

## IPCEI on Advanced Semiconductor Technologies - Central narrative

Megatrends such as Artificial Intelligence, Automation, Security and Sustainability create a fundamental change of society. **The European semiconductor industry will play a vital role in this transformation if, and only if, we urgently adopt a collective and ambitious approach** to seize these market opportunities.

Although the European semiconductor industry has major strengths in specific technological fields, it has been under pressure for the past 20 years. **Semiconductors more and more are a key domain of global geo-economic and political dominance**, reinforcing the need for European technological sovereignty and strong position on global markets.

**To face this in-depth transformation, an IPCEI focused on Advanced Semiconductor Technologies (AST) will provide the necessary impulse for Europe's semiconductor industry** to capitalize on emerging technological opportunities and to establish new positions of global leadership and market strength.

**The IPCEI AST provides an ambitious and collective answer to these challenges by addressing highly disruptive technological developments** – AI chips and accelerators; Photonic Integrated Circuits; and Chiplets and heterogenous integration/Advanced packaging, **and by giving a highly innovative impulse to areas in which Europe is already leading**, namely – Disruptive sensors; Power Electronics and Disruptive Energy Saving Solutions; and Secure Communication. To position Europe as a technological leader, the IPCEI AST covers all required steps within the semiconductor value chain, including **strategic enablers** such as equipment.

To ensure its success, the IPCEI AST will build on the efforts made through already existing EU initiatives, especially the pilot lines, to accelerate industrial R&D and first industrial deployment.

## The Importance of Semiconductors

Semiconductors are the backbone of our future economy. They are embedded in virtually every electronic device and essential to a wide range of applications and end markets. The importance of semiconductors is only expected to increase over the coming decade, **driven by megatrends such as Artificial Intelligence, Automation, Security and Sustainability**.

Semiconductors are more than just enablers – they are becoming a central driver of economic growth and prosperity. **The semiconductor industry is expected to reach €1 trillion EUR in annual revenue by 2030 and may double again by 2040**<sup>1</sup>. It enables end products across a wide range of industries – from automobiles, via industrial equipment and IT services, to energy technologies – multiplying the impact of semiconductors in Europe's GDP and infrastructure. Semiconductors form the basis for roughly half of the global GDP. At the same time, the dynamics of the semiconductor industry are undergoing rapid transformation: **semiconductors have emerged as a key domain of global geo-economic competition**. As access to (advanced) semiconductors directly impacts industrial and security capabilities, countries across the globe are **mobilizing significant resources to invest in their domestic semiconductor industries**. Substantial investments are being made toward expanding production capacity and accelerating R&D as well as to “home-shore” strategically important production, with the goal of **creating global champions**. Also, Europe needs to aim at building

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<sup>1</sup> [2025 semiconductor industry outlook | Deloitte Insights](#)

up positions within the global supply chains on which European players will become indispensable. On some fields like manufacturing semiconductor equipment (for example lithography tools) or sensors, power electronics, Europe has already an indispensable position which has to be sustained. Simultaneously, efforts need to be made to reduce strategic dependencies on foreign suppliers to increase supply chain resilience and security in crucial domains such as infrastructure and defence.

Thus, the challenge Europe is facing in this domain is threefold: 1) To increase the **resilience** of supply regarding today's and tomorrow's European semiconductor demands while anticipating demand shifts triggered by the mentioned megatrends, 2) to increase **security** of semiconductor solutions taking into account new geopolitical realities, and 3) to achieve and sustain **technological leadership** over strategic semiconductor-enabled technologies and supply chains leveraging Europe's excellent R&D&I capabilities.

## **The Complexity of the Global Semiconductor Ecosystem**

**The global semiconductor supply chain is highly complex and intricate.** Semiconductor production consists of numerous highly specialized steps, each requiring its own chain of suppliers. Most of the stages of the supply chain are nowadays dominated by only a select number of players, due to very large investments in technological innovation and production capacity, regional specialization and significant economies of scale. Companies typically concentrate on specific steps of the supply chain, and within those steps on specific market segments or technological niches where they can achieve global leadership.

These economies of scale, combined with high capital requirements and steep requirements in technological expertise, make the semiconductor market difficult to enter. **Entry is only possible through a combination of disruptive innovation that outperforms existing solutions and the ability to rapidly bring these innovations to market while scaling up production to meet market demand. Additionally, the introduction of incremental innovations can also lead to market capture by capitalizing on sudden novel market demands.**

Over the past decades, globalization and the drive for cost efficiency have led to a shift in production capacity to regions with the most favourable conditions – primarily in Asia. This trend has also influenced the European economy, since many European companies have relocated parts of their manufacturing activities abroad. Meanwhile, Europe has remained a global leader in R&D, supported by its excellent research institutions and robust knowledge infrastructure.

## **The Need for Strategic Choices**

**Europe's position in the global semiconductor industry has been under pressure for the past 20 years.** This pressure has only increased in recent years, as semiconductors have become a central focus of geopolitical competition. Countries around the world are rapidly scaling up investments in R&D and manufacturing capacity as they strive to increase their technological capabilities. Although Europe has also mobilized investments in production capacity and further innovations through the Chips Act, earlier IPCEIs, and other policy initiatives, these efforts have not been enough to catch up. Europe cannot afford to fall further behind in such a strategically vital sector. **Yet the global competition is intense, and success requires a continuous clear focus and coordination.** The current geopolitical context and the uncertainty it creates calls for determined and collective action to ensure that

Europe maintains and gains market leadership in the microelectronics industry and the European industry in general.

Thanks to its world-class R&D ecosystem and its strong foothold in key segments of the global supply chain, Europe has a solid foundation to build upon. However, it is not realistic to aim for leadership across the entire semiconductor value chain. **Instead, Europe must concentrate its efforts to secure and expand positions of global relevance and excellence, while reducing critical dependencies.** Rather than attempting to imitate the competition and trying to catch up, Europe should **build upon existing strengths to leapfrog and get technologically ahead of the competition.**

**If Europe's efforts are too fragmented, it risks spreading its resources too thinly – and losing momentum in the areas where it could lead.**

At the same time, **the emergence of new technological areas and disruptive innovation in established areas are expected to become increasingly important in the semiconductor value chain** in the coming years for the next generation of semiconductor innovation. **Strategic choices made today will determine Europe's role in shaping these future breakthroughs,** thereby facilitating continued economic prosperity and increase living standards across Europe.

### **Building on earlier European initiatives on semiconductors**

Through the **European Chips Act**, Europe has set itself an ambitious target to bolster European competitiveness and resilience in semiconductor technologies and applications. To this end, pillar I of the European Chips Act aims at supporting technological capacity building and innovation in the EU by bridging the gap between the EU's advanced research and innovation capabilities and their industrial exploitation. In particular, the pilot lines constitute a promising accelerator to bring technologies developed through upstream research closer to industrialization. Furthermore, in setting up semiconductor competence centres in the Member States the EU will follow its ambition to provide easy access to technical expertise and experimentation in the area of semiconductors. This will help companies, SMEs in particular, to approach and improve design capabilities and developing skills. Also, the establishment of the design platform created in an open, non-discriminatory and transparent way, will stimulate wide cooperation between users and key actors of the ecosystem whilst reinforcing Europe's advanced chip design capacity. **It is essential that the IPCEI AST aligns seamlessly with and capitalizes on the initial efforts made through the pilot lines and the other mentioned EU's initiatives and beyond, to accelerate industrial R&D and first industrial deployment.** This IPCEI will also create synergies with the approved IPCEIs on Microelectronics (ME) and Microelectronics and Communication Technology (ME/CT), striving to make the European semiconductor ecosystem ready for the next generation of semiconductor technologies.

### **Goal of the IPCEI Advanced Semiconductor Technologies**

**An IPCEI focused on Advanced Semiconductor Technologies will provide the necessary impulse for Europe's semiconductor industry** to capitalize on emerging opportunities to establish new positions of global technological leadership and market strength. **Megatrends such as Artificial Intelligence, Automation, Security and Sustainability** continue to accelerate, leading to a fundamental transformation of the semiconductor industry as well as addressed downstream industries and causing new innovation and market opportunities to

emerge. **As an integrated project**, IPCEI AST will involve Member States and participants that will commit to contribute to the project by aligning on strategic technological areas, developing innovative technologies and investing large efforts **to make sure that Europe capitalizes on these new opportunities, and supports at the appropriate level the transition from cutting-edge semiconductor research into viable, market-ready products and production processes**. Furthermore, the aggregation of an elevated number of participants, with different backgrounds and expertise, coming from industry and R&D, will contribute to the development of a highly innovative EU semiconductor ecosystem able to address the most strategic requirements of the EU industrial sectors boosting the EU's competitiveness and resilience.

#### **Sub goals:**

- **Bridge the gap from lab to fab:** Turn Europe's world-class semiconductor research into business impact by accelerating first industrial deployment and prepare the scale-up of production capacity. This includes leveraging existing pilot lines that have been set up in Europe under the Chips Act.
- **Prepare for the next generation of semiconductor technologies:** Reflect demand shifts resulting from emerging megatrends by driving innovation in future-critical semiconductor technologies, while at the same time advancing Europe's strategic goal of technological leadership and security.
- **Establish indispensable European strategic strengths:** Strengthen Europe's strategic position by building upon its strengths to create new indispensable positions in the global value chain.
- **Reinforce ecosystem resilience:** Reduce undesirable strategic dependencies by developing competitive European alternatives and creating a strong value chain around it.
- **Strengthen downstream industries:** Strengthen the competitive edge of European companies by providing cutting-edge semiconductors components tailored to end-user industries' future needs.
- **Solve Market Failures:** Resolve systemic coordination challenges and unlock private investments in areas with strong innovation potential and vast spill-over effects.

#### **Identified Technology Fields for the IPCEI AST**

If Europe wants to be able to seize the market opportunities linked to megatrends, it must provide a coordinated response that is commensurate with the challenges the European industry is facing. This is the IPCEI AST's mainspring by addressing technological fields that are both sources of differentiation for the EU and crucial to the resilience of European value-chains.

Based on consultations with Member States and Industry, the IPCEI AST capitalizes on the European semiconductor industry's strengths and significant public investments already made, in particular through the IPCEIs ME and ME/CT, through a coordinated action on seven promising technology fields: on one hand, by addressing highly disruptive technological developments that have not been covered in previous IPCEIs: AI chips and accelerators; Photonic Integrated Circuits; as well as Chiplets and heterogenous integration/Advanced packaging. On the other hand, by converting the try on key and differentiating technologies for the European industry: Disruptive sensors; Power Electronics and Disruptive Energy Saving Solutions; and Secure Communication. In addition, all required steps within the semiconductor value chain will be covered through a seventh cross-cutting technology field on strategic

enabling technologies such as equipment, EDA, materials and input, which are a prerequisite for Europe to position itself as a technological leader.

Further information about the technology fields are described in the annex of this document.

## **Logical Framework of the IPCEI Advanced Semiconductor Technologies**

The logical framework of the IPCEI AST will be structured along four levels:

1. The central narrative, providing the overarching goals of the IPCEI.
2. The dominant megatrends that form the backdrop influencing the semiconductor industry in the coming years.
3. The workstreams that can be identified as cross-cutting themes.
4. The work packages that describe which technologies are relevant in this context.