

SEMI Europe Advocacy

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SEMI launches Chips Skills Academy to tackle shortage of skilled labour

On October 1st, the European Chips Skills Academy (ECS), a project coordinated by SEMI Europe, has kicked off. ECS is an EU-funded project that aims to bridge the gap between education, training and industry to address the shortage of skilled labour in the semiconductor industry. The Chips Skill Academy will, together with 17 partners, implement the Pact for Skills, establish an academy for microelectronics and develop an innovative curriculum.¹

The Academy launched by SEMI Europe will address the pressing shortage of skilled labour in the semiconductor industry, which was also emphasized by Ursula von der Layen in her State of the EU speech last month.² Despite the comprehensive strategy outlined by the EU in the Chips Act to develop chip manufacturing and related value chain activities in Europe, the insufficient specialized workforce remains a significant obstacle towards the achievement of the EU's goals and ambitions for this sector.

In this regard, as reported by POLITICO, the recent landmark investment plans delivered by Intel and TSMC for chip manufacturing facilities will require thousands of skilled workers – the 3,000 jobs announced by Intel will largely consist of technicians (70%) and engineers (25%).³

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-details/43353764/101110124/ERASMUS2027>

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_4426

³ <https://www.politico.eu/article/chip-manufacturers-need-staff-european-factories-tsmc-intel/>

Any shortage of these workers will inevitably hamper the ambitious strategy foreseen under the EU Chips Act, to the detriment of Europe's semiconductor industry and economy as a whole.

The European Chemicals Agency receives over 5600 comments on the PFAS ban proposal

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has announced that it has received over 5,600 opinions on the proposal to ban per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the EU before the consultation deadline (September 25th). The proposal to ban PFAS chemicals, requested by the chemical agencies of Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden at the start of the year, aims to protect human health and environmental wellbeing.

Given the significant impact of this proposal on the semiconductor industry, SEMI Europe was among the entities that submitted an official opinion, advocating for a derogation on the use of PFAS for our industry. The document was prepared thanks to the valuable support provided by the PFAS Working Group over recent months.

Given the current lack of alternatives for most applications of PFAS in the semiconductor supply chain and the long time-to-market required for developing viable alternatives, it is fundamental that ECHA and the European Commission grant the 12-year derogation, in addition to the 18-month transition period already foreseen under the current restriction proposal – for a total transition period of 12 years + 18 months before restriction becomes legally applicable.

All the comments will be now evaluated by ECHA's scientific committees for Risk Assessment (RAC) and Socio-Economic Analysis (SEAC), which will be integrated by ECHA to form their official opinion within the shortest possible timeframe.⁴

German Ministry of Economy publishes list of 31 Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI)

The German Ministry of the Economy has recently (September 18th) published a list of projects that will obtain funding under the "Important Projects of Common European Interest" (IPCEI) of the EU. The list includes 31 projects from 11 federal states (Published on the German Ministry's website⁵) that will grant a total of €4 billion, half of which will be allocated towards the German semiconductor industry, thereby confirming the strategic importance of this sector within the IPCEI program.⁶

In addition to EU funding, the participating companies will provide another €10 billion in the form of investments towards production and manufacturing facilities, as well as to the development of new types of semiconductors. Beneficiaries of the IPCEI program will not only include the industry leaders, but also involve small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) and start-ups.

⁴ <https://echa.europa.eu/fr/-/echa-receives-5-600-comments-on-pfas-restriction-proposal>

⁵ https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/M-O/202306-ipcei-mikroelektronik-2-karte.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10

⁶ <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Pressemitteilungen/2023/09/20230918-mikroelektronik-fuer-deutschland-und-europa.html>

Overall, the main objective of the IPCEI will be to strengthen the microelectronics and communications technology sector across the EU, as the program is foreseen to distribute grants to 68 projects involving 56 companies across 14 European countries.⁷

Chips Joint Undertaking enters into force

On September 21st the Council Regulation establishing the Chips Joint Undertaking has entered into force. The Chips Joint Undertaking will be responsible for implementing the Chips for Europe Initiative, the first pillar of the recently adopted EU Chips Act, focusing on strengthening the EU semiconductor industry through a combination of investments from the EU, member states and private sector.

Its objectives include the creation of an open-design platform to reinforce Europe's chip design capacity, pilot lines serving for research and development, capacities for quantum chips, competence centres providing technical expertise and a Chips Fund to finance SMEs and start-ups. Chips Joint Undertaking will be responsible for implementing all these objectives, except for the Chips Fund, which will be implemented by the European Innovation Council and Invest EU.

While the predecessor, the "Key Digital Technologies Joint Undertaking" was public-private partnership responsible for managing research and innovation for the EU electronics industry, the newly established Chips Joint Undertaking will focus solely on the semiconductor industry to achieve the objectives of the Chips Act⁸.

For feedback, get in touch with the SEMI Europe Advocacy Team at
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⁷ https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/state-aid/legislation/modernisation/ipcei_en

⁸ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/factpages/chips-europe-initiative#:~:text=The%20Chips%20for%20Europe%20Initiative%20includes%20a%20number%20of%20pilot,gap%20from%20lab%20to%20fab.>