



EUCLUSTERS  TALKS 

An initiative of the European Union



Green, digital and resilient through clusters:

Takeaways from the European Cluster Conference

15 May 2024

08:30-09:45 CET

Online

Agenda

1. News from the European Cluster Collaboration Platform
Nina Hoppmann, *Team Member European Cluster Collaboration Platform*
2. Key messages from the European Cluster Conference
Mariella Masselink, *Head of Unit, DG GROW, European Commission*
Marek Przeor, *Team Leader Cluster Policy, DG GROW, European Commission*
3. Panel debate
Carolina Garcés, *Project Manager Internationalisation, Mobile Heights*
Glenda Napier, *CEO, Energy Cluster Denmark*
Kristina Šermukšnytė-Alešiūnienė, *General Director, AgriFood Lithuania*
Susana Remotti, *Cluster Project Manager, PROPLAST Italy*
4. Funding opportunities
Nina Hoppmann, *Team Member European Cluster Collaboration Platform*

Housekeeping rules

Zivile Kropaite, presenter

- 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

Register for Clusters meet Regions in Graz, Austria



Anchored in the theme of **Tradition Reinvented**, the event aims to explore how clusters can spearhead transformative shifts towards a climate-neutral, digital future, aligning with European sustainability goals.

As part of the [Clusters Meet Regions event in Graz, Austria](#), a matchmaking event will take place on **18 June 2024**.

EU-Taiwan Matchmaking



The [EU – Taiwan Matchmaking Event](#) will take place on-site in **Berlin, Germany on 10-12 June 2024** with a delegation of about 80 companies and trade organisations from Taiwan.

Focus areas: ICT/Semiconductors and Digital industries; AI/IoT/Advanced manufacturing; Smart Mobility; Green/Circular Economy/Renewable energy/Sustainability; Smart Healthcare; Smart city/Connectivity/5G

Deadline: 16 May 2024

EU-South Med Matchmaking



The [EU – South Med Matchmaking Event](#) will take place on-site in **Frankfurt, Germany** on **11-13 June 2024**.

It will bring together cluster organisations and SMEs from the European Union (EU), non-EU countries participating in the Single Market Programme/COSME Strand, and South MED region: **Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine* and Tunisia**.

Focus areas: Green tech and energy; Digital tech and ICT; Mechanical engineering and manufacturing; Pharma and biotech

Deadline: 16 May 2024

EU-Canada Matchmaking



The [EU – Canada Matchmaking Event](#) will take place **will take place on-site in Montreal, Canada, on 10-12 September 2024** in the context of the ALL IN Event (Artificial Intelligence).

It will provide participants an excellent chance to promote Cluster to Cluster (C2C), Cluster to Business (C2B), and Business to Business (B2B) collaborations between EU/COSME countries and Canada.

Focus areas: Artificial Intelligence, Advanced manufacturing, Digital Technology, Quantum Technology

First cut-off: 28 May 2024

Explore the Trend Universe: Open to all users from the EU!

Our services
The services of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform to support your work

CLUSTERS MEET REGIONS	EUCLUSTERS TALKS	EUCLUSTERS MATCHMAKING	C2LAB	CLUSTER BOOSTER ACADEMY	GREEN TRANSITION SUPPORT	TREND UNIVERSE
Join clusters and policymakers in the local, regional, and national level and work on strengthening the industrial ecosystem of regions.	Your weekly opportunity to exchange knowledge and discuss topics significant to the EU business community.	Team up with other cluster organisations from Europe and third countries and find new collaboration opportunities at dedicated matchmaking events.	Interactive workshops for cluster organisations, companies, and other interested entities to meet up, establish new collaborations and develop project roadmaps.	Join our Cluster Booster Academy, meet other cluster managers and learn how to further develop your cluster and overcome challenges in your daily work!	Connect with other businesses in the green transition, and get practical knowledge, tools and information you need for your work.	A strategic foresight instrument which allows you to get a deeper understanding of future trends and their impact on your cluster organisation.
Explore	Explore	Explore	Explore	Explore	Explore	Explore



Trend Universe

A strategic foresight instrument which allows you to get a deeper understanding of future trends and their impact on your cluster organisation.

[Explore](#)



Insights on the countries

1

Economic policy context

2

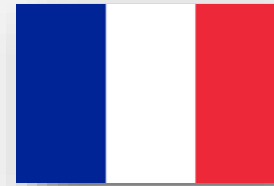
Relevant industrial ecosystems & the cluster landscape

3

National cluster policy, programmes & initiatives

4

State of cluster policy & its role in broader economic policy challenges



France

Pôles de compétitivité

1. **Since 2005:** Competitiveness clusters as established and **dedicated** cluster policy
2. **2019-2022:** Phase IV focused on European **cluster cooperation** and alignment with regional development strategies
3. **Since 2023:** Phase V adds a focus on **grand challenges** (twin transition) and economic sovereignty

Takeaways from the European Cluster Conference

Mariella Masselink

Head of Unit, DG GROW, European Commission

Marek Przeor

Team Leader Cluster Policy, DG GROW, European Commission

EUROPEAN CLUSTER CONFERENCE 2024

7-8 MAY 2024, BRUSSELS

#EUClusterConference

Key statistics of the European Cluster Conference 2024:

- 2 days
- Participants 700
- Speakers: 56
- Matchmaking meetings: 800
- Exhibition stands: 70

Key takeaways from the European Cluster Conference 2024:

- Clusters:
 - are not a "funding target". They are part of our Single Market toolbox.
 - long-term strategic partner for public authorities
 - ensure a truly European approach to value chains which goes beyond national borders
 - provide incredibly relevant feedback to policy makers
 - strategically important for knowledge sharing and collaboration among businesses, regional authorities and research actors for scaling up and technology transfer
- Clusters in the EU:
 - Driving force for implementing green, digital, resilience transition
 - Secure EU value chains
 - Be the magnet to attract investments
 - Create both social and economic value
 - Pool resources, identify complementarities and offer a global solution

High level panel sessions 7th May - Key takeaways

#EUClusterConference



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OPENING PANEL SESSION: CLUSTERS FOR EUROPEAN COMPETITIVENESS – BUILDING NEW AND RESHAPING EXISTING VALUE CHAINS IN EUROPE

- Being in a cluster supports companies – they are more productive, more connected and better prepared for all transitions
- Clusters boost regional competitiveness and create dynamism and value in concrete regions. We need to better leverage the strategic role of clusters and connect them to broader national and EU industrial policies.
- EU needs new types of public-private partnerships / strategic relationship to deliver on the twin transition and resilience objectives – clusters have a role to play
- Clusters are natural investment hotspots for value chains creation – crucial in sectors such as clean tech and defence

PANEL SESSION: BEING FIT FOR THE NEXT EU MANDATE: CLUSTERS AS HOTSPOTS FOR ATTRACTING INVESTMENTS

- Trust, critical mass and scope, colocation of competence, skills, infrastructure in clusters
- EU strategy should build upon existing actors and structures to attract investments.
- Clusters are the right place to leverage private investments with public funding.
- Stability and reliability are what private investors are looking for and clusters can provide that thanks to collaboration.
- Clusters need to improve presence of financial intermediaries and boost financial literacy skills

Collective intelligence parallel sessions 7th May Key takeaways

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EUROPEAN CLUSTER CONFERENCE 2024

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Green Transition

- More integration, cross-sectoral and cross-border collaborations between clusters is needed to deliver on green transition objectives
- Long term funding for clusters and companies
- A platform of best practices at different levels: clusters, SMEs, national cluster policy

Main barriers are:

- Lack of long-term funding, climate change denial, mindset/reluctance to change

What could help:

- More collaboration among clusters and companies
- Capacity building and relevant services for SMEs
- "Every job is a climate job" mindset
- Streamlined regulatory framework (e.g. reporting obligations)

Digital Transition

- Cluster organisations know the value chain across different industrial ecosystems and they have the capacity to scale up businesses.

Main barriers are:

- Lack of funding, and when available, tied to too many conditions
- Lack of awareness or understanding of digital technologies (good vs. better?)
- Change-averse mindset
- Not being able to keep up with the speed of change
- Regulatory issues, e.g., linked to data protection
- Global competition

What could help:

- Cluster could be right sensors to monitor digitalization/awareness raising
- Funding based on impacts and results (KPIs)
- Training of clusters managers on latest digital solutions, their applications and take up options
- Cross-cluster and cross-sectoral collaboration (not only digital)

Resilience

- Need to build trust: within clusters, with companies, among clusters
- Build capacity to understand the needs of your members and react to their needs/ understanding value chains
- Speed/Need to act and adapt fast to stay strong

Main barriers are:

- Lack of funding, lack of skilled workforce, capacity to be strategic and adapt quickly new solution (e.g. AI)

What could help:

- More government support, guidance for contingency/mitigation planning for clusters at EU and local level
- Lifelong learning for cluster managers
- More collaboration among clusters
- Empowerment of partners beyond clusters

Skills

- Crises have created skills mismatches and shortages
- Upskilling/reskilling and lifelong learning are key

Main barriers are:

- Multitasking and capability of combining complementary skills in a project-based approach required (technical, digital, social, linguistic, communication, soft skills all needed)
- Tendency to hire already skilled people instead of training current employees
- Difficulty in retaining knowledge and skilled staff
- Difficulty in prioritising skills (soft vs. hard skills)

What could help:

- Closer collaboration and sharing of training resources among clusters
- Long-term partnerships between academia and business
- Practical education (internships in companies, stage in universities)
- Consistent long-term policy/ lifelong learning

Funding

- Need to ensure funding stability for clusters
- Matching needs of members
- Restrictive 10-year funding rule (state aid)

Main barriers are:

- Lack of financial resources/funding stability for clusters, complex funding rules

What could help:

- Clarifying cluster value proposition, matching needs of members
- Communication with policy makers on investment priorities and value added of clusters
- Clear legal structure needed for liability
- More cascade funding for SMEs through cluster organisations

Technology

Main barriers are:

- Lack of technical knowledge
- Traditional mindset of companies and clusters (reluctance to change)
- Speed of change (technologies quickly becoming obsolete)
- Slow adoption in the EU compared to China or US
- Difficulty in bringing innovations to market
- Non-business or customer driven research
- Lack of global regulation/standards
- Focus on research rather than deployment

What could help:

- Experimentation and test-before-invest hubs
- Engaging target groups/focusing on customer demand/ output driven innovation
- Clusters as facilitators to bring research and industry together (better address research needs)
- Knowledge transfer and peer learning among clusters
- Increased cascade funding / higher budget per ticket

Parallel sessions 8th May

Key takeaways

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Metaclusters: building new or reshaping existing value chains in Europe

- Metaclusters can be the most effective way to structure collaboration across countries in the EU
 - Higher level organisational structures that connect multiple clusters across different regions or sectors
 - Designed to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange and innovation at a larger scale than individual clusters/address complex challenges that transcend individual clusters by leveraging collective efforts
- There is no country in Europe which can specialise in all key technologies so there is no other option
- By collaborating and connecting competences we can find solutions to common challenges and becoming more resilient during shocks (e.g. Covid, chips, war in Ukraine) and compete with global players
- The value chains are changing fast now and inputs are received from other sector (multisectoral and interdisciplinary thinking requires cluster cooperation beyond sectoral silos)
- You need relatedness to share talents, technologies, investments etc./ identify existing clusters (across locations), assess interconnections, implement collaborative initiatives, and monitor progress
- Time and resources put together into an action plan (roadmaps) is fundamental to collaborate
- We must create corridors of excellence (Silicon Europe)/ harmonising technologies across countries

Creating shared value through clusters

- Shared value is a competitive strategy that creates value both on the social and the economic value. It is embedded in the business strategy and is for the long term. Win-win for public and private.
- Shared value is created by:
 - Conceiving new products- e.g. ergonomic back-packs that solve a problem of scoliosis among children
 - Redefining productivity in the value chain e.g. re-use of water/pollution reduction due to energy savings
 - Building supportive environment for vocational training at the place cluster is located
- Clusters have the power to be drivers for gender equality and diversity, for instance, by creating handbooks for gender equality for their members. Gender equality is also a driver of economic prosperity,
- Studies show - a reduction by 1% of the gender pay gap would result in 0,1% increase in the GDP.
- Involving young people in project design and implementation gives a future led perspective/sensitivity for sustainable future

EU's defence, health, energy and economic security

- Security requires ongoing regulatory, institutional and organisational reforms
- Long term perspective is needed while discussing security.
- Raw materials: Self-sufficiency in critical minerals is key to EU competitiveness with clusters boosting knowledge, collective investment, social perception, skills provision and permitting process
- Energy: It is crucial to integrate renewable energy into energy system.
- Cybersecurity: Proliferation of awareness and knowledge on cybersecurity among SMEs is difficult to be put in place if this is not done in a certain framework. Good experience with cascade funding, boosting innovation and collaboration via cluster organisations (eg. Innosup-1 Secure IT project)
- Clusters create cross-sectoral projects bringing different sectors together on security issues e.g. IT, energy, food
- Clusters are agile in the moment of crises to prepare mitigation actions in short-term perspective e.g. developing vaccines, finding new inputs (diversifying supply sources or innovating), respond to cyberattacks, etc.
- **Preparedness/mitigation/contingency plans at cluster level are needed**

Boosting EU clusters' competitiveness through internationalisation

- Example: Global South markets are very challenging for SMEs to access. SMEs alone often lack the resources and time to look for the right market and business partner internationally.
- Clusters know the specific SME needs and can play a crucial role to support SME's preparation, visibility and cooperation building in these markets.
- Cluster partnerships from across Europe can help cooperation among SMEs to pool resources, identify complementarities and offer a global solution to partners in third markets.
- Clusters are mostly interested in targeting cooperation first with Africa, followed by South-East Asia and, lastly, South America.
- Business missions and support to identify local partners/right interlocutor are the top preferred activities to help SME's internationalisation.
- Ensuring continuity of international activities without public funding is an issue

Developing a successful cluster business model

- No universal business model for financing cluster organisations
- Project funding and public support (including regional and EU funding) remain as some of the key sources of income for cluster organisations
- It is important to balance project and public funding with membership fees and to select projects that bring value to members.
- Taking into consideration all cluster stakeholders' views via collective intelligence methods is crucial to build a cluster business model with a clear and effective value proposition.
- Example for Iceland: after Covid switched from 70% from membership fees to 70% coming from projects
- Example from Canada: nearly \$2 billion of public funding (from research to deployment) invested by the federal government in five high-impact clusters to develop globally competitive ecosystems e.g. ocean economy, AI, digital, advanced manufacturing, proteins. Creating incentives for private investments.

Bolstering start-ups and scale-ups

- Start-ups develop and succeed if they operate in a good ecosystem that can support them incl. supporting after failures.
- Clusters create preconditions for start-up creation and scale up.
- Value chains are important for start-ups. Once you have all parts of the value chain covered in Europe you can compete on the international stage.
- A mechanism/instrument to enable covering financing of all parts of the value chains in Europe is required (without need to search for (risk) capital outside EU)
- Funding in the UE is slow and fragmented in comparison to the US. Start-ups escape from EU for scaling up financing. Conservative/ risk averse approach of EU investors.
- Example: Idea for a tool in energy transition area working with life demonstration conditions like in living labs to support start ups

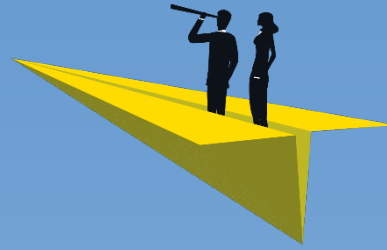
WE HAVE FOUND

NORBERT 😊



EUROPEAN CLUSTER CONFERENCE 2024

7-8 MAY 2024, BRUSSELS



Thank you



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Panel debate

Carolina Garcés, Project Manager Internationalisation, Mobile Heights

Glenda Napier, CEO, Energy Cluster Denmark

Kristina Šermukšnytė-Alešiūnienė, General Director, AgriFood Lithuania

Susana Remotti, Cluster Project Manager, PROPLAST Italy

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Enterprise Europe Network

- The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) **provides business support and advisory services – in particular for SMEs** – by offering information, advisory services, feedback and partnering services, innovation, technology and knowledge transfer services. The Network provides services encouraging the participation of SMEs in the opportunities provided by the Single Market Programme and Horizon Europe, as well as internationalisation services beyond the Single Market and informs SMEs on access to finance and funding opportunities.
- This call for proposals establishes and ensures the continuous functioning of the Enterprise Europe Network from 1 July 2025 until 31 December 2028 by **selecting the consortia that will make up the Network**.
- Activities to be funded:
 - Activity 1: Provision of value-added services to clients
 - Activity 2: Promotion of the Network and communication
 - Activity 3: Network development and capacity building
 - Activity 4: Network coordination and quality management
 - Activity 5: Project management (including consortium coordination)
- Topic ID: SMP-COSME-2024-EEN-01; SMP Action Grant Budget-Based
- Multiple cut-offs; first deadline: 19 September 2024
- Published on [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

EU-Ukraine Cluster Partnership Programme

- The action will support **Ukrainian business integration in EU value chains** and the development of **cooperation projects and partnerships** between European and Ukrainian clusters and business network organisations.
- The programme will be implemented by consortia of organisations that are interested in establishing and running a **Cluster Partnership** (referred to as Partnerships).
- The proposal shall address both specific objectives:
 - Developing **value chains interlinkages** between EU and Ukrainian companies (networking).
 - Fostering the **cluster capacity-building and the professionalisation of support** for both EU and Ukrainian SMEs.
- Deadline: 4 June 2024
- SMP-PJG SMP Project Grants;
TOPIC ID: SMP-COSME-2024-CLUSTERUA-01
- Published on [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

Expanding Academia-Enterprise Collaborations

- Project results are expected to contribute to a selection of expected outcomes, e.g.:
 - Improved **integration** of research institutions, Higher Education Institutions, vocational schools, and similar organisations into Europe's innovation ecosystems
 - Improved **flows of knowledge, skills, and talents** between educational institutions and other innovation ecosystem actors at various levels of development
 - Improved **skills of all involved ecosystem actors** to increase innovation potential, inter-sectoral mobility, and market uptake of new technologies
 - Enhanced **availability of local talents** equipped with skills to support business acceleration and digitalization
 - Enhanced **entrepreneurial activity** in developing innovation ecosystems and their upscaling and interconnectedness across the EU
- Topic ID: HORIZON-EIE-2024-CONNECT-02-01; HORIZON Lump Sum Grant
- Deadline: 19 September 2024
- Published on [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

Supporting national, regional and local authorities across Europe to prepare for the transition towards climate neutrality within cities

- Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:
 - Increased **preparedness and capacity** of national, regional and local authorities in EU Member States and countries associated to Horizon Europe to **engage in cities' transition towards climate neutrality**.
 - Identification of **country-specific challenges and barriers** for cities to achieve climate neutrality related to regulatory framework, funding and financing, and governance structures and promotion of best-practices through transnational exchanges and sharing of experience.
 - Enhanced **synergies with R&I national/international communities, relevant initiatives, and partnerships**
- The objective of this action is to **strengthen existing national networks** in Member States and Associated Countries as well as **encourage and support the creation** of such structures in countries where this has not yet taken place.
- Topic ID: HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-02-01; HORIZON Action Grant Budget-Based
- Deadline: 5 September 2024
- Published on [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters

- AIBC: Open call for SMEs from the **ICT, mobility, logistics, energy and/or manufacturing sectors** to participate in **international mission** to Austin, TX, USA; deadline 16 May
- CirInWater: Knowledge lump sum is willing to boost SMEs' development or growth by facilitating **access to external training or consultancy services**; meant for an individual SME that is offering **water-smart solutions**, especially for the agrifood & energy-intensive industries; deadline 2 October 2024
- E-BOOST: Supporting innovative **Products & Services** development in **electromobility** sectors; deadline 31 May 2024
- E-BOOST: **Mobility** Lump Sum to Mobility and Industry **Suppliers Meeting** (MISM) mission; deadline 31 May 2024
- E-BOOST: **Mobility** Lump Sum to **InnoTrans mission (Railway exhibition in Berlin)**; deadline 30 May 2024
- ELBE: Call for Internationalisation UK, USA & AUSTRALIA; deadline 20 May 2024
- FRIEND CCI: Call for **providers** offering solutions in **digitalisation, greening, and internationalisation** to collaborate with **Creative and Cultural** SMEs for the realization of funded projects; deadline 1 August 2025
- GEMSTONE: Financial support for **training** related to **Green Manufacturing**; deadline 31 December 2024
- IKAT: **Tourism** 2nd Call for SMEs in Europe - Financial support for services; deadline 15 May 2024

Opportunities for SMEs: Calls from Euroclusters

- INGENIOUS: **Internationalisation** grant for SMEs operating in **energy-intensive industries** to develop activities related to Africa, Asia, North America and Latin America; deadline 30 September 2024
- INGENIOUS: **Training** grants to help SMEs improve their digital skills, green transition, resilience preparedness and reskilling and upskilling of the workforce; deadline 14 February 2025
- POLREC: Open Call for **Internationalisation** of **Polymer/Elastomer recycling** SMEs; deadline 22 May 2024
- RE-CENTRE: Financial support for participation of SMEs (traditional furniture and living sector, IT sector, and green/circular economy sector) in **B2B meetings** with entities from Mexico or Chile; deadline 31 May 2024
- RESIST: **Training** FSTP for SMEs in the **Automotive – Mobility – Transport** ecosystem; deadline 30 November 2024
- RESIST: **Networking and marketing** FSTP for SMEs from the **Automotive – Mobility – Transport** ecosystem; deadline 20 December 2024
- RESIST: **Internationalisation** FSTP for activities in target markets; deadline 20 December 2024
- RESIST: **Coaching and mentoring** for assessment and feasibility services; deadline 1 November 2024
- SILEO: Open Call for **Travel Vouchers** to Italy to support the participation of SMEs operating in the **lighting and furniture sector** and **tech-savvy SMEs** in the SILEO **Hack Day event**; deadline 28 June 2024
- **All calls here:** <https://clustercollaboration.eu/open-calls>

Register for the next Talks

29 May

EU Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing Initiative

And more to come...

Continue the discussion



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THANK YOU

