EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Clusters meet Regions' event in Palma "Clusters as Drivers of Regional Transition from Linear to Circular Economy"

Input paper

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Authors:
Dr. Jan-Philipp Kramer (Prognos)
Francesco Fumagalli (Prognos)
Felix Ginzinger (Prognos)
Fabian Schmidt (Prognos)
Joseba Unzaga Rubio (Prognos)
Vincent Vogelsang (Prognos)

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Executive Summary

The following paper presents observations on the cluster landscape of the Balearic Islands in light of their efforts to transition from a tourism-dependent economy toward one driven by innovation, sustainability, and circularity. It outlines key considerations for the region's future development, particularly in relation to smart specialisation, green and digital transformation, and economic diversification. These issues are central to the **Clusters Meet Regions event in Palma on May 14 & 15**, which highlights how clusters can serve as enablers of regional transitions and help foster innovation ecosystems. The event provides a platform to exchange best practices and explore synergies between clusters, SMEs, and regional stakeholders across Europe. This paper aims to contribute to those discussions by summarising the current cluster landscape and identifying strategic questions for further exploration.

The key takeaways of this paper are summarised below:

Context: Economic profile of the Balearic Islands

- The Balearic Islands account for approximately 2.8% of Spain's GDP, reaching a total of €42.1 billion in 2023. With a GDP per capita (PPS) of €38,300, the region surpasses both the Spanish and EU27 averages.
- The regional economy is dominated by a strong service sector, primarily driven by tourism, which makes a substantial contribution to its gross value added. The importance of tourism is also reflected in the employment structure, where the share of jobs in the Tourism ecosystem significantly exceeds both the national and EU27 averages.
- In the 2023 Regional Innovation Scoreboard, the Balearic Islands are classified as a "Moderate Innovator," with an innovation performance below the Spanish and EU27 averages.

Clusters in the Balearic Islands and their importance for regional economic development

- Of the nearly 200 cluster organisations in Spain registered on the ECCP, seven are based in the Balearic Islands. Five of these belong to the total of six cluster organisations that are officially certified by the regional government. These clusters span the focus areas of maritime and nautical tourism, information and communication technologies in tourism, biotechnology and biomedical research, the chemical industry and environmental sustainability, green transition and renewable energy, as well as educational innovation and digital transformation, thus covering eight of the 14 EU industrial ecosystems. The cluster landscape is highly centralised in Palma and is primarily composed of small organisations. Clusters support the region's strategic shift towards circularity, sustainability, and innovation.
- Cluster policy is supported at both national and regional levels. At the regional level, cluster support is embedded in the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) 2021–2027 of the Balearic Islands. All matters related to clusters fall under the responsibility of the Directorate General for Innovation and Digital Transformation, which promotes participation in European programmes and strengthens the regional innovation ecosystem
- Cluster organisations act as key enablers of the green transition by supporting eco-innovation, promoting sustainable production models, and mobilising relevant actors across value chains. Their strong presence is positively correlated with green readiness, indicating their capacity to help regions adopt environmentally sustainable practices and reduce their environmental footprint.

Cross-border cooperation and the involvement of Balearic clusters in European networks and support initiatives

- The European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (ESCPs), supported by the European Commission, aim to enhance the global competitiveness of cluster members by fostering interregional collaboration on joint innovation and investment projects, and by facilitating access to markets across the EU and beyond. In the Balearic Islands, one cluster organisation has participated in an ESCP for Excellence (ESCP-4x) project.
- Regarding the Euroclusters, the Maritime and Logistics Cluster of the Balearic Islands is involved in two initiatives: MedBAN and IKAT. These Euroclusters focus on advancing the sustainable blue economy and driving innovation in the tourism sector.

Smart Specialisation in the Balearic Islands

- Smart Specialisation is a strategic approach developed by the European Commission that requires regions to identify and focus on their unique strengths and capabilities to foster innovation-driven economic growth. The S3 2021-2027 of the Balearic Islands includes the six thematic priority areas “Territorial sustainability for economic modernization”, “Development of the tourism value chain”, “Knowledge for strengthening the economy of the Balearic Islands”, “Technologies for digital & ecological transformation”, “Management of innovation & business internationalization” and “Transformative emerging sectors”.
- Cluster organisations from the Balearic Island play a relevant role in the implementation of the Balearic S3 and the Balearic Islands are involved in the S3 Partnership on Maritime Sustainable Blue Bioeconomy.

01

Context: Economic profile of the Balearic Islands

1. Context: Economic profile of the Balearic Islands

The autonomous community of the Balearic Islands (short: Balearic Islands) is located in the Balearic Sea, approximately 150–240 kilometres east of the Spanish mainland, comprising the four islands: Ibiza, Formentera, Mallorca, and Menorca (NUTS 3). As of 2023, the Balearic Islands are home to approximately 1.21 million people, representing approximately 2.5% of Spain's population.[1] The Island of Mallorca accounts for 78% of the population, with 940,000 inhabitants, followed by Ibiza and Formentera, which have a combined population of 173,000 (14%), and Menorca, with 99,000 inhabitants (8%).[2] Despite its relatively small size and population, the region is a highly popular tourist destination, with the tourism sector being the main engine of the Balearic economy. However, recognising the challenges of relying heavily on tourism, the Balearic Islands are increasingly focusing on **circular economy, sustainable tourism, and economic diversification**. These priorities will take centre stage at the upcoming Clusters meet Regions Event in Palma, reflecting the region's commitment to building a more resilient and environmentally conscious future.

The following section provides a concise socio-economic overview of the Balearic Islands, encompassing key aspects, such as its macroeconomic profile and sectoral specialisation, as well as its innovation and regional competitiveness performances.

Macroeconomic profile of the Balearic Islands

With a GDP of €42.1 billion in 2023, the Balearic Islands accounted for approximately 2.8% of Spain's total GDP.[3] The region has experienced dynamic economic growth in recent years. In 2019, the GDP grew by 2.1%, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the region's reliance on tourism, the GDP fell sharply by 23.2% in 2020.[4] The economy rebounded strongly in 2021, growing by 11.6%. By 2022, GDP had returned to its pre-crisis levels, with a 16% increase. In the following year, the Balearic Islands showcased a strong economic growth of 6.6%, outpacing both Spain's national growth rate of 2.7% and the EU27 average of 0.4%.[5] The per capita GDP (PPS) of the Balearic Islands in 2023 was €38,300, surpassing both the Spanish average (€34,500) and the EU27 average (€38,100).[6] This positioned the Balearic Islands sixth among Spanish autonomous communities.

The region's strong tourism sector drives strong retail, transport and hospitality sectors that account for 37.8% of total GVA, significantly higher than the Spanish and EU average (23.9% and 18.8%, respectively). The construction sector also stands out with a share of 8.4%, surpassing both the national and EU27 averages. In contrast, the industry sector represents just 5.5% of GVA, considerably below both the Spanish and EU27 figures.[7] Overall, the GVA highlights the strength of the Balearic service sector while industry plays a minor role in the regional economy compared to the national and EU27 averages.

In terms of trade, the Balearic Islands exported €2.6 billion in 2024 while importing €1.6 billion, resulting in a positive trade balance, in contrast to Spain as a whole. The main trading partners are Germany, accounting for 11% of total exports, followed by the Netherlands (10.7%) and France (8.3%). In total, the regional exports

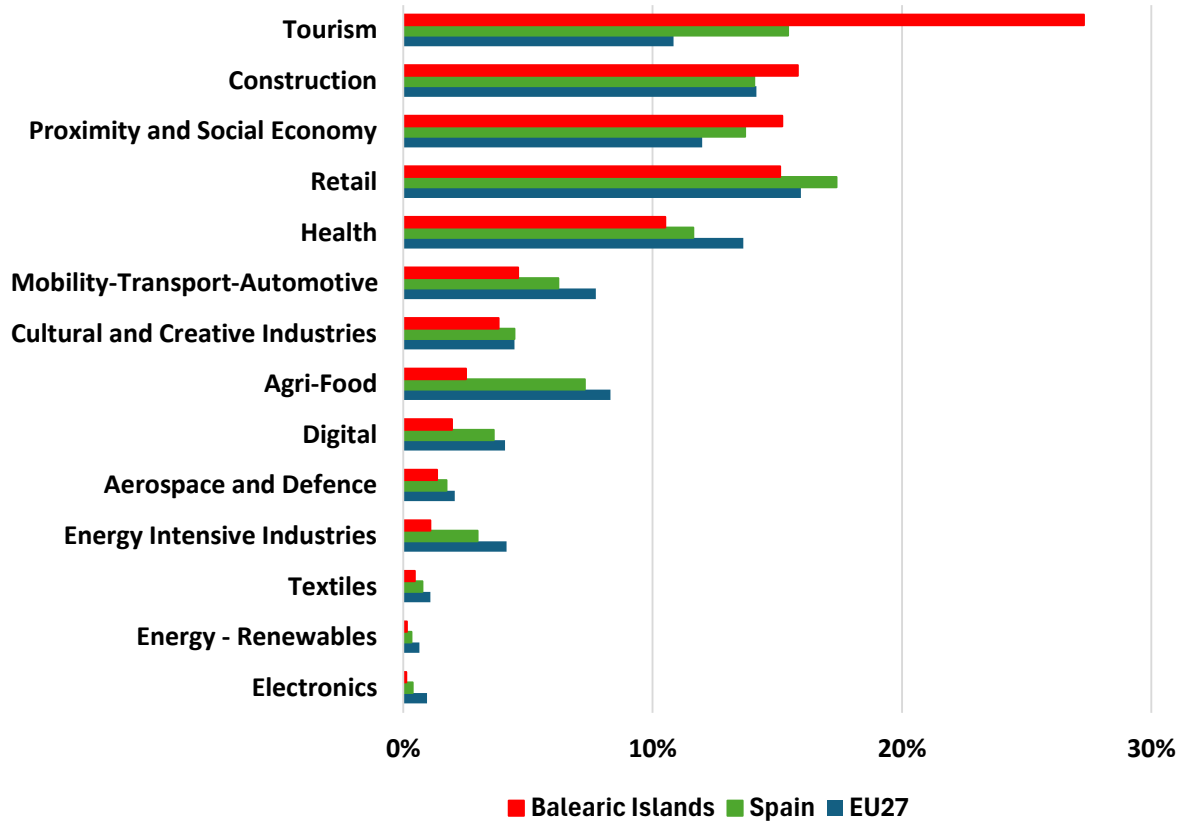
[1] Eurostat (2025): Population on 1 January by age, sex and NUTS 3 region. Data retrieved on 21.06.2024.
[2] ibid.
[3] Eurostat (2025): Gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices by NUTS 2 regions. Data retrieved on 11.04.2025
[4] Eurostat (2025): Gross domestic product (GDP) and main components (output, expenditure and income)
Data retrieved on 11.04.2025.
[5] To account for inflation, GDP at market prices was adjusted using a deflator derived from national-level chain-linked volumes with a 2010 base year, based on Eurostat data.
[6] ibid.
[7] Eurostat (2025): Gross value added at basic prices by NUTS 3 regions. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/nama_10r_3gva (last access 16.04.2025).

account for less than 1% of Spanish exports.[8] The main exports are energy and intermediate goods, accounting for 29.6% and 30.9%, respectively.[9]

Employment composition and specialisation of the Balearic Islands

Looking at the regional employment composition of the Balearic Islands, the region's strong services sector can be highlighted. According to the most recent data, services account for 54.3% of total employment in the region.[10] This figure notably exceeds the Spanish average of 46.1% and the EU27 average of 41.1%, highlighting the region's specialisation in service-sector activities, primarily driven by the tourism industry. A similar pattern is observed when examining employment distribution across the EU industrial ecosystems. As part of its Industrial Strategy (March 2020), the European Commission has identified **14 industrial ecosystems** that encompass all players operating in a value chain.[11] In the Balearic Islands, the **Tourism ecosystem stands out as the largest in terms of employment**, accounting for 27.3% of total employment across ecosystems, exceeding both the EU27 average of 10.8% and the national average of 15.4% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Employment across the EU industrial ecosystems for the Balearic Islands, Spain and the EU27, in 2022



[8] Ministerio de Industria y Turismo España (2024): Estadísticas del comercio exterior español (last access 16.07.2024).
[9] ibid.
[10] Eurostat (2024): Employment by sex, age, economic activity and NUTS 2 regions (NACE Rev. 2) (1 000). Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/lfst_r_lfe2en2 (last access 17.05.2024).
[11] See here for more information: https://clustercollaboration.eu/in-focus/industrial-ecosystems (last access 17.05.2024).

Source: ECCP (2025), own elaboration based on Eurostat. Note that the classification of the 14 industrial ecosystems has been calculated by aggregating NACE 2-digit activities, following the methodology established by the European Commission (2022).

The above analysis indicates the strong reliance of the regional economy of the Balearic Islands on the tourism sector. The sector accounts for over 40% of regional GDP. In contrast, manufacturing contributes just 2.7% of GDP (compared to the national average of 12.5%).[15] In 2023, the total number of nights spent in the Balearic Islands reached 68.8 million, accounting for 14.2% of the total nights spent in Spain and having the 3rd highest number of nights spent in the EU.[16] Even though the tourism sector is essential for the regional economy, the low level of economic diversification can carry risks and dependencies, as could be seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The region's economic objective is to create a connected and collaborative ecosystem to drive innovation and the circular economy, with a focus on economic diversification and sustainable tourism.[17] This objective is furthermore underscored by the Social Pact for the Economic, Social, and Environmental Sustainability of the Balearic Islands, which was initiated in May 2024 by the regional government.

Regional competitiveness level of the Balearic Islands

To provide an overview of the Balearic Islands' performance in key dimensions of regional competitiveness, the ranking of the autonomous community in the Regional Competitiveness Index is presented.[18] This index measures key aspects of competitiveness among regions across the EU in three dimensions: the Basic Sub-Index, the Efficiency Sub-Index and the Innovation Sub-Index. A detailed overview of the region's performance in various indicators and dimensions of the Regional Competitiveness Index is provided in Figure 8 in the Annex.

According to this, the region of the Balearic Islands overall performs below the EU average, with a score of **86.4**, ranking 156th out of all 234 regions and 11th out of all 17 autonomous communities in Spain assessed in the Regional Competitiveness Index. Given the score, **the Balearic Islands can be classified as a "Transition Region"**, of which there are eleven in Spain. Since 2019, the overall score has increased by 7.6 points.

Looking at the three dimensions, the region exhibits a **commendable performance in the Basic Sub-Index**, driven by strong results in Health, Institutions, and Infrastructure, with the latter two performing above the EU and national levels. This indicates strong institutional support, efficient connectivity, and a healthy workforce that enhances regional competitiveness. In the Innovation Sub-Index, which scores slightly below the EU and national levels, the Technological Readiness pillar performs well with a score of 131.8, slightly above the national level, highlighting the ability of households and enterprises to adopt and use existing technologies.

The Regional Competitiveness Index also reveals areas requiring improvement to enhance the region's competitiveness in the future. The Efficiency Sub-Index exhibits a low score due to performance below the EU27 in the Higher Education and LLL, Labour Market and Market Size pillars, reflecting gaps in workforce skills, labour market flexibility, and limited opportunities for economies of scale and innovation. Furthermore, the region lags in both the Business Sophistication and the Innovation pillar, both of which fall below the EU27 and Spanish

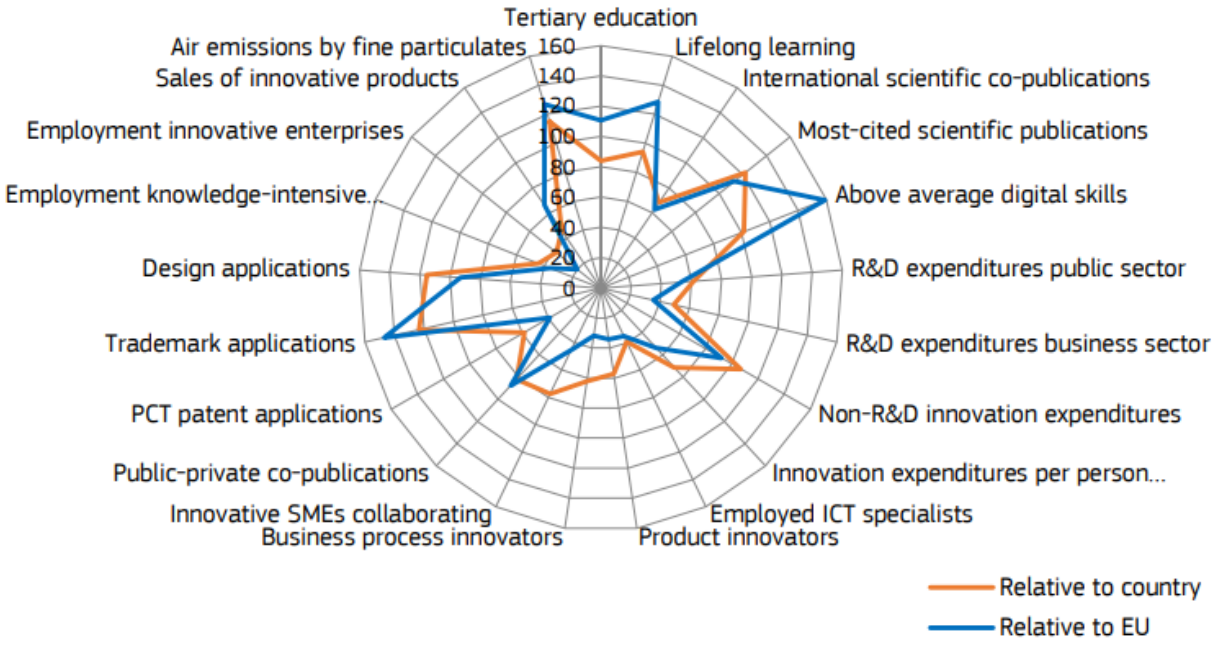
[15] Caixa Bank Research (2024): Balearic Islands. Available online: https://www.caixabankresearch.com/en/publications/autonomous-community-profiles/balearic-islands (last access 17.04.2025).
[16] Eurostat (2024): Which EU regions are receiving the most foreign tourists? (last access 17.04.2025).
[17] Marinelli & Rolla (2024): Targeted Assignment – Balearic Islands Innovation, internationalisation and circularity: towards a road map for the Balearic Islands. Available online: https://www.caib.es/sites/innovacio/es/n/recibido_el_informe_final_del_targeted_support_solicitado_por_las_islas_baleares (las access 14.04.2025).
[18] European Commission (2022): EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0 - 2022 edition. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/assets/regional-competitiveness/index.html#/ (last access 09.04.2025).

averages, despite some improvement since 2019. This indicates challenges in adopting new technologies, fostering specialisation and diversification in high-value sectors, and driving innovation to remain competitive.

Regional innovation performance and landscape of the Balearic Islands

The 2023 Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS) provides an evidence-based and comparative avenue for assessing its level of innovativeness. The RIS contains data on 21 innovation-related indicators across 10 dimensions for European regions at either the NUTS 1 or NUTS 2 levels.[19] According to the RIS, the Balearic Islands are a "**Moderate Innovator**" with an RII score of 71.1 (EU27 = 100), exhibiting a lower innovation performance than the EU27 average and the national average of 89.2. Over time, its innovation performance has increased by 9.2% since 2016.[20]

Figure 2: Regional competitiveness level of the Balearic Islands



Source: European Commission (2023): Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Regional profiles Spain.

The region of the Balearic Islands exhibits **several considerable strengths within its innovation ecosystem** (see Figure 2). Among its strengths, the Balearic Islands show strong scientific research collaboration, as reflected in the indicator "Most-cited scientific publications", where it surpasses both the Spanish and EU averages. This achievement indicates effective research activities, which in turn enhance the region's innovation output. The region also performs strongly in the "Above average digital skills" indicator, scoring well above the EU average and slightly higher than the Spanish average, highlighting a well-developed digital competence among its population. In the realm of intellectual property, the Balearic Islands excels as indicated by high scores in the " Trademark Applications" indicators compared to the EU average. Additionally, the region's strong educational performance is reflected in both the "Tertiary education" and "Lifelong learning" indicators, where it exceeds the

[19] European Commission (2023); Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Methodology Report. Available online: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5357c81b-9222-464b-8468-38ccd83b5624_en?filename=ec_rtd_ris-2023-methodology-report.pdf (last access 14.04.2025).
[20] European Commission (2023); Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Regional profiles Spain. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/ris/2023/ec_rtd_ris-regional-profiles-spain.pdf (last access 14.04.2025).

EU average. This highlights a robust foundation in higher education and continuous skill development, essential for sustaining the region's innovation capacity.

While the innovation ecosystem of the Balearic Islands displays notable strengths, indicators are highlighting **potential areas for improvement** when compared with the Spanish and EU27 averages. R&D expenditures in both the public and business sectors fall below the EU27 and Spanish averages, indicating potential underinvestment in research and development activities. Balearic Islands account for the second lowest R&D expenditure in Spain, with 0.51% of GDP or €161 per inhabitant, significantly below the Spanish average of 1.49% of its GDP or €470 per inhabitant.[21] When comparing private and public R&D expenditure, the Balearic Islands have one of the lowest rates of private R&D expenditure (41.7%). In comparison, private R&D expenditure in Madrid and the Basque Country accounts for 57.7% and 76.5% of the total R&D expenditure, suggesting that the more innovative states accumulate more private R&D investment. The region also scores low in the "Product and process innovators" indicator, suggesting that the creation and implementation of new products and processes remain areas where the region lags behind. Furthermore, the "Innovative SMEs collaborating" indicator reveals below-average performance, indicating limited collaboration among small and medium-sized enterprises, which is crucial for fostering innovation networks. Lastly, the region shows a low score in the "Employment in knowledge-intensive enterprises" indicator, pointing to a shortage of high-skilled jobs that are essential for sustaining a knowledge-based economy.

An actor which is further supporting the innovation landscape of the region is the **Balearic Islands Digital Innovation Hub (DIHBAI-TUR)**.[22] As a member of the European network of Digital Innovation Hubs, the centre's main objective is to support regional digital transformation—primarily in tourism and agriculture—by offering local companies access to AI-driven innovation, technological infrastructure, and multi-entity cooperation, acting as a one-stop shop to enhance competitiveness and quality of life through digitalisation. Another example is the **Bit Foundation**, which is a government-dependent non-profit organisation in the Balearic Islands that aims to promote innovation, technological development, and entrepreneurship through managing technology parks, supporting R&D initiatives, disseminating knowledge, and providing ICT services to the regional administration.[23] Additionally, the Innovation Factory (Factoría de Innovación), included in the ERDF Operational Programme 2021-2027, plays a central role in driving innovation among SMEs by offering personalised consultancy, innovation diagnostics, and support for R&D certification. The programme targets over 200 companies by 2024, aiming to promote innovative transformation through action plans, knowledge exchange, and increased participation in European initiatives.[24]

[21] For more information, see https://cotec.es/informes/evolucion-de-la-id-3 (last access 17.04.2025).
[22] For more information, see https://dihbai-tur.com/en/ (last access 17.04.2025).
[23] For more information, see https://www.fundaciobit.org/en/what-is-the-bit-foundation/ (last access 17.04.2025).
[24] For more information, see https://caib.es/sites/aeib/es/factoria_dinnovacia/ (last access 17.04.2025).

02

Clusters in the Balearic Islands & their importance for regional economic development

EUROPEAN CLUSTER COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Strengthening the European economy through collaboration

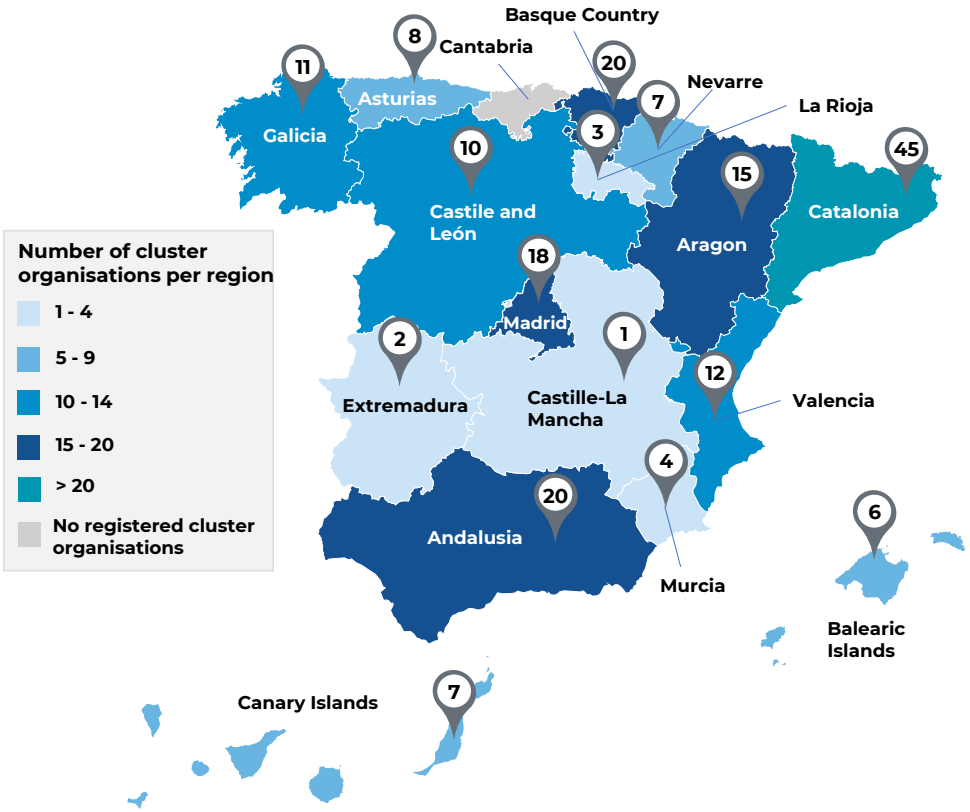
2. Clusters in the Balearic Islands and their importance for regional economic development

The involvement of clusters in regional economic governance, policy design and implementation at the regional level are of central importance for regional economic development. This chapter provides an overview of cluster organisations in the Balearic Islands, including their geographic distribution and key characteristics such as size, membership structure, and thematic orientation based on industrial ecosystems. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the policy framework supporting cluster development at both the national and the region level.

ECCP-registered cluster organisations in the Balearic Islands

Cluster organisations are **key actors in the European economy**, facilitating collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing between diverse innovation stakeholders within a geographical or sectoral cluster.[25] The European Cluster Collaboration Platform serves as a one-stop shop for cluster organisations at the European level. Therefore, the number of registered cluster organisations and other innovation actors in the Balearic Islands on the ECCP gives the first impression of the intensity of organisation in regional industrial networks.

Figure 3: Overview of cluster organisations in Spain



Source: ECCP (2025). Own elaboration based on https://reporting.clustercollaboration.eu/all (last accessed 14.04.2025). Note: For the Balearic Islands, the number of cluster organisations is based on regionally certified clusters, while for other regions it is based on ECCP-registered cluster organisations.

[25] A cluster, in economic terms, refers to the concentration of interconnected business, suppliers and associated institutions that are geographically proximate or related by sector.

Figure 3 above shows the geographical distribution of the cluster organisations in Spain. Out of the total 1,618 ECCP-registered EU27 cluster organisations and 199 registered organisations in Spain on the ECCP, there are seven registered and validated cluster profiles from the Balearic Islands (See Table 1 in the Annex). Among these, five cluster organisations are certified by the Balearic Island Government. In total, the region hosts **six regionally certified cluster organisations**. These include the following:

- Balearic Marine Cluster
- International Cluster of Information and Communication Technologies applied to Tourism (Turistec)
- Biotechnology and Biomedical Cluster of the Balearic Islands (BIOIB)
- Chemical Industry Cluster of the Balearic Islands (CliQIB)
- Cluster Ecological Transition of the Balearic Islands (TEIB)
- Cluster.edu of the Balearic Islands

The six cluster organisations in the Balearic Islands certified by the Balearic Island Government span the focus areas of maritime and nautical tourism, information and communication technologies in tourism, biotechnology and biomedical research, the chemical industry and environmental sustainability, green transition and renewable energy, as well as educational innovation and digital transformation Therefore, they can be linked to eight of the 14 different EU industrial ecosystems.[26] The most prominently represented ecosystem is **Digital**, which is addressed by three cluster organisations, followed by **Tourism, Mobility-Transport-Automotive, and Energy Intensive Industries**, each covered by two cluster organisations. In addition, the ecosystems **Health, Agri-Food, Renewable Energies, as well as Proximity and Social Economy** are each represented by one cluster organisation. A list of these cluster organisations and their assigned ecosystems is provided in Table 2 in the Annex. In addition to the six certified clusters, one cluster organisation is registered on the ECCP but is not certified by the Balearic Islands Government, namely the Maritime and Logistics Cluster of the Balearic Islands. It is included for completeness and described further below, although it is distinct from the regionally certified cluster organisations. The Balearic Islands exhibit a highly centralised cluster landscape, with all cluster organisations located in the region's capital, Palma. Most cluster organisations are relatively small, with one to five employees, while one cluster has between six and ten employees. A similar trend can be described for the member structure, with two organisations being rather small, with up to 50 members, while three organisations have between 51-100 members.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the Balearic Islands are committed to building an innovative ecosystem focused on the circular economy. This ambition is driven by the dual objective of achieving greater sustainability and diversifying the region's economy. The region's emerging cluster landscape reflects this strategic orientation, with several dynamic cluster organisations playing a central role. One of the key actors is the **Balearic Marine Cluster**, which unites companies from across the maritime sector, including shipyards, marinas, and service providers.[28] The cluster's mission is to enhance the international competitiveness of the Balearic nautical industry by fostering innovation, promoting sustainability, and strengthening skills development. Another significant contributor to the green transition is the **Chemical Industry Cluster of the Balearic Islands (CliQIB)**.[29] Representing the regional chemical industry, CliQIB promotes sustainable and circular business models by encouraging innovation, regulatory compliance, and resource-efficient practices. The cluster fosters collaboration among companies,

[26] Please note that the ecosystem allocation is based on the selection made by each respective cluster organisation. In cases where no selection was made, the ECCP has assigned the organisation to one or multiple ecosystems based on the available information.

[28] For more information, see https://balearicmarinecluster.com/en/ (last access 17.04.2025).

[29] For more information, see https://cliqib.org/ (last access 17.04.2025).

research institutions, and public stakeholders, and supports capacity-building initiatives such as dual training programmes in partnership with universities. It also plays an important role in helping businesses navigate environmental regulations related to packaging and waste management, thus contributing to the region's broader sustainability goals. This focus on ecological transformation is further embodied by the **Cluster for Ecological Transitions of the Balearic Islands (TEIB)**.[30] The TEIB Cluster promotes the green transition by facilitating cooperation between companies and public-private partnerships. Its work targets the integration of sustainability principles into key sectors such as tourism, trade, construction, and transport, aiming to generate added value while accelerating the region's transition to a low-carbon, circular economy. The TEIB Cluster's role in the region's path to sustainable and circular economic transformation is further described in Box 1.

Box 1: ECCP Cluster Solutions Library – Cluster TEIB

Ecological Transition Cluster of the Balearic Islands – TEIB Cluster

Cluster TEIB: A Cluster for the Balearic Green Transition

Founded in 2021, the aim of this cluster is to accelerate the green transition in the islands. The cluster has the support of the main institutions of the environmental sector in the Balearic Islands and is made up of companies, public administrations, various associations and knowledge centres. The TEIB sets its focus on nine strategic areas concerning renewables, energy storage, efficient and sustainable construction, blue economy, circular economy, sustainable mobility, digitalisation and smart grids, intelligent resource management and electrification. Thus, these priorities promote innovation and public-private collaboration, and aim at improving and decarbonising waste management and energy and water supply.

The relevance of the Cluster's internal Organisation

The TEIB Cluster is integrated by a considerable number of larger companies, which have had the opportunity to collaborate with SME and Start-ups in several projects. In this line, the working groups in the cluster have also contributed to official policies and regulations, while they have also managed to research and secure funding opportunities. A significant example is the Training and Talent Working Group. Its main role is to promote a new sustainability training programme for local energy community managers, to help them foster and manage community energy projects.

Lessons Learned and Transferability

The success of the TEIB Cluster stems from its rapid gain of relevance for industrial transition in the Balearic Islands, and the importance therein, in involving itself in the development of the regional S3 and in other innovation projects. Additionally, the Cluster facilitates the region to orientate towards sustainability, as well as to align with regional, national and European innovation strategies.

Source: ECCP (2025). Note: the full case study on the Cluster TEIB can be found in the ECCP Cluster Solutions Library.

The tourism sector, as the cornerstone of the Balearic economy, is represented by **International Cluster of Information and Communication Technologies applied to Tourism (Turistec)**.[31] As a cross-sectoral cluster, Turistec brings together ICT companies, tourism businesses, and knowledge institutions to develop and implement cutting-edge digital solutions for the tourism value chain. The cluster fosters innovation in areas such as smart tourism, data analytics, and digital platforms, to modernise the tourism sector and support its sustainable growth. Turistec also actively participates in European and international cooperation projects, positioning the Balearic Islands as a hub for tourism-tech innovation. Together, these clusters underscore the region's commitment to strengthening its tourism industry through innovation, digitalisation, and sustainable

[30] For more information, see https://clusterteib.es/en/ (last access 17.04.2025).

[31] For more information, see https://turistec.org/ (last access 17.04.2025).

practices, in alignment with the broader goals of economic diversification and ecological transition. The health sector is represented by the **Biotechnology and Biomedicine Cluster of the Balearic Islands (BIOIB).** BIOIB, established in 2010, is the leading biotechnology and biomedical cluster in the Balearic Islands. It brings together companies, institutions, and research centres to foster collaboration in research, development, and innovation (R&D&I). Its mission is to drive regional economic transformation by promoting the bioeconomy and creating positive social and environmental impacts. Finally, **Cluster.edu of the Balearic Islands** is the another of the six cluster organisations of the Balearic Islands certified by the regional Government. It focuses on education in the Balearic Islands, uniting educational institutions, businesses, and organisations to enhance innovation in education. It aims to integrate technologies like AI, VR, and robotics, promoting personalised and sustainable learning, and strengthening values-based education. The cluster aims to reduce school dropout rates and drive educational transformation in the region.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the **Maritime and Logistics Cluster of the Balearic Islands**, which is registered on the ECCP but not certified by the Balearic Island Government. The cluster brings together companies and institutions from the maritime, port, and logistics sectors. The cluster aims to boost the competitiveness, innovation, and sustainability of these interconnected industries by promoting collaborative projects, knowledge exchange, and international cooperation. It acts as a platform for addressing shared challenges such as digitalisation, decarbonisation, and skills development. Through its participation in European initiatives, as shown in Chapter 3, it plays a strategic role in connecting the Balearic maritime and logistics ecosystem with broader Mediterranean and EU-level efforts to advance the sustainable blue economy. By fostering innovation and cross-sectoral synergies, the cluster contributes to the region's ambition to become a reference point for green and digital transformation in maritime industries.

Cluster policy in the Balearic Islands

Spain's cluster policy is characterised by a certain degree of coordination through a national cluster policy and independent regional cluster policies in the autonomous communities.

At the national level[32], the Spanish cluster policy is mainly based on two closely linked elements: the Register of Innovative Business Associations and the Programme to Support Innovative Business Associations, both managed by the Ministry of Industry and Tourism (MINTUR).

- To be included in the register, which is a necessary condition for participating in the Programme, cluster organisations (known as AEIs) must submit a four-year Strategic Plan. This plan is evaluated by a dedicated Assessment Committee and must receive an "Excellent" rating. The Strategic Plans provide the MINTUR with high-quality information on the activities of the AEIs and facilitate ongoing monitoring, as they must be renewed every four years to remain valid.
- As for the programme, its main objective is to strengthen the role of clusters (or AEIs) as agents capable of promoting cooperation between universities, R&D&I centres and industry to boost competitiveness, innovation and internationalisation and ultimately to support SMEs.

[32] The section on Spain's national cluster policy is based on the ECCP country factsheet for Spain: https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/in-focus/policy-acceleration/country-factsheets-on-cluster-policies-and-programmes (last access 11.04.2025).

At the regional level, the Balearic Islands pursue an ambitious approach. As part of the S3 2021-2027 of the Balearic Islands[33], strengthening the regional economy involves boosting the cluster ecosystem (For more information on the S3 in the Balearic Islands, refer to Chapter 4). The strategic objective in this regard is to define and structure the science, technology, and innovation ecosystem in a way that is business-oriented. Therefore, clusters are supported as instruments for managing open innovation projects in international cooperation. The strategic focus areas for cluster development include:

- Steering clusters towards the development of R&D&I projects that create added value for companies through new innovative services.
- Encouraging clusters to launch initiatives in innovation and technological development.
- Promoting international cooperation between clusters.
- Ensuring the structuring and coherence of all regional innovation and technology supply actors to align around shared strategic goals.
- Strengthening the international positioning of clusters from the Balearic Islands.
- Supporting the internationalisation of regional innovation and technology providers.
- Equipping Balearic companies with cutting-edge services, technologies, and knowledge to boost their competitiveness.

The **Directorate General for Innovation and Digital Transformation of the Balearic Island Government** plays the central role in cluster policy at the regional level. It supports cluster development through a combination of structural and project aid. In addition, it is developing technical specifications grouped into three thematic areas: (1) the Balearic Innovation Strategy, RIS3 governance and the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process; (2) the Innovation Factory; (3) and a future, though not yet official, plan to promote and consolidate the Balearic Islands' innovative cluster ecosystem. The latter aims to support participation in European programmes, foster strategic alliances, and offer internationalisation consulting.

In addition, **ADR Balears**, the Regional Development Agency of the Balearic Islands and an instrumental body of the Regional Ministry of Enterprise, Employment and Energy plays a central role in supporting the region's economic development. It provides targeted support to entrepreneurs and SMEs, particularly in strategic sectors identified in the Smart Specialisation Strategy. While it does not directly promote cluster policy, it supports innovation-oriented groupings and strategic collaborations, for example in the nautical sector, where it has actively contributed to the strategic positioning of the **Balearic Marine Cluster**.[34]

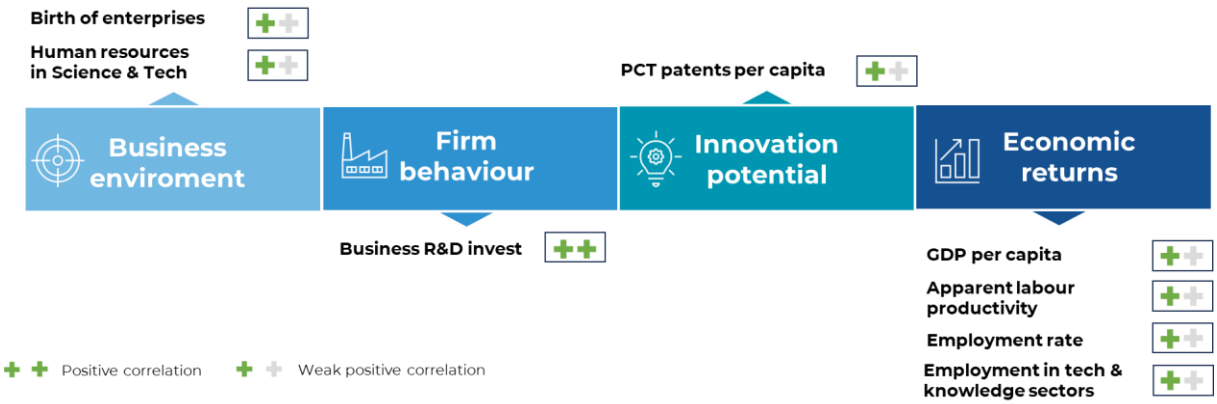
[33] Government of the Balearic Islands (2021): Estratégia Regional D'Innovaió per una Especialització Intelligent RIS3 Illes Balears 2021-2027. Available online: https://www.caib.es/sites/innovacio/ca/estratagia_regional_dinnovacia_per_a_una_especialitzacia_intelaligent_ris3 (last access 17.04.2025).

[34] For more information, see https://balearicmarinecluster.com/cheques-de-consultoria/ (last access 06.05.2025).

The importance of clusters for regional economic competitiveness and twin transition

Cluster organisations play a significant role in enhancing **regional industrial competitiveness and productivity** by fostering collaboration, specialisation and innovation. The findings of the Cluster Panorama Report reinforce this role showing strong, positive correlations between the presence of clusters and multiple indicators of **economic returns**, **innovation potential**, **firm behaviour**, and **business environment**. This is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Relationship of clusters and regional competitiveness, correlation results



Source: ECCP (2024). European Cluster Panorama Report 2024. Note: The symbols in the table indicate Pearson correlation coefficients that are significant at 95% level. Positive/negative Correlations include coefficients >=0.3, weak correlations include coefficients >=0.1. Green fields indicate a positive relationship and red a negative relationship.

Within the **business environment** dimension, regions with a strong cluster presence tend to exhibit higher levels of human resources in science and technology, which suggests that clusters are magnets for skilled talent and contribute to the development of regional innovation ecosystems. These environments are also more conducive to entrepreneurship and firm creation, as evidenced by the positive correlation with the birth of enterprises. This implies that clusters help build dynamic local economies where new firms are more likely to emerge and thrive.

In the area of **firm behaviour**, cluster organisations are closely linked with increased business R&D investment and the employment of ICT specialists, both of which are fundamental for enhancing firms' innovation capacities and digital readiness. These results indicate that clusters do not just passively reflect the strength of their member firms, but actively contribute to improving their performance by facilitating knowledge transfer, cooperation, and access to specialised services and infrastructure.

Under the dimension of **innovation potential**, a particularly notable result is the positive correlation between cluster presence and patenting activity, including PCT patents per capita and digital patents, which are important proxies for technological advancement and international competitiveness. The results also show some degree of correlation with green patents, suggesting that clusters may increasingly support the development of sustainable technologies, although this relationship is still emerging.

Concerning **economic returns**, the presence of clusters is positively associated with key performance indicators such as GDP per capita, employment rate, labour productivity, and employment in knowledge-intensive sectors. These macro-level outcomes underscore the broader economic benefits of strong cluster ecosystems, which are able to leverage regional assets, support structural transformation, and contribute to long-term growth.

These correlations imply that clusters not only support economic growth but also enhance resilience and adaptability through innovation and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the Cluster Panorama highlights the influence

of clusters in creating enabling environments for enterprise formation and knowledge exchange, which are foundational for long-term competitiveness.

Cluster organisations are not only engines of economic competitiveness and innovation—they are also emerging as **key enablers of the twin transition**, which encompasses both digital and green transformation processes. Recent findings from the European Cluster Panorama Report underline the significant positive link between cluster presence and many factors associated with the green and digital transition.

With respect to the **green transition**, the analysis shows that the presence of cluster organisations is positively correlated with green readiness indicators, indicating that regions with a higher number of clusters tend to be better prepared for adopting environmentally sustainable practices. This implies that clusters may facilitate the green transition by supporting eco-innovation, promoting sustainable production models, and mobilising relevant actors across value chains. Interestingly, a positive correlation is also observed between cluster presence and air emissions in industry, suggesting that clusters are often located in more industrialised regions, where emissions are naturally higher due to economic activity. This underlines the importance of involving clusters in decarbonisation strategies, given their influence over industrial ecosystems. Rather than being seen as part of the problem, clusters can be leveraged as platforms for change, helping industries within their networks to implement cleaner technologies and reduce their environmental footprint.

Specific examples of how cluster organisations can support the green transition can be found in the ECCP Green Transition Support (see Box 1).

Box 2: ECCP Green Transition Support – Examples how cluster can support the green transition

The Green Transition Support is a service offered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) that aims to inspire, inform, and share good practices for clusters on how to promote the green transition and support local businesses in this endeavour.

1. Innovation Challenge: Flux50 supports the energy transition of its members by connecting large companies with innovative solution providers through innovation challenges. In the 2024 "Low Voltage Flexibility Challenge," Flux50 facilitated collaboration between an electricity supply company and over 50 innovators, demonstrating how clusters can bridge innovation gaps and accelerate the adoption of clean energy solutions. Read more here: https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/sustainability-action-impactful-initiatives-clusters/innovation-challenge
2. Talent Pool Platform: The Basque Energy Cluster supports the energy transition by bridging the gap between industry and talent, helping its members access skilled professionals needed for clean energy innovation. Through targeted outreach to STEM students and graduates, the cluster strengthens the workforce pipeline essential for driving the sector forward. Read more here: https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/sustainability-action-impactful-initiatives-clusters/talent-pool-platform

Source: ECCP (2025).

03

Cross-border cooperation and the involvement of Balearic clusters in European networks & support initiatives

3. Cross-border cooperation and the involvement of Balearic clusters in European networks and support initiatives

Findings from the Evaluation Study of and Potential Follow-Up to Cluster Initiatives under COSME, H2020 and FPI of the European Commission (2021) show that cross-border cooperation is perceived by innovation stakeholders as a highly relevant activity for clusters to support sustainable growth and resilience-building of their SME members.[37] To gain an overview of the existing cross-border cooperation of clusters in the Balearic Islands, a closer look will be taken in this chapter at their involvement in relevant European support initiatives (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Overview of selected EU support initiatives that involve clusters from the Balearic Islands

Source: ECCP (2025).

Involvement of Balearic cluster organisations in the European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (ESCP)

The European Strategic Cluster Partnership (ESCP) initiative, funded under the EU Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME), is a relevant EU support initiative to increase cross-border cooperation of EU cluster organisations and other intermediary organisations. The ESCP initiative established partnerships of European clusters and intermediary organisations from the different EU Member States or associated countries. Those partnerships focused on three different thematic areas which were internationalisation (ESCP for Going International), cluster excellence (ESCP for Excellence) and smart specialisation (ESCP for Smart Specialisation) out of which the ESCP for Going International was still running throughout 2024[38] and the ESCP for Excellence[39] already ended in December 2023.[40]

[37] Prognos et al. (2021): Evaluation Study of & Potential Follow-Up to Cluster Initiatives under COSME, H2020 & FPI (DG GROW, Unit D2 - Industrial Forum, alliances, clusters). Study on behalf of the European Commission. Available online: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a2c3e9e1-3deb-11ec-89db-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-241039860 (last access 14.04.2025).

[38] https://clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/escp-4i/fourth-generation (last access 14.04.2025).

[39] https://clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/escp-4x (last access 14.04.2025).

[40] For more information on the European Cluster Partnerships see: https://clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships (last access 14.04.2025).

One cluster from the Balearic Islands, namely the **Biotechnology and Biomedicine Cluster of the Balearic Islands (BIOIB)**, participated in one ESCP-4x project, **the Excellence Cluster for Regional Improvement (ECRI)**, in which it acted as the coordinator. The project has requested a grant for a total value of €47,325, while it also involved cluster organisations from four different countries, being those Italy, Greece, Poland and Spain. ECRI has the goal to improve the performance of the clusters and the services they provide to the companies associated to them. This purpose is fulfilled through training activities, which focus on promoting local competitiveness through better value chain development and cluster management excellence.[41]

Involvement of clusters based in the Balearic Islands in the Eurocluster initiative

For the 2021-2027 funding period, the European Commission has launched the implementation of the EU Industrial Strategy. In this context, so-called Euroclusters[42] are funded under the Single Market Programme. The Eurocluster initiative aims at supporting cross-sectoral, cross-regional European industry clusters cooperating with other economic stakeholders such as companies or business organisations. In this case, one cluster organisation of the Balearic Islands is part of two Euroclusters:

- The Eurocluster **MedBAN**[43] defines itself as a Eurocluster for the Blue Economy, which looks forward to accelerating a sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean Sea. Their mission is thus to empower SMEs for a Sustainable Future, supporting them in the adoption of greener and smarter business models or providing funding and expertise for innovation and internationalisation. Additionally, MedBAN connects Mediterranean stakeholders for impactful collaboration and enhances digital transformation in maritime industries. The cluster in the Balearic Islands that is participating in this Eurcolcuster is **Maritime and Logistics Cluster of the Balearic Islands**, and acts as a beneficiary. Other EU partners come from Italy, France, Greece and Portugal.

- Setting its focus on the Mediterranean and Black seas, the **IKAT**[44] Eurocluster aims to contribute to the achievement of the updated tourism strategy put forward by the European Commission. The different topics IKAT tackles span among the different sectors and agents that set up the industrial ecosystem of Tourism in Europe, mainly Maritime and Logistic Clusters, Tourism Clusters or Innovation and Water Quality Control Clusters. Furthermore, IKAT aims to build an initial Consortium to establish a democratic, agile, and flexible working and decision-making methodology that will allow the development of actions to support the tourism ecosystem in the short to medium term. The cluster in the Balearic Islands participating in this Eurocluster is also **Maritime and Logistics Cluster of the Balearic Islands**, acting as a coordinator. Other EU partners come from Italy, Greece and Portugal.

Involvement of the Balearic Island in the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) initiative

The Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument is a funding initiative under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for the 2021–2027 programming period. It provides financial and advisory support through the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA). The aim is to support interregional innovation projects in their commercialisation and scaling-up phases, helping them overcome regulatory and market-related barriers to reach investment readiness. A total of €570 million is available for the

[41] For more information, see https://biopmed.eu/progetti-strategici/ecri/ (last access 14.04.2025).
[42] For more information on the Euroclusters see: https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/joint-cluster-initiatives-euroclusters-europes-recovery_en (last access 14.04.2025).
[43] For more information, see https://magellancircle.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025.03.18-MedBAN-Final-Conference-1.pdf (last access: 11.04.2025).
[44] For more information, see https://www.ikatproject.com/ (last access 14.04.2025).

period, with up to €10 million per project, and a 70% EU co-financing rate applies to all beneficiaries and cost categories.

Currently, there are no Balearic Cluster organisations involved in I3 initiatives. However, the **Circular Economy and Sustainable Solutions for Agrifood in the Mediterranean (CESAM) project** is an EU-funded initiative under the (I3) Instrument, which aims to promote innovative circular economy solutions within the agrifood sector across the Spanish regions Balearic Islands and Catalonia, as well as Occitania in France.[45] Coordinated by the Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean, CESAM brings together nine partners, including four institutional entities and five SMEs. From the Balearic Islands, the **Fundació Balear d'Innovació i Tecnologia (Bit Foundation)** involved in it. Funded by the ERDF Interregional Innovation Investment Instrument Programme, CESAM will put its attention on four main pillars: (1) industrial water treatment and recycling concerted use of water; (2) packing eco-conception plastic free, new materials, circular solutions; (3) optimisation of processes circular processes waste production; 4) valorisation of co-products. With a total budget of €3,022,935, CESAM is co-financed by the EU at 70%, with each partner contributing the remaining 30%. The project runs from September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2026.

Further Involvement of the Balearic Island Clusters in European Network and Partnership initiatives

Further involvement of Balearic Islands clusters in EU and international projects can also be seen among Interreg Mediterranean initiatives, such as the **BLUEfasma project**.[46] Implemented under the Interreg MED Programme 2014–2020, BLUEfasma was a Circular Economy initiative aimed at advancing sustainable growth in the blue economy. It focused on promoting circular practices in fisheries and aquaculture to benefit insular and coastal areas across the Mediterranean. The project addressed the transnational challenge of natural resource depletion and strengthened the innovation capacity of SMEs, maritime networks, and public authorities to support blue growth. Project partners included organisations from several Mediterranean countries, such as Greece, Montenegro, and Spain. The Balearic partner taking part in this project is **Maritime and Logistic cluster of the Balearic Islands**.

[45] For more information, see https://cesam.euroregio.eu/ (last access 14.04.2025).
[46] For more information, see https://www.clustermib.com/bluefasma (last access 08.05.2025).

04

Smart Specialisation in the Balearic Islands

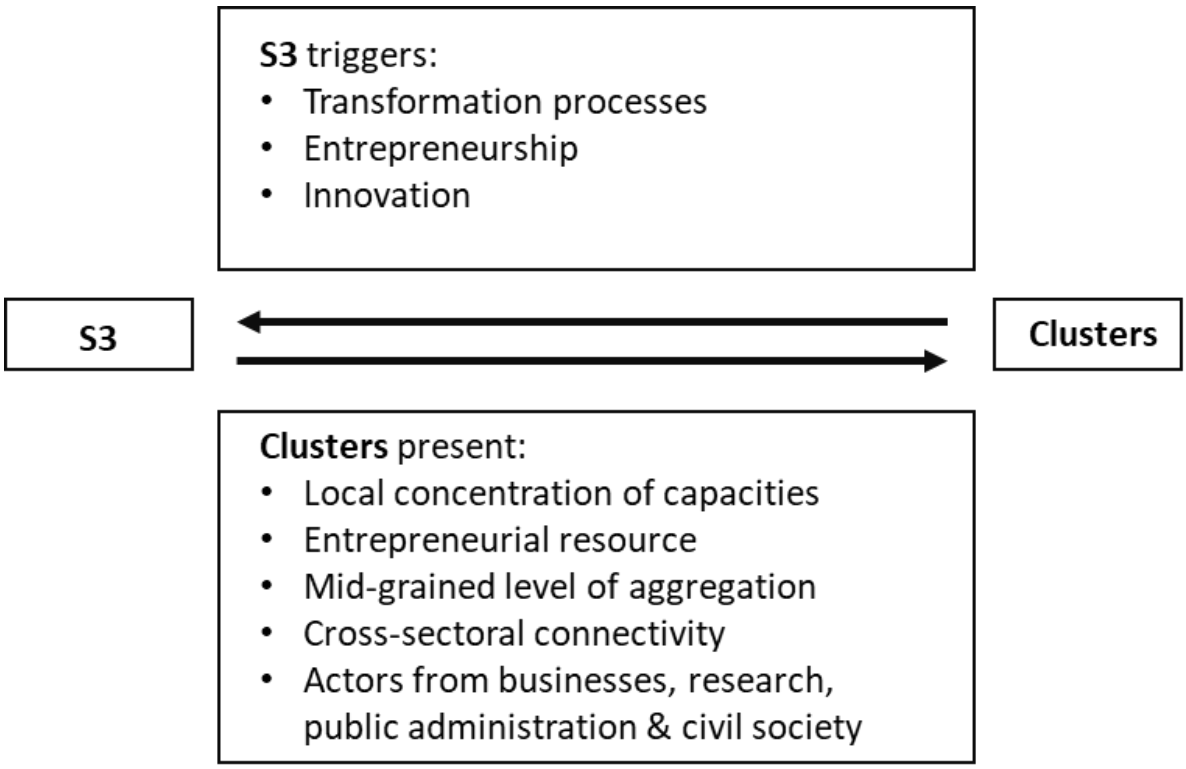
EUROPEAN CLUSTER COLLABORATION PLATFORM

Strengthening the European economy through collaboration

4. Smart Specialisation in the Balearic Islands

Smart Specialisation is a strategic approach developed by the European Commission that requires regions to identify and focus on their unique strengths and capabilities to foster innovation-driven economic growth. **Cluster organisations can play an important role in the design and implementation of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)** since in both concepts, the promotion of economic growth and competitiveness through regional proximity are key elements. S3 can help to transform the efforts of individual cluster organisations into a regional agenda while clusters provide a broad range of actors with specific abilities.[47] The interplay between clusters and smart specialisation is also visualised in Figure 6. Box 3 at the end of this chapter provides some good practices of cluster involvement in S3 from other European regions and especially in the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process[48] (EDP). Against this background, this chapter focuses on Smart Specialisation in the Balearic Islands.

Figure 6: Interaction of clusters and S3



Source: ECCP (2025), own adaptations based on Keller et al. (2019): Implementing S3 with Clusters – An Innovation Model for Transformative Activities.

[47] See also European Commission (2013): The role of clusters in smart specialisation strategies. Available online: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2fe44194-e5a8-42b7-ac14-9c9b8e157de3 (last access 14.04.2025); OECD (2016): OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016 – Cluster Policy and Smart Specialisation. Available online: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/sti_in_outlook-2016-28-en.pdf?expires=1628167848&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=54667669BA762145CD40965A391C05BE (last access 10.04.2025).

[48] The entrepreneurial discovery is an interactive and inclusive process in which the relevant actors identify new and potential activities and inform the government. The government assesses this information and empowers those actors most capable of realising the potential. See https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/s3-community-of-practice/entrepreneurial_discovery_en (last access 02.05.2025).

A key starting point for the analysis of the Balearic Islands' S3 2021-2027 is the "Estratégia Regional D'Innovaió per una Especialització Intelligent RIS3 Illes Balears 2021-2027", developed by the Government of the Balearic Islands. [49] The S3 2021-2027 of the Balearic Islands identifies **six priority areas.** These priority areas range from territorial sustainability for economic modernisation, to the development of the tourism value chain, and technologies for digital and ecological transformation (see Figure 7 for a full overview).

Figure 7: Priority areas of the S3 2021-2027 of the Balearic Islands

Source: ECCP (2025), own elaboration based on the RIS3 Illes Balears 2021-2027.

A closer examination of the different priority areas provides a clearer understanding of the objectives pursued by the Balearic Islands through their Smart Specialisation Strategy:

- **Territorial sustainability for economic modernisation:** This priority focuses on promoting sustainability by diversifying competitive economic activities that do not depend on the region's limited natural resources. Key actions include investing in digital transformation, green technologies, and ecological transition initiatives to reinforce the regional economic structure. It also highlights the importance of developing innovative infrastructure to support the ecological transition. The use of green technologies, circular economy approaches, sustainable mobility, and alternative fuels such as green hydrogen forms an integral part of this strategy.
- **Development of the tourism value chain:** To enhance the competitiveness of the Balearic economy, this priority promotes strengthening the tourism value chain by investing in gastronomy, culture, and high-quality tourism. By transferring knowledge to businesses, the region aims to leverage its unique culture and heritage to attract high-end tourism. Additionally, it seeks to identify new, high-value market segments and guide local businesses in developing innovative, tailor-made tourism products and services. This will help support the growth of advanced services for innovation management and market expansion at both regional and international levels.
- **Knowledge for strengthening the economy of the Balearic Islands:** This priority seeks to boost innovation by increasing R&D investment in strategic sectors such as food, biotechnology, and digital health. It also focuses on emerging technologies like big data, artificial intelligence, and the circular economy. Strengthening the regional innovation ecosystem through better coordination among actors and improved advisory services is also a key goal. Moreover, the

[49] Government of the Balearic Islands (2021): Estratégia Regional D'Innovaió per una Especialització Intelligent RIS3 Illes Balears 2021-2027. Available online: https://www.caib.es/sites/innovacio/ca/estratagia_regional_dinnovacia_per_a_una_especialitzacia_intelaligent_ris3 (last access 17.04.2025).

development of public-private instruments for collaborative research, particularly in tourism innovation, is foreseen.

- **Technologies for digital & ecological transformation:** The objective here is to drive the digital transformation in the Balearic Islands through the application of technological and commercial solutions. This includes the deployment of disruptive technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, blockchain, and 5G to enhance business competitiveness. The priority also supports the generation and coordination of data to provide intelligent solutions for Balearic companies. In parallel, it aims to strengthen the circular economy and increase the use of renewable energies to foster sustainable development.
- **Management of innovation & business internationalisation:** This priority supports the design and development of innovative products and services in key sectors by leveraging knowledge and highly skilled human capital. It also focuses on training the workforce to meet the evolving competitiveness needs of businesses, including the promotion of dual vocational training. These efforts aim to reinforce the region's economic structure and support business growth and internationalisation.
- **Transformative emerging sectors:** To promote smart specialisation in the Balearic Islands, this priority supports the future sustainability of the territory and its economic structure. It aims to diversify economic activities in areas such as the bioeconomy, circular economy, biotechnology, marine economy, and climate change research (CCR), while also promoting the Blue Economy through research on the marine environment and the study of its carrying capacities. Additionally, this priority focuses on promoting scientific advice from Balearic actors to regional, national, and international companies.

The S3 2021–2027 of the Balearic Islands explicitly highlights **cluster organisations and networks as important instruments** for driving innovation, enhancing SME competitiveness, and supporting strategic projects aligned with the region's smart specialisation priorities. This role is particularly emphasised in Programme 5 on networks and clusters, which aims to build a more dynamic and collaborative innovation ecosystem by strengthening connections between businesses, research institutions, and technology providers. A core objective of the programme is to facilitate access to innovation, knowledge, and technologies, particularly for SMEs, including those developed at the European and international levels. Clusters are therefore supported as instruments for managing strategic open innovation projects with an international dimension. The strategy tasks cluster organisations with leading these efforts, contributing to the diversification and modernisation of the regional economy by fostering cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaboration and accelerating the development of new solutions.

A concrete example of this strategic approach is the Balearic Islands' involvement in the S3 Partnership on Maritime Sustainable Blue Bioeconomy. This interregional partnership focuses on areas such as marine biotechnology, sustainable aquaculture, and circular blue value chains, and aims to identify complementarities between regions, develop shared investment agendas, and support cross-border demonstration projects. The Maritime Cluster of the Balearic Islands plays an active role in this initiative, contributing regional expertise and strengthening the islands' position within the European blue economy network.

Box 3: Good practices of cluster involvement in S3

Good practices of cluster involvement in S3

Basque Country, Spain – Cluster working groups:
In the Basque Country, cluster organisations are actively involved in the identification of key sectors for the definition of the S3 priority areas to ensure an alignment with the strengths of the region. Moreover, cluster organisations are involved in the implementation of the S3 through working groups and special committees which develop project proposals that are submitted to various funding programmes (e.g., ERDF).

Tuscany, Italy – Foresight & Roadmapping:
In Tuscany, clusters were key actors involved in the EDP which built on a 5-step model for strategic planning based on foresight and roadmapping. In this process, the 13 regional Innovation Poles play a key role as they are tasked to organise open workshops in which scientific and technological roadmaps were developed based on foresight exercises on the regional strengths and weaknesses.

Skåne, Sweden – Board of cluster organisations:
In Skåne, the innovation strategy is part of Skåne's Regional Development Strategy (The Open Skåne 2030) and was developed by the Research and Innovation Council of Skåne. The Research and Innovation Council of Skåne is a forum of collaboration composed of a variety of actors from the public, private and the academic sector. Cluster organisations are represented in this Research and Innovation Council through the board of cluster organisations.

Walloon Region, Belgium – Coordination cells & Strategic Innovation Initiatives:
In the Walloon Region, cluster organisations are actively involved in the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) 2021-2027 through their participation in coordination cells for each of the five priority areas. These coordination cells, which include both regional administration and cluster organisations, are responsible for monitoring the development of their respective priority areas. Furthermore, Strategic Innovation Initiatives, which are cross-sector consortia aiming to achieve S3 objectives through a set of coherent projects covering the entire innovation chain, play a key role in the region's innovation framework. Walloon cluster organisations have supported the emergence and structuring of these initiatives and continue to assist in strategy development and ecosystem building to enhance cross-sector collaboration and innovation.

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European Commission (2023); Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Methodology Report. Available online: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5357c81b-9222-464b-8468-38ccd83b5624_en?filename=ec_rtd_ris-2023-methodology-report.pdf (last access 14.04.2025).

European Commission (2023): Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Regional profiles Spain. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/ris/2023/ec_rtd_ris-regional-profiles-spain.pdf (last access 14.04.2025).

Government of the Balearic Islands (2021): Estratégia Regional D'Innovaió per una Especialització Intelligent RIS3 Illes Balears 2021-2027. Available online: https://www.caib.es/sites/innovacio/ca/estratagia_regional_dinnovacia_per_a_una_especialitzacia_intelaligent_ris3 (last access 17.04.2025).

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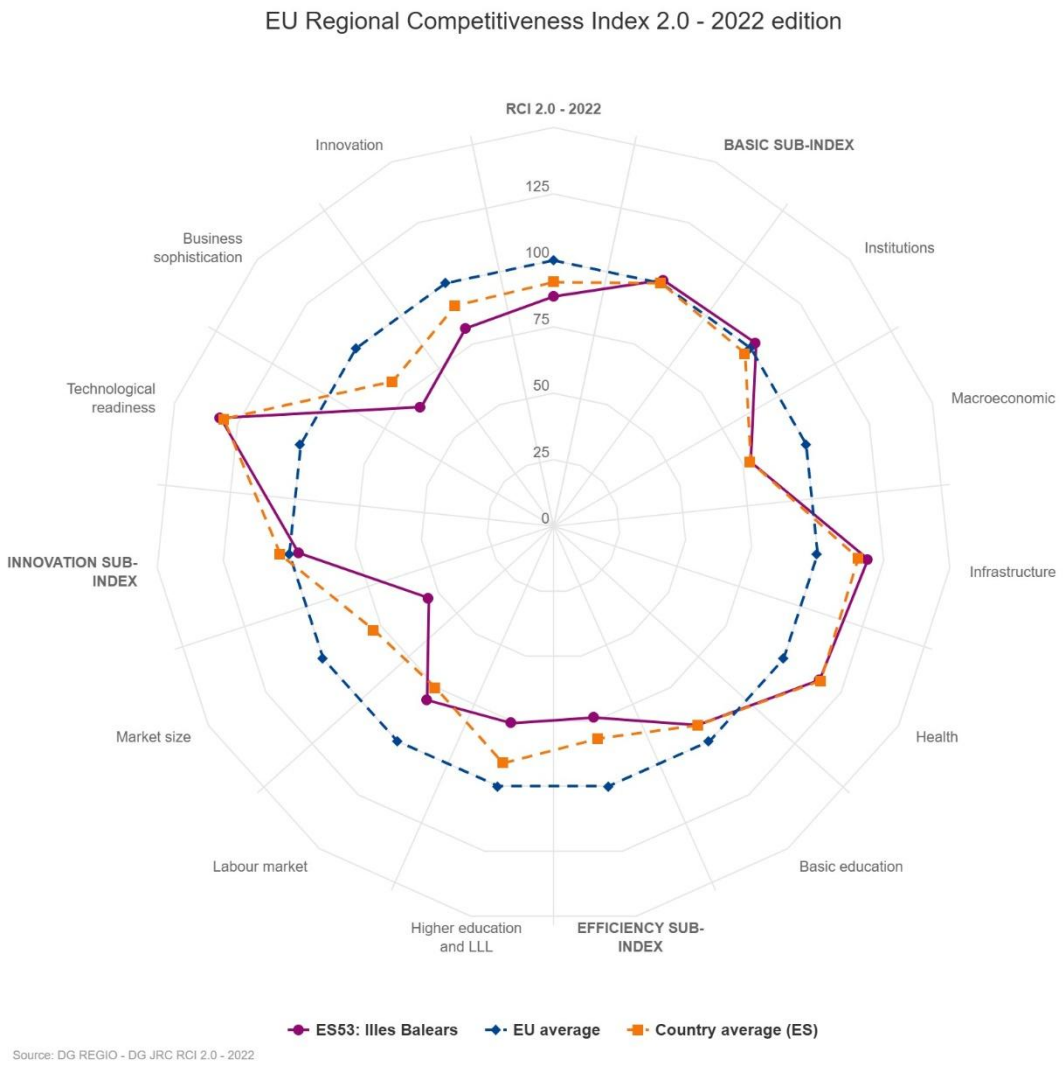
OECD (2016): OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016 – Cluster Policy and Smart Specialisation. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/sti_in_outlook-2016-28-en.pdf?expires=1628167848&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=54667669BA762145CD40965A391C05BE (last access 10.04.2025).

Prognos et al. (2021): Evaluation Study of & Potential Follow-Up to Cluster Initiatives under COSME, H2020 & FPI (DG GROW, Unit D2 - Industrial Forum, alliances, clusters). Study on behalf of the European Commission. Available online: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a2c3e9e1-3deb-11ec-89db-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-241039860 (last access 14.04.2025).

Annex

Regional Competitiveness Level in the Balearic Islands

Figure 8: Performance of the Balearic Islands in the 2022 Regional Competitiveness Index



Source: European Commission (2022): EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0 – 2022 edition.

List of cluster organisations in the Balearic Islands

Table 1: Overview of cluster organisations in the Balearic Islands registered on the ECCP and their addressed EU industrial ecosystems

No.	Cluster organisation (English name)	Assigned Industrial Ecosystem	Website
1	Balearic Marine Cluster	Tourism, Mobility-Transport-Automotive	www.balearicmarinecluster.com
2	Balearic Islands.t Cluster of Technological Innovation in Tourism of the Balearic Islands*	Digital, Tourism	N/A
3	Biotechnology and Biomedical Cluster of the Balearic Islands (BIOIB)	Health, Digital, Agri-Food	www.bioib.org
4	Chemical Industry Cluster of the Balearic Islands (CliQIB)	Energy Intensive Industries	www.cliqib.org
5	TEIB Cluster Ecological Transition of the Balearic Islands	Energy-Intensive Industries, Renewable Energy, Mobility-Transport-Automotive	www.clusterteib.es
6	Maritime and Logistic cluster of the Balearic Islands	Mobility-Transport-Automotive, Tourism, Renewable Energies	www.clustermib.com
7	International Cluster of Information and Communication Technologies applied to Tourism (Turistec)	Digital, Tourism	www.turistec.org

Source: ECCP (2025), based on the Mapping Tool (last access 14.04.2025) and information from the cluster organisation's website. * Note that the Balearic Islands.t Cluster, even though registered on the ECCP, is no longer active.

Table 2: Overview of the regionally certified cluster organisations in the Balearic Islands and their addressed EU industrial ecosystems

No.	Cluster organisation (English name)	Assigned Industrial Ecosystem	Website
1	Balearic Marine Cluster	Tourism, Mobility-Transport-Automotive	www.balearicmarinecluster.com
2	Biotechnology and Biomedical Cluster of the Balearic Islands (BIOIB)	Health, Digital, Agri-Food	www.bioib.org
3	Chemical Industry Cluster of the Balearic Islands (CliQIB)	Energy Intensive Industries	www.cliqib.org
4	Cluster Ecological Transition of the Balearic Islands (TEIB)	Energy-Intensive Industries, Renewable Energy, Mobility-Transport-Automotive	www.clusterteib.es
5	Cluster.edu of the Balearic Islands	Proximity and Social Economy, Digital	www.cluster.edu.es
6	International Cluster of Information and Communication Technologies applied to Tourism (Turistec)	Digital, Tourism	www.turistec.org

Source: ECCP (2025), based on the Mapping Tool (last access 14.04.2025) and information from the cluster organisation's website.