirming her optimism and belief in the Commission's supportive role.

Another prominent topic was the **skills gap**. Daniel Stadler elaborated on the difficulty of quickly training quantum specialists and the need to balance deep technical knowledge with user-oriented understanding. He highlighted regional efforts in North Rhine-Westphalia to scale up quantum education and commercial masterclasses aimed at skilling the workforce for adoption.

The panel finalised with **main takeaways** included the need to strengthen Europe's technological sovereignty, enhance SME access to advanced technologies, foster talent development, and ensure strategic cooperation across borders and sectors. Aiga Irmeja encapsulated the spirit of the discussion by affirming, "Europe can do it," a sentiment that reflected the collective resolve of the panel to drive innovation for a secure and competitive European future.

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 Accelerator 2025 - Short application](#); deadline 18 December 2025.
2. [EIT Jumpstarter Next 2025](#); deadline 11 April 2025.
3. [European Quantum Communication Infrastructure](#); deadline 27 March 2025.
4. Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters; published on [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#).