

A large, stylized graphic of a 3D cube structure made of thin white lines. One of the cubes in the foreground is filled with a solid light orange color. The structure is composed of several interconnected cubes, creating a sense of depth and geometric complexity.

# Let's Rise for Europe

Policy discussion and idea catalogue:  
Tech Sovereignty in Europe







## Our joint call to Rise for Europe

First of all, thank you to all participants who showed up at our Rise for Europe working lunch and roundtables at DTU Startup Day.

The participation, engagement, and valuable inputs contributed greatly to moving the discussion in Europe from focusing on challenges and barriers to strengths and opportunities - very much in line with the newly launched EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy.

At the roundtable discussions, we gathered as leading European innovation hubs, universities, investors, policymakers, entrepreneurs and ecosystem builders to identify concrete opportunities, initiatives and actions for scaling critical technologies and building technological autonomy and competitiveness in Europe.

Together, we rolled up our sleeves and joined forces as true policy entrepreneurs to identify ideas, actions and initiatives that can transform Europe from a world leader in research to a world-leading ecosystem for technological innovation and startups.

The policy roundtable revealed a clear consensus: Europe's challenges with building and scaling tech champions lie in regulatory challenges as well as issues of market fragmentation, cultural mindset, and insufficient capital deployment. The path to European tech leadership is not paved with new regulations but with making existing markets work effectively, mobilising existing capital, and building a unified innovation ecosystem. The solutions identified are concrete and actionable.

On the coming pages, we have gathered the insights, key takeaways, ideas, and topics for further discussion from our roundtable discussion. We hope they can be instrumental to the work you do in each of your capacities. Let's continue to rise for and with Europe.

Best Regards,

Laura Klitgaard  
President, The Danish  
Association of Engineers, IDA

Marianne Thellersen  
Senior Vice President for innovation  
and entrepreneurship DTU







# Roadblocks and Initiatives

## - Key insights, ideas and inspiration from the 4 roundtable discussions

---

### 1. Competencies:

#### Building Europe's entrepreneurial talent base

---

##### Key insights from the roundtable discussion:

- Mindset and ambition gaps are holding Europe back. Strong technical talent exists, but entrepreneurial ambition and commercial confidence are unevenly distributed. Also, European founders often lack the scale of ambition seen in US counterparts.
- Entrepreneurship must be treated as a core mission of European universities. Too often, entrepreneurial education is fragmented, underfunded, or dependent on individual champions. Entrepreneurship in universities depends too heavily on individual leadership rather than systematic institutional strategy.
- Entrepreneurial education needs scale. Isolated programs reaching dozens of students won't move the needle; Europe needs systemic integration of entrepreneurial education across education levels and countries.
- Experienced founders matter. Many successful tech ventures are led by startup and industry veterans. Education and support models must not just focus on entrepreneurial students and scientists but also support their engagement with experienced entrepreneurs.

##### Selected ideas:

- Institutionalise entrepreneurship in university strategies; dedicate at least 1% of university budgets to innovation and spinouts.
- Build "DTU Skylab-style" hubs across Europe to give students hands-on startup exposure.
- Promote cross-border educational programs and joint curricula on entrepreneurship, technology commercialisation, and leadership.
- Embed entrepreneurial mindsets early - from primary school to PhD programs - and train university faculties to support these goals.

##### Key takeaways and inspiration for the EU Innovation Conference:

- How can EU-level policies encourage entrepreneurship to become a systemic priority in higher education across member states?
- How can Europe build a pipeline of high-ambition entrepreneurial talent by combining scientific excellence with commercial drive?
- What role can pan-European institutions play in recognising, connecting, and supporting entrepreneurial universities and educators?

---

## 2. Collaboration:

### From fragmented ecosystems to a functional single market

---

#### Key insights from the roundtable discussion:

- The widely discussed “28th Regime” for startups received limited support; concerns were voiced that it would add bureaucracy without solving core fragmentation problems.
- A key barrier is a lack of single market enforcement: practical challenges in banking, HR, legal, and public procurement persist across borders. EU law implementation varies significantly across member states, creating practical barriers for scaling companies.
- There is no EU-level regulatory helpdesk or complaint resolution mechanism for startups navigating cross-border challenges.
- Procurement as a key innovation driver, but current EU procurement rules systematically exclude startups from public markets.
- Shared infrastructure, due diligence expertise, and procurement platforms are critical enablers for cross-border startup growth.
- True collaboration within Europe depends not just on alignment at policy level, but on practical, trust-based relationships across ecosystems.

#### Selected ideas:

- Implementation and enforcement of existing Single Market rules should be prioritized rather than adding the new 28th regime. Rather than new regulatory structures, develop standardised templates, legal frameworks, and support ecosystems (lawyers, accountants, banks).
- Develop common procurement frameworks that open EU demand-side opportunities to startups. Explore DARPA-style instruments to support demand-side innovation and first customers for tech ventures.
- Encourage and facilitate mobility for startups and founders - e.g. with shared due diligence processes, legal templates, regulatory navigation, and market entry support.
- Establish an EU-level helpdesk to support startups in navigating cross-border challenges.
- Collaboration across universities and ecosystems is needed to share infrastructure, expertise, and best practices, especially for deep tech evaluation and due diligence, where technical expertise is scarce.
- Establish EU-wide expert networks, shared due diligence standards, and capacity to support better evaluation of emerging sectors like quantum, AI, and health data.
- Prioritise personal relationships and shared infrastructure (labs, computing, clinical trials) to accelerate innovation at scale.

- Europe's innovation strength is undervalued: shift from a deficit narrative ("falling behind") to one focused on unique advantages. Build a unified European narrative: promote pan-European success stories (rather than isolated national wins) and move away from "Silicon Valley of X" comparisons. Develop a coordinated EU-wide storytelling and branding strategy to attract capital, talent, and global attention to European tech achievements.

#### **Key takeaways and inspiration for the EU Innovation Conference:**

- What are the most impactful reforms to ensure the Single Market works in practice for startups?
- How can the EU build shared infrastructure and regulatory support mechanisms to level the playing field for innovators across member states?
- In what ways can public procurement and standardisation become strategic levers for scaling?
- How can ecosystems collaborate across borders without diluting their local strengths or duplicating efforts?

---

### **3. Early stage capital:** Getting Europe's tech flywheel started

---

#### **Key insights from the roundtable discussion:**

- Europe's innovation potential is hindered by a persistent lack of early stage capital, especially for deep tech startups. Compared to the US and Asia, European startups receive significantly less pre-seed and seed funding.
- Early stage funding in Europe is fragmented, risk-averse, and mismatched to deep tech development cycles. This makes it difficult for early stage startups to attract the necessary capital for scaling.
- Many startups are spun out too early and are undercapitalised. Spinning out too early and "spoon feeding" ventures with fragmented soft funding weakens their scaling potential.
- Avoid premature spinouts—consider letting ventures mature longer inside university labs, coupled with strong private-sector engagement. Align academic spinouts with commercial realities: integrate professional boards, funding literacy, and market-readiness earlier.
- Universities lack the financial tools and expertise to prepare ventures for major investment rounds. There is a need for more effective collaboration between universities, investors, and entrepreneurial ecosystems to unlock early funding, including the creation of university-linked pre-seed and early stage VC funds.
- Simplifying cross-border investment processes and harmonising early stage funding mechanisms across Europe are critical to closing the funding gap and ensuring promising startups do not stall.

### **Selected ideas:**

- Leverage public funds effectively: Use state capital for first-loss positions while maintaining private management.
- Create evergreen and long-duration funds (15+ years) tailored for deep tech development.
- Engage institutional investors (insurers, pension funds) and develop new financial products to channel European savings into innovation and startups.
- Incentivise multi-corporate pre-seed funds to pool industrial capital and expertise around strategic investments in critical technologies.
- Establish cross-border investment platforms (e.g., Nordic Five Tech) to pool high-potential startups into shared investment platforms. Encourage cross-border/regional specialisation in critical technologies rather than replicating all capabilities everywhere and support EU-wide networks that link complementary expertise within, e.g., quantum, defense, etc.
- Build entrepreneur financial literacy programs to improve scaling and investment readiness.
- Strengthen university-investor collaboration. Support the creation of university-linked pre-seed and early-stage VC funds.
- Keep companies in university labs longer (following US model) while maintaining clear IP separation.

### **Key takeaways and inspiration for the EU Innovation Conference:**

- How can Europe close the deep tech early-stage funding gap without over-reliance on soft money or premature spinouts?
- What fund structures are most effective for deep tech startups - evergreen, multi-stage, blended models?
- How can university ecosystems build productive relationships with investors and what are effective VC university models?
- What policies can promote specialisation and coordination across Europe's fragmented seed-stage funding landscape?



---

## 4. Growth Capital: Scaling European champions

---

### Key insights from the roundtable discussion:

- Europe faces a sizable gap in growth capital compared to the US. EU venture investment remains less than half that of the US (as a share of GDP) – a gap that widens even more in deep tech.
- Large pools of institutional capital (from insurers, pension funds, and corporations) exist in Europe. Still, barriers such as risk profiles, regulatory constraints, and lack of familiarity with the startup asset class limit their involvement. Institutional investors remain reluctant to enter VC due to risk, regulation, and fund performance. The challenge is mobilisation, not availability.
- National VC initiatives offer blueprints for mobilising growth capital at scale; the roundtable called for similar coordinated efforts across Europe.
- More capital alone isn't the solution – fund structure, specialisation, and market attractiveness matter just as much.
- Public procurement, stock option reform, and ecosystem liquidity are all under-leveraged non-financial levers for scaling.

### Selected ideas:

- Mobilise capital through hybrid public-private fund-of-funds, building on successful models.
- Encourage specialised regional growth platforms around strategic tech domains.
- Reform regulations to enable institutional capital flow into VC. Mobilise institutional investors by developing new financial products and updating capital requirements to make startup and VC investment more attractive and accessible.
- Strengthen exit environments through better secondary markets, IPO support, and corporate acquisition pathways.
- Facilitate specialisation in verticals (quantum, health data, green tech) to build depth and scale.

### Key takeaways and inspiration for the EU Innovation Conference:

- What regulatory reforms are needed to unlock institutional capital for European tech?
- How can we align public investment tools with strategic specialisation and long-term growth objectives?
- What are the policy levers beyond capital (e.g., procurement, equity incentives, exit channels) that can support scale-stage growth?
- How do we ensure Europe's capital flows remain anchored in European scaleups, rather than diverted abroad?







# So, where does this all lead us?

With the vision to make Europe the world's best place to launch and grow global technology-driven companies, the EU Commission released the first-ever EU Startup & Scaleup Strategy.

To help you discuss the strategy's building blocks and match them to the ambitions for European innovation, resilience, and technological autonomy, we have summed up the key actions and flagship initiatives of the five main areas the Commission has identified.

---

## 1. Fostering an Innovation-Friendly Environment

---

- European 28th Regime (planned for Q1 2026):
  - Voluntary, harmonised EU legal regime for startups/scaleups, enabling digital company setup in 48 hours, with unified rules on insolvency, labour, and tax.
- European Business Wallet (Q4 2025):
  - Digital identity for businesses, enabling secure, EU-wide sharing of verified credentials and data.
- Regulatory Sandboxes & Testbeds:
  - Expand regulatory sandboxes and testbeds to accelerate safe market entry for innovative solutions, especially in deep tech.
- Single Market Enforcement:
  - Prioritise better enforcement of existing Single Market rules over new bureaucracy.
  - Develop standardised legal templates and frameworks for cross-border business.
- EU Regulatory Helpdesk:
  - Establish a helpdesk to support startups with cross-border regulatory and administrative challenges.
- Standardisation & Procurement:
  - Develop common procurement frameworks and harmonise standards to facilitate cross-border scaling and market access.

---

## 2. Driving Better Financing

---

- European Innovation Investment Pact (Flagship Initiative):
  - Mobilise €175 billion in private and public investment for startups and scaleups by 2030.
  - Engage Member States and private investors in a coordinated effort to unlock capital.
- European Tech Champions Initiative:
  - Pan-European fund providing late-stage growth capital for scaleups, leveraging public/private investment.

- **Unlocking Institutional Investment:**
  - Reform regulatory barriers to allow pension funds and insurers to invest in venture capital and startups.
- **Pan-European Investment Platforms:**
  - Support cross-border VC funds and platforms, especially for deep tech and strategic sectors.
- **New Financial Instruments:**
  - Develop evergreen and long-duration funds tailored to deep tech.
  - Incentivise multi-corporate pre-seed funds for strategic tech investments.
- **Financial Literacy & University Collaboration:**
  - Promote financial literacy for entrepreneurs.
  - Support university-linked pre-seed and early-stage VC funds and deeper university-investor collaboration.

---

### 3. Supporting Market Uptake and Expansion

---

- **Lab to Unicorn Initiative:**
  - Support network, collaboration and (existing) synergies between leading startup and scaleup hubs rooted in strong university ecosystems, to provide startups and scaleups access to services, infrastructure and corporates across the hubs.
  - Help Academic institutions and their inventors with blueprints for commercialising IP and creating spinoffs.
- **Public Procurement Reform:**
  - Make public procurement more accessible to startups through innovation-friendly frameworks and pilot programs.
  - Encourage public sector bodies to act as first customers for innovative startups.
- **Harmonising Standards:**
  - Propose measures to align standards and regulatory requirements across member states.
- **Support for Internationalisation:**
  - Expand support for startups to enter new markets, including regulatory navigation and market entry assistance.
- **Pan-European Branding:**
  - Develop a coordinated EU-wide storytelling and branding strategy to promote European tech globally.
- **Shared Due Diligence & Infrastructure:**
  - Facilitate cross-border mobility and market entry through shared due diligence processes, legal templates, and infrastructure.











---

## 4. Attracting and Retaining Top Talent

---

- **Blue Card/Blue Carpet Initiative (Flagship Initiative):**
  - Launch a “Blue Carpet” fast-track scheme for startup founders and tech talent, building on the EU Blue Card, to simplify and accelerate visa and residence procedures for third-country nationals.
  - Promote Europe as a top destination for global entrepreneurial talent.
- **Entrepreneurial Education:**
  - Systematically integrate entrepreneurship into university strategies, dedicating at least 1% of budgets to innovation and spinouts.
  - Embed entrepreneurial mindsets from primary school to PhD, and train faculty accordingly.
- **Mutual Recognition of Qualifications:**
  - Support the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and facilitate talent mobility across the EU.
- **Diversity & Inclusion:**
  - Support initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion, including women and underrepresented groups in tech.
- **Mentorship & Networks:**
  - Connect startups with experienced mentors, advisors, and entrepreneurial veterans.

---

## 5. Facilitating Access to Infrastructure, Networks and Services

---

- **Investment in Shared Infrastructure:**
  - Expand access to digital innovation hubs, testbeds, and research facilities for startups and scaleups.
  - Build pan-European networks connecting startups with investors, corporates, mentors, and research institutions.
- **European Business Wallet:**
  - Serve as a digital cornerstone for accessing infrastructure and services across the EU.
- **Support Services:**
  - Develop and scale services for business development, regulatory compliance, and internationalisation.
- **Shared Due Diligence & Best Practices:**
  - Establish EU-wide expert networks and shared due diligence standards, especially for deep tech evaluation.
- **Access to Critical Infrastructure:**
  - Facilitate startup access to labs, high-performance computing, clinical trial facilities, and data spaces.

## We look forward to follow up

The EU's new strategy is moving from ambition to action. We look forward to continuing the dialogue on how to act on this.

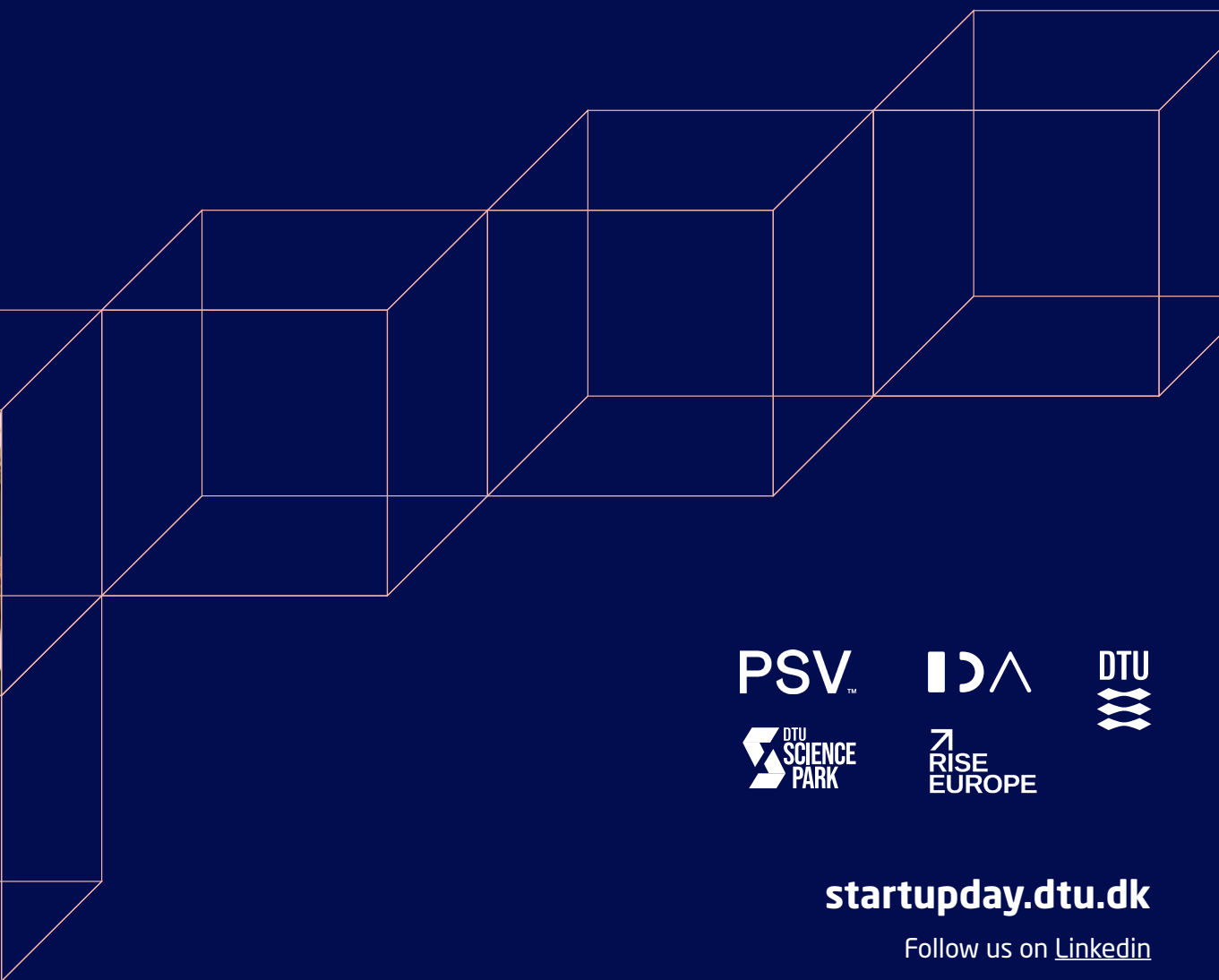
The Danish EU Presidency offers a unique opportunity to drive these initiatives forward to address the structural challenges that prevent European tech from achieving global scale.

Insights and suggestions from this publication will be used in the planning and programme of the upcoming EU Innovation Conference on Advancing Strategic Competitiveness & European innovation in Deep tech, which will be held by DTU during the Presidency, on November 25-26, 2025.

**For more information on the conference, please visit the website:**

[ascend.dtu.dk](https://ascend.dtu.dk)





PSV™



**startupday.dtu.dk**

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#)