EU Export Control Forum 2026

Trade Compliance

Cattwyk Rechtsanwaltsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG

Hohe Bleichen 8, D-20354 Hamburg
Rue d'Arlon 25, B-1050 Brussels

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We attended the European Commission's annual Export Control Forum in Brussels on 20 November 2026. On the same day, Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/2288 amending Annex I to Regulation (EU) 2021/821 ("**Dual-Use Regulation**") entered into force.

The discussions in Brussels confirmed that EU export control law has entered a new phase. It is becoming more political and it increasingly targets technology and know-how rather than physical goods. Further, the EU is now prepared to act without waiting for international consensus.

Below we set out the most important takeaways together with our practical recommendations.

1. Economic security as permanent policy

The Export Control Forum confirmed that economic security has become the organising idea behind EU export control policy. Organisations should therefore expect the scope of controls to widen further and should extend their compliance programmes beyond physical goods to technology and data.

In his opening address, Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič emphasised that protecting critical technology from strategic competitors is essential to democratic resilience, while insisting that enforcement must not isolate European researchers from global innovation networks. Bernd Lange, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade ("**INTA**"), took stock of five years of Regulation (EU) 2021/821. He noted that export controls no longer concern only military or dual use hardware but increasingly capture data, software and manufacturing technology. Declan Hughes, Secretary-General of Ireland's Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, called for closer administrative convergence and shared digital screening tools to reduce delays for legitimate researchers.

2. The 2026 update of the EU control list

The EU control list has traditionally mirrored decisions taken in the multilateral export control regimes. Since 2022, however, Russia has blocked most new entries in the Wassenaar Arrangement. In response, the EU created its own category of controls for emerging technologies in 2025, the so-called "500 series" which it has now expanded.

Stéphane Chardon, Head of Sector at DG Trade and Economic Security, and Giovanni Squadrito of the Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments presented the Delegated Regulation (EU) 2026/2288 amending Annex I to the Dual-Use Regulation. The update implements some decisions of the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Australia Group and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, yet its most prominent additions are EU-only controls in

the 500 series. Chardon confirmed the EU's commitment to the multilateral regimes but explained that the EU will continue to control key emerging technologies where security so requires, after consulting partners.

This 2026 update of the EU export control list reaches well beyond equipment manufacturers. Research institutions, data centre operators and corporate R&D units should therefore assess their exposure now and classify their products and technology against the legal text rather than against summaries.

3. Fragmentation within the EU and with regard to US export control law

As national controls and US divergence increase, an EU-wide approach to compliance is not sufficient. Companies must therefore track the national lists of each Member State from which they export and maintain EU and US classifications separately.

The Dual-Use Regulation permits Member States to adopt national control lists on public security grounds. Several have done so in the recent past, including Germany and the Netherlands, for items such as advanced lithography equipment, quantum computing processors and specialised biotechnology tools. Industry and universities warned that diverging national rules disrupt cross-border research within the EU. Denis Redonnet, Deputy Director-General of DG Trade and Economic Security, stated that the Commission is developing a coordinated European framework to harmonise national measures and prevent forum shopping.

US divergence has also technical implications. Claes Hansen who trains staff on export controls at the European Space Agency, pointed out that EU and US lists may classify the same item under different codes. The new EU 500 series may therefore create new confusion, in his opinion.

4. Research and intangible technology transfers

Intangible technology transfers have become the most difficult compliance issue in research, and not only for universities. Any company that shares controlled technical data across borders, including within its own group of companies or via cloud platforms, faces the same risks.

On the panel "From the lab to the cloud", Branislav Aleksic, Co-Chair of the European Export Control Association for Research Organisations ("**EECARO**"), stressed that research institutions operate very differently from defence contractors, as they rely on open

exchange, decentralised governance and international teams. EECARO cautioned against treating export controls as a universal answer to research security risks.

The greatest practical difficulty lies in sharing source code, technical designs or laboratory protocols through cloud storage or shared repositories. Without clear exemptions for basic scientific research, overly broad controls risk deterring cross-border science and the mobility of international talents. The panellists agreed that compliance programmes must respect the basic scientific research exemption while screening applied projects that may carry a genuine proliferation risk.

5. Takeaways

- Economic security has become a permanent pillar of EU trade and industrial policy.
- The 2026 update of the EU control list tightens controls on semiconductor equipment, advanced computing, high-temperature materials and additive manufacturing.
- National controls adopted by individual Member States increasingly fragment the single market, while the gap with the United States widens.
- Transfers of software, data and know-how, in particular via the cloud, have become the most difficult compliance issue for research-intensive organisations.

Yves Melin
Lawyer | Partner
y.melin@cattwyk.com

Isabel Fressynet
Lawyer | Counsel
i.fressynet@cattwyk.com

Caroline Glöckle
Lawyer | Associate
c.gloeckle@cattwyk.com

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