



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
AND SMES  
Industrial Policy and Innovation  
**Social Economy**  
**Head of Unit**

Brussels  
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Dear Antonio and ECA Members,

We would like to thank you for the letter dated 27 October that the European Cluster Alliance (ECA) sent to Commissioner Breton. He asked me to reply to you on his behalf.

First of all, I would like to assure you that Commissioner Breton is well aware and strongly believes in the important contributions that clusters make to boosting growth and competitiveness and now helping the European economy weathering the crisis. He clearly expressed his positive views on clusters and the need to support them through his intervention at the videoconference that he had with ECA in June and through his video message at the European Cluster Conference on 10 November.

Second, I would like to express again Commissioner Breton's and our own appreciation of the work that ECA has undertaken in the last one year. You built an effective community, delivered help in the very early days of the crises, generated a constant flow of valuable information on supply chain disruptions and created an intense dialogue among clusters on good practices and cluster policies. We greatly value the good cooperation that we had so far between ECA and DG GROW, and the wider European Commission.

Third, I want to confirm that we are supportive of the idea to involve clusters drafting and implementation of the European recovery and resilience initiatives. We see eye-to-eye with you regarding the relevance and capabilities of clusters that make them well placed to boost these actions. Clusters should contribute directly through facilitating innovation, channelling funding earmarked for recovery and resilience efforts, driving the green and digital transitions and acting as intermediaries towards SMEs. We are also aware that clusters already successfully work with governments on the national recovery plans in France, Belgium and Spain. We intend to promote these practices so that other countries also follow suit.

DG GROW and specifically our Cluster Team located in my Unit will work towards ensuring that clusters will get a recognition and concrete practical roles in the various initiatives developed under our recovery and resilience plans. We are reaching out to the relevant Commission services with the intention to establish opportunities and operational responsibilities for clusters for participating in developing and implementing of policies, designing and operating funding instruments, strengthening and connecting ecosystems, etc.

Fourth, I also would like to confirm that we intend to continue to work on supporting clusters through European level initiatives. The Recommendation Report that the Expert Group will finalise by the end of this year includes a number of proposed actions for increased support and capacity building for clusters, cluster associations and cluster managers. We clearly see the value added in helping clusters to organise themselves better, to improve capacity needed to implement green, digital and resilience related measures, and to collaborate across countries and ecosystems.

We continue to be committed to the implementation of the Joint Cluster Initiatives - Euroclusters that was proposed as a flagship initiative within the new Single Market Programme. This large scale new initiative will be used to connect ecosystems across regions and sectors to strengthen value chains, to boost innovation, internationalization and scaling up support to SMEs, to foster knowledge sharing and to facilitate industrial transformation.

We believe that a sustained close cooperation between the European Commission and ECA will greatly strengthen our chances for success in achieving the above objectives. Therefore, I very much look forward to continue to have regular contacts between us and to find ways how we can mutually support our respective initiatives in the coming months. I will also continue to inform Commissioner Breton about our cooperation in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Ulla ENGELMANN  
(e-signed)