



Clusters Meet Regions event in Attica, Greece

Input paper

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EUROPEAN CLUSTER
COLLABORATION PLATFORM

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Abbreviation	Expansion
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CMR	Clusters Meet Regions
DG GROW	Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
ECCP	European Cluster Collaboration Platform
EDIH	European Digital Innovation Hub
EISMEA	European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency
EL30	NUTS 2 code for Attica
EL43	NUTS 2 code for Crete
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSRI	General Secretariat for Research and Innovation
HBio	Hellenic BioCluster
HCCC	Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence
HETiA	Hellenic Emerging Technologies Industry Association
HPhos	Hellenic Photonics Cluster
I3	Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument
IRHIS	Interoperable Remote Health Innovation brought to Scale
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
JU	Joint Undertaking
MedBAN	Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network
MedTech	Medical Technology
NEXT MED	Interreg NEXT Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PPS	Purchasing Power Standards
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
RCI	Regional Competitiveness Index
RIS	Regional Innovation Scoreboard
RIS3	Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (Smart Specialisation Strategy)

RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
TTO	Technology Transfer Office
WITS	World Integrated Trade Solution

1. Executive summary

Attica is Greece's leading economic and innovation region. It concentrates a large share of the country's economic activity, research capacity, universities, startups, cluster organisations and innovation-support structures. The region performs above the national average on most innovation and competitiveness indicators and acts as the country's main gateway to European and international markets through its concentration of services, transport infrastructure and research assets.

The cluster landscape reflects this position. Of the 22 ECCP-registered cluster organisations identified in Greece, 12 are located in Attica. These organisations are active in digital technologies, health, microelectronics, aerospace, creative industries and other knowledge-intensive sectors. Their role extends beyond networking: they support collaboration between firms and research organisations, facilitate access to innovation services and strengthen SME participation in European projects and value chains.

Attica's innovation ecosystem is supported by a broad policy framework combining national and regional instruments. The National Smart Specialisation Strategy and the Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027 provide the overall strategic direction.

They are complemented by instruments such as Research Innovate, Technology Transfer Office, Centres of Competence, the Smart Attica European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) and the Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence. Together, these initiatives support research commercialisation, technology uptake and business innovation.

Despite these strengths, several challenges remain. Attica performs above the Greek average on many indicators, but several gaps persist when compared with the EU. Business R&D investment, technology transfer, innovation diffusion and scale-up financing continue to lag behind EU averages. The main policy challenge is therefore not the creation of new innovation assets. Attica already has a strong research and innovation base. The priority is to better connect existing organisations and support instruments. This would help more SMEs grow their activities and integrate into European value chains.

Against this background, the Clusters Meet Regions event provides an opportunity to discuss how cluster organisations can contribute to addressing these challenges. Attention should be given to the collaboration between research organisations and businesses and to improving SME participation in European value chains.

The event can help identify practical actions to reinforce Attica's role as a leading innovation and cluster hub in Greece and Southeast Europe.

1.1. Economic profile of Attica

Attica is Greece's main economic and innovation centre. It is more than the capital region. It concentrates economic activity, research capacity, knowledge-intensive services, public administration, startups, cluster organisations and digital support structures. The region accounts for a very large share of national economic activity and performs above the Greek average on several innovation and competitiveness indicators.

Its economy is mainly service-based. This includes transport and logistics, tourism, financial services, digital activities and cultural industries. These sectors give Attica a strong gateway role for Greece, especially through Athens and Piraeus.

The main challenge is conversion. Attica has many innovation assets, but they do not automatically lead to higher productivity, stronger SMEs or more exports. The key policy issue is to turn research, digital capacity, entrepreneurship and public support into concrete business growth and links with European value chains.

1.2. Cluster landscape and its contribution to economic development

Attica is the main Greek hub for cluster organisations. The report identifies 22 ECCP-registered cluster organisations in Greece, of which 12 are in Attica. This makes the region the strongest concentration of ECCP-registered clusters in the country.

Greek clusters cover a wide range of areas. These include digital technologies, energy and renewables, construction, mobility and transport, health, aerospace and defence, agri-food, and creative and cultural industries. The cluster landscape is therefore more technology-oriented than the wider Greek economy, which remains strongly based on tourism, retail and agri-food employment.

Clusters have a practical role. They help SMEs work together, connect with research organisations, access European partners and prepare joint projects. They can also support technology transfer by linking research outputs with business needs, pilots and demonstrators.

1.3. Policy support framework

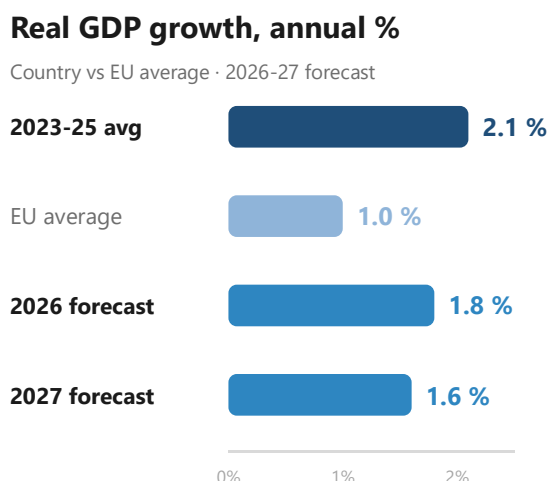
Greece does not rely on one single cluster policy instrument. The support framework is broader. It combines the National Smart Specialisation Strategy, the Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027, the Regional Programme Attica 2021-2027, Research Innovate, TTO, Centres of Competence, Smart Attica European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) and the Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence.

This framework gives Attica many useful tools. Research Innovate supports business R&D, research-business partnerships and the use of research results. TTO and Centres of Competence help bring knowledge closer to the market. Smart Attica EDIH supports SMEs and public bodies with digital transformation, including AI-related services.

2. Economic profile of Attica

Greece has entered the second half of the 2020s from a stronger macroeconomic position than during the previous decade. Economic growth remained above the EU average, supported by investment and tourism, with EU funds providing significant support.¹ Its convergence path remains constrained by productivity, investment and external-balance weaknesses. According to the European Commission's latest Country Report, real GDP grew by 2.1% per year in 2023-2025, above the EU average of 1.0%, while growth is expected to remain positive at 1.8% in 2026 and 1.6% in 2027 as the Recovery and Resilience Facility² gradually comes to an end.³

Figure 1 Greece's economic outlook: real GDP growth and investment-to-GDP ratio (2023–2027)⁴



The investment-to-GDP ratio rose from 11.3% in 2018 to 16.9% in 2025, indicating that the investment gap vis-à-vis the EU has narrowed, although the Commission still notes that low investment in intellectual property constrains innovation and productivity.⁵

This growth performance does not yet amount to full economic convergence. In 2025, Greece's per capita income stood at 68.4% of the EU average, while real GDP remained almost 14% below its 2008 peak. Labour productivity is the central structural weakness: the Commission reports that Greek labour productivity is still only 54.6% of the EU average, while Greece records the highest number of hours worked per employee in

¹ European Commission, 2025 Country Report: Greece, Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2025), Brussels. The report attributes Greece's above-EU-average growth to private consumption, the recovery in tourism and investment growth supported notably by the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2025-european-semester-country-reports_en.

² The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is the EU's main post-pandemic recovery instrument. Established in 2021 as part of the NextGenerationEU programme. The RRF supports reforms and investments to build a resilient, sustainable and digital European economy.

³ European Commission, Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), NextGenerationEU. Available online: https://next-generation-eu.europa.eu/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en#paragraph_116.

⁴ Charts based on data from: European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

Note: AI-assisted tools were used to support the creation of this image. The output was subject to human review and the authors retain the sole editorial responsibility for its content.

⁵ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

the EU.⁶ The external position also remains a constraint. The current account deficit stood at 5.7% of GDP in 2025, and the Commission links Greece's non-cost competitiveness challenge to reliance on lower value-added activities such as tourism and agriculture and to SMEs with limited scale and international exposure.⁷

The trade profile confirms both the openness of the economy and the persistence of a structural goods deficit. The World Bank's WITS database reports 2023 goods exports of approximately EUR 50.9 billion and goods imports of EUR 81.9 billion, implying a goods trade deficit of around EUR 31.0 billion.⁸ By contrast, services exports amounted to EUR 49.1 billion, exceeding services imports of EUR 27.2 billion. In aggregate, exports of goods and services represented 43.71% of GDP, while imports represented 48.45%, underlining that Greece's internationalisation model remains strongly supported by services, including tourism and transport, but is less balanced in goods trade.

The country's sectoral structure reinforces this diagnosis. ECCP data show that, among the 14 EU industrial ecosystems, employment in Greece is strongly concentrated in Tourism, Retail and Agri-Food, with Tourism accounting for around 19%, Retail 17% and Agri-Food 14% of employment across the mapped ecosystems (see Figure 2).⁹ These ecosystems are important for employment and territorial cohesion, but they also help explain why Greece faces a persistent challenge in moving towards higher value-added, research-intensive and export-oriented activities. By contrast, the Digital ecosystem accounts for only around 3% of employment across the mapped ecosystems, while Electronics and Energy-Renewables remain very small in the employment structure.

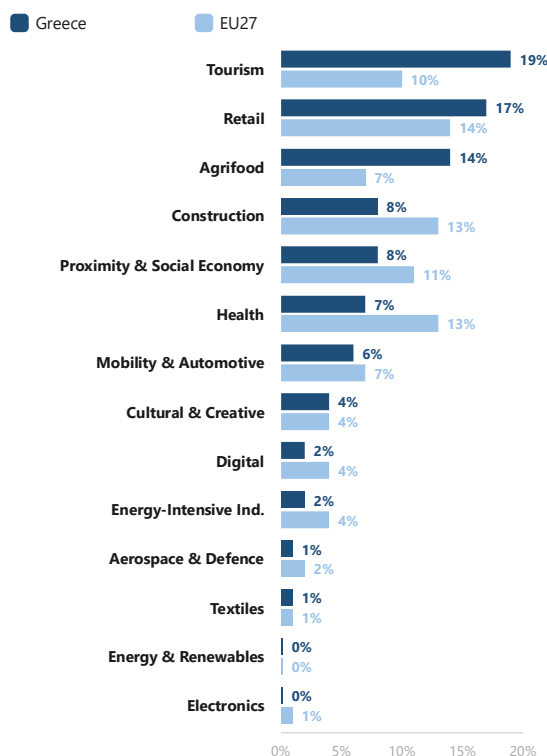
⁶ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

⁷ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

⁸ World Bank WITS, Greece Trade Statistics / Greece Trade Summary 2023, values in current US dollars; Eurostat, ECU/EUR exchange rates versus national currencies, dataset tec00033 / ert_bil_eur_a, annual average exchange rate, 2023: 1 EUR = 1.0813 USD. Calculations by the author. Available online: <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/GRC/Year/2023/Summary>

⁹ ECCP / internal annex, Industrial ecosystem employment shares for Greece.

Figure 2 Employment across the ecosystems in Greece and in the EU in 2023



2.1. Regional context

Attica, the NUTS 2 region (EL30), is the country's main economic hub. The European Commission notes that 47% of Greece's economic activity takes place in Attica, underlining the region's weight in the national economy.¹⁰ The region is also the country's main centre for business services, research, higher education, public administration and innovation-related activities.

¹⁰ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

Figure 3 Key benchmark indicators - Attica, Greece and the EU¹¹

Indicator	Attica	Greece	EU
GDP per capita, PPS (2023), €	36 700	26 400	38 100
GDP per capita, index (EU = 100)	96	69	100
Services employment share	73.8%	< Attica	< Attica
Competitiveness, RCI 2.0 (2022)	92.3	73.1	100
Innovation, RIS 2025 (EU = 100)	85.1	75.8	100
Innovation class (RIS 2025)	Moderate	Moderate	—
Business R&D (% of GDP)	n/a	0.9%	1.5%
Labour productivity (EU = 100)	n/a	54.6	100
Enterprises using AI (2025)	n/a	8.9%	20.0%

n/a: available at national level only. Services employment is lower in Greece and the EU than in Attica.

A comparison with Greece and the EU highlights Attica's relative position. In 2023, GDP per capita reached EUR 36 700 PPS in Attica, compared with EUR 26 400 for Greece and EUR 38 100 for the EU. In purchasing power standards, Attica reached 96% of the EU average, while Greece as a whole reached 69%. These figures show that Attica is much closer to the EU average than the rest of the country.¹²

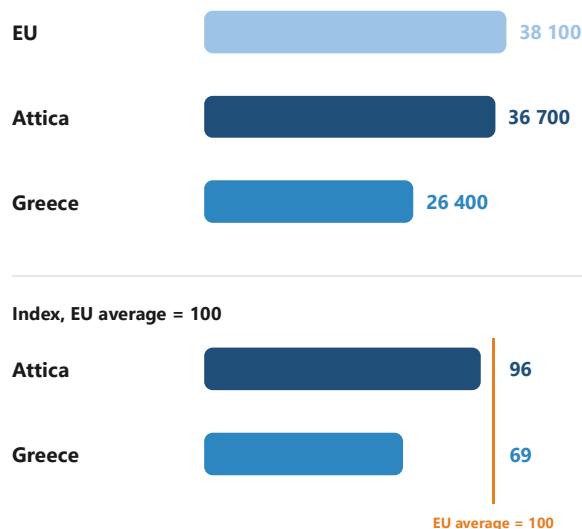
The region also performs above the Greek average on several indicators linked to competitiveness and innovation. It performs better than Greece in research, skills and knowledge-based services. Services account for 73.8% of employment in Attica, compared with 64.0% in Greece and 64.8% in the EU. This reflects the large role of services in the regional economy.

¹¹ Chart based on data from: European Commission, 2026 Country Report - Greece; Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2025; EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0 (2022).

Note: AI-assisted tools were used to support the creation of this image. The output was subject to human review and the authors retain the sole editorial responsibility for its content.

¹² European Commission, European Innovation Scoreboard 2025 - Country profile Greece, via Policy Commons metadata summary of the EC report. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/ris/2025/ec_rtd_ris-regional-profile-el.pdf.

Figure 4 GDP per capita in Attica, Greece and the EU, EUR PPS (2023)¹³



**Attica reaches 96% of the EU average,
Greece 69%**

However, the gap with the EU has not been closed. Attica's GDP per capita remains below the EU average. The region still faces challenges in turning research into business opportunities. As shown in later sections, these challenges are not linked to a lack of assets. Rather, the challenge is to convert research and innovation into business growth.

Attica should be viewed as both a national leader and a catching-up European region. It performs well above the Greek average on most economic and innovation indicators, but it still faces several of the structural constraints that affect the Greek economy. This position is reflected in the region's sectoral structure, which combines service economy with transport, tourism, logistics and knowledge-intensive functions.

2.2. Key sectors and trade

Attica has a more service-oriented economy than both Greece and the EU. The region combines business services, public administration, tourism-related services, logistics, finance, digital activities, culture and research-intensive functions. Manufacturing employment is more limited than in the EU average, but Attica hosts strategic interfaces between manufacturing, services and global flows. These include port logistics, supply-chain services, digital solutions, health innovation and technology-intensive business support.¹⁴

Attica also serves as Greece's main gateway to international markets. The Port of Piraeus and Athens International Airport connect the region to European and global trade, transport and tourism networks. Piraeus is Greece's main port, with significant container and car-terminal capacity, access to the Thriassio logistics centre and cargo rail connections to Europe.¹⁵ This positions the Attica-Piraeus corridor as a gateway for trade between Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean and European markets.

¹³ Chart based on data from: Eurostat, regional GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (2023).

Note: AI-assisted tools were used to support the creation of this image. The output was subject to human review and the authors retain the sole editorial responsibility for its content.

¹⁴ European Commission, European Innovation Scoreboard 2025 - Country profile Greece. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/ris/2025/ec_rtd_ris-regional-profile-el.pdf.

¹⁵ Enterprise Greece, Logistics Sector Profile. Available online: [Logistics - Enterprise Greece](#).

For Attica, the strategic issue is therefore not only trade volume. It is value capture. The region can use its logistics assets, digital capabilities and research base to support higher domestic value added in export-oriented activities. Cluster organisations can contribute by linking logistics users, digital providers, industrial SMEs, universities and investors around practical upgrading projects. This is relevant for supply-chain resilience, trade diversification and the development of more knowledge-intensive services around port, transport and mobility functions.¹⁶

The major component of Attica's service economy is tourism. In 2024, Attica was the most visited Greek region, with 8.78 million visits, 47.82 million overnight stays and EUR 4.75 billion in travel receipts recorded in the Bank of Greece regional travel balance.¹⁷ Tourism in Attica is connected to a wider urban economy that includes transport, culture, retail, hospitality and business services. Tourism therefore generates demand across a broad range of sectors rather than functioning as a stand-alone activity.

Accommodation data confirm the scale of this demand at destination level. In 2024, Attica recorded 5.76 million arrivals and 12.74 million nights spent in hotels or similar establishments like tourist campsites and short-stay accommodation establishments, with increases of 3.3% and 2.7% respectively compared with 2023.¹⁸

The strategic issue for Attica is therefore not the number of visitors. It is the capacity to capture more value from tourism-related flows and to connect them with services. Tourism is a horizontal activity. It generates demand across many sectors (transport, accommodation, food services, entertainment, retail, travel agencies, car rental and conferences).

2.3. Competitiveness, innovation capacity and the business environment

Greece is classified as a Moderate Innovator in the 2025 Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS), with national performance of 75.8 relative to the EU in 2025.¹⁹ Attica (EL30) is also classified as a Moderate Innovator, with a regional innovation performance score of 85.1, making it one of the two strongest Greek regional performers together with Crete (EL43), which scores 87.6. Innovation performance increased in all Greek regions between 2018 and 2025, although several regions experienced declines between 2023 and 2025, highlighting both long-term improvement and recent unevenness.

Attica's innovation position is driven by the concentration of universities and enterprises with innovation potential. The RIS 2025 country profile explicitly notes that Attica, as the home of Athens, benefits from a dense network of universities, research organisations and innovative firms. However, the same source highlights that Greece's regional innovation disparities stem from differences in institutional capacity, economic structure and access to R&I infrastructure. It also mentions that the Greek regions have limited autonomous powers to design or implement innovation policy, since Smart Specialisation is coordinated primarily at national level.

¹⁶ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints.

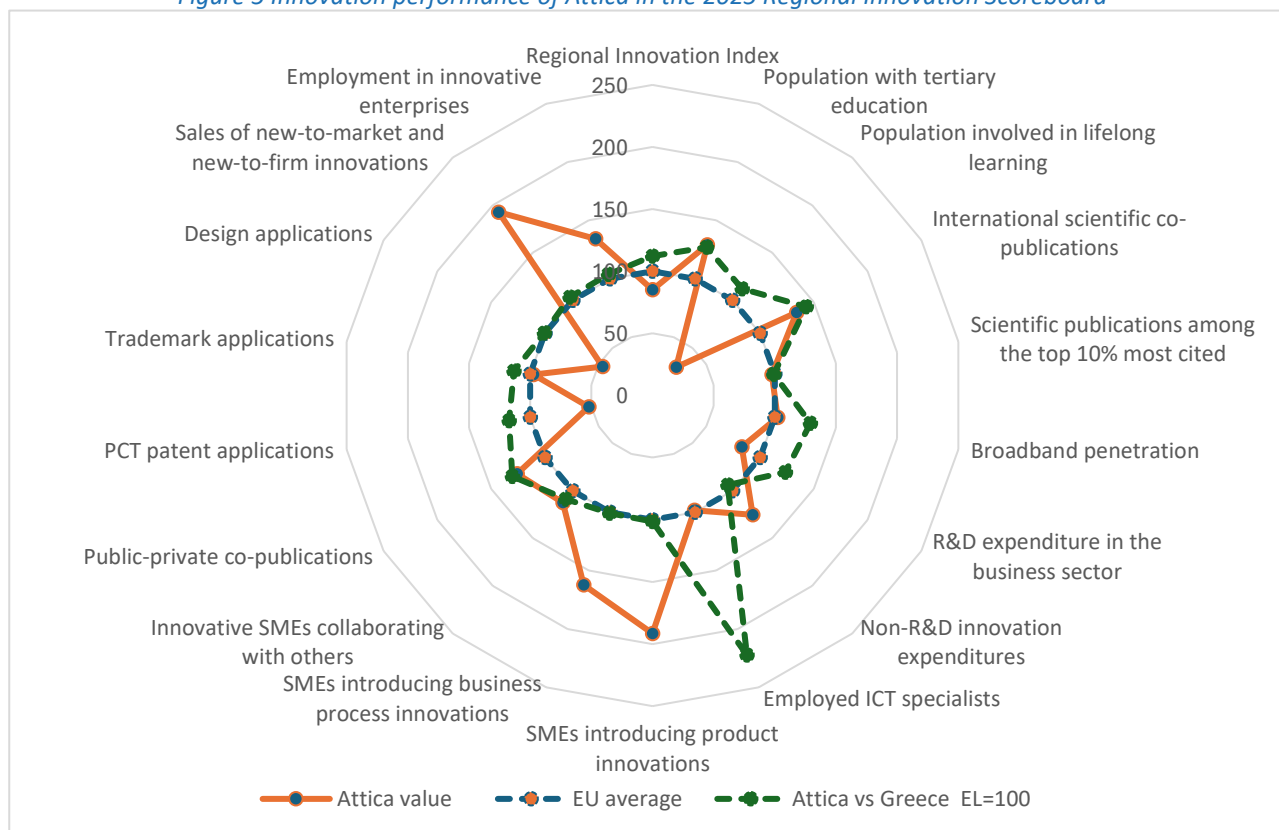
Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

¹⁷ Bank of Greece (2025), Developments in the Balance of Travel Services: 2024, Press Release, 8 May 2025. Available online: [Press Releases](#).

¹⁸ Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) (2025), Arrivals and Nights Spent in Tourist Accommodation Establishments, 2024. Available online: <fbab978e-900b-84bb-b2d7-889613d2d75e>.

¹⁹ European Commission, European Innovation Scoreboard 2025: Country profile Greece, via Policy Commons metadata summary of the EC report. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/ris/2025/ec_rtd_ris-regional-profile-el.pdf

Figure 5 Innovation performance of Attica in the 2025 Regional Innovation Scoreboard²⁰



National R&I indicators point in the same direction. Although business R&D expenditure in Greece has increased over recent years, it remains below the EU average, accounting for 0.9% of GDP compared with 1.5% across the EU. At the same time, Greece performs relatively well in public-private scientific collaboration, with public-private co-publications representing 9.01% of total publications, above the EU average of 7.62%. However, the European Commission notes that further efforts are needed to strengthen science-business linkages, technology transfer and the commercialisation of research results. Digital adoption also remains a challenge. In 2025, only 8.93% of Greek enterprises reported using AI technologies, compared with 19.95% across the EU.

The policy landscape has become more comprehensive and better aligned with EU priorities. The Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027 is explicitly designed as the implementation tool of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy, linking research and innovation with entrepreneurship and national and regional advantages, with a financial envelope of approximately EUR 3.9 billion.²¹ Within this framework, Research Innovate 2021-2027 provides EUR 300 million to link R&I with entrepreneurship, improve competitiveness and outward orientation, and support four interventions: enterprise R&D, enterprise research partnerships, uptake of research results, and Seal of Excellence projects.²² A dedicated Technology Transfer Office Networks 2021-2027 action adds a further EUR 25 million to strengthen research commercialisation, technology-transfer networks and industry uptake of public research results.²³

Several Attica-relevant initiatives are particularly important for the innovation landscape. Smart Attica EDIH is the first European Digital Innovation Hub for AI in Greece, targeting SMEs and public-sector organisations

²⁰ Chart based on data from: European Commission, Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2025.

²¹ Hellenic Republic, Ministry of National Economy and Finance, Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027. Available online: [‘Competitiveness 2021–2027’ Programme - 21 27](#).

²² General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI), Action “Research Innovate 2021-2027”. Available online : [Action “Research-Innovate 2021-2027” – General Secretariat for Research and Innovation \(GSRI\): Official website](#).

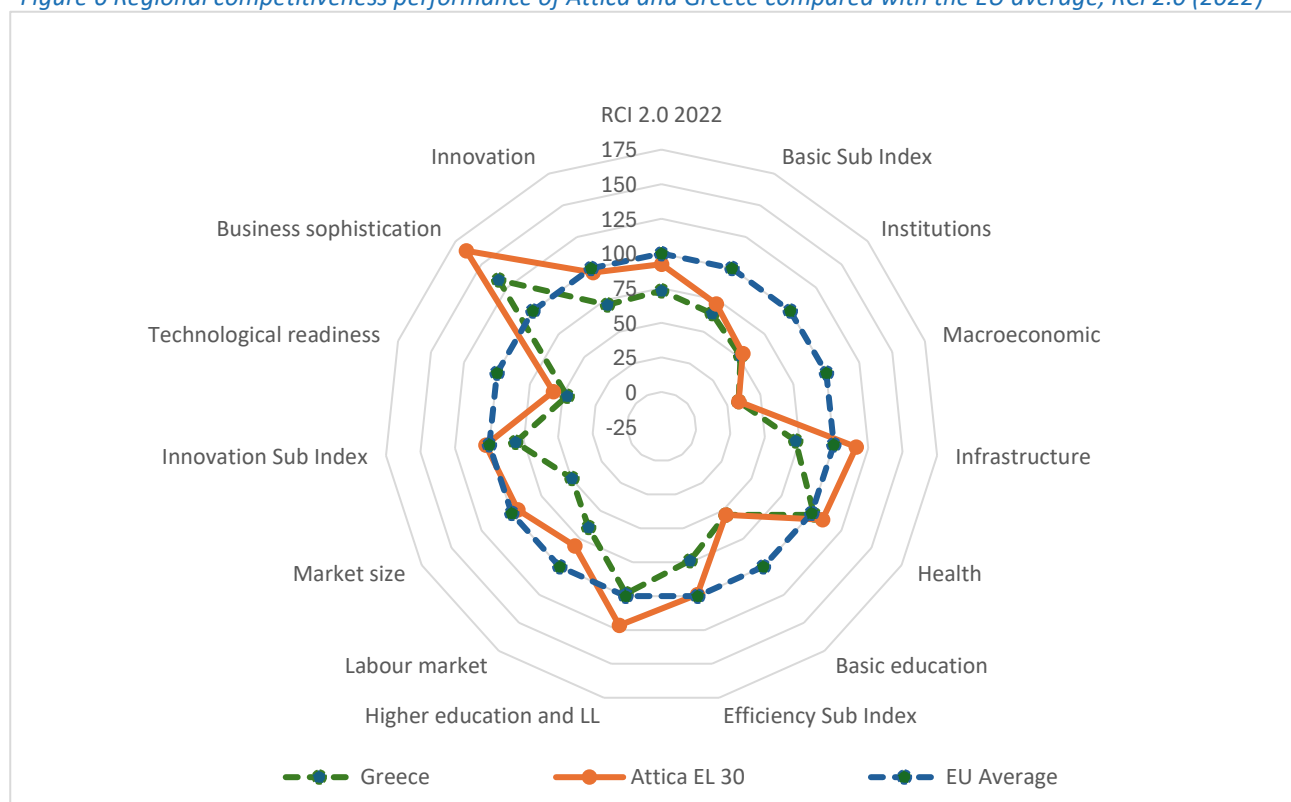
²³ Hellenic Republic, Technology Transfer Unit/Office Networks 2021-2027. Available online: [New Action ‘Technology Transfer Unit/Office Networks 2021-2027’ –](#).

in Energy & Environment, Supply Chain & Mobility, and Culture & Tourism. This initiative offers services including test-before-invest, digital maturity assessment, networking, skills and investment support.²⁴ The Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence (HCCC), launched in 2025, connects HETiA (Hellenic Emerging Technologies Industry Association), the Ministry of Development, Greek research centres and universities, and aims to support semiconductor innovation, startups, SMEs, skills, design, testing and pilot-production capabilities.²⁵ These initiatives are directly relevant to the Clusters Meet Regions event because they address the core bottleneck identified above: the translation of research and digital capabilities into industrial upgrading.

2.3.1. Regional competitiveness level of Greece and Attica

The EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0 provides a useful benchmark because it measures the ability of regions to offer an attractive environment for firms and residents through Basic, Efficiency and Innovation sub-indices.²⁶ The RCI 2.0 chart places Greece below the EU average, with an overall score of 73.1 against an EU benchmark of 100, while Attica performs significantly better at 92.3 (see Figure 6 below). The same chart shows that Attica outperforms the national average across the Basic, Efficiency and Innovation dimensions, notably on infrastructure, higher education and lifelong learning, market size and business sophistication.

Figure 6 Regional competitiveness performance of Attica and Greece compared with the EU average, RCI 2.0 (2022)²⁷



However, Attica's position remains that of a catching-up metropolitan region rather than an EU competitiveness leader. Its overall RCI score remains below the EU average, while Greece's national-level

²⁴ Smart Attica EDIH, Official Website and Service Portfolio. Available online: [Smart Attica EDIH](#).

²⁵ Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence (HCCC), Greek Chips at the Heart of Innovation, 17 July 2025. Available online: [HCCC](#).

²⁶ European Commission, EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0: 2022 edition, methodology and interpretation. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/maps/regional-competitiveness_en.

²⁷ Chart based on data from: European Commission, EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0 (2022).

weaknesses in institutions, macroeconomic conditions and productivity continue to affect the regional business environment.²⁸ The Commission's 2026 Country Report identifies broad-based obstacles to innovation and productivity, including regulatory and administrative burdens, limited business dynamism, insufficient private R&D, and difficulty in scaling startups and SMEs. It also reports that 89% of Greek firms view business regulation as an investment barrier, compared with 69% in the EU, which illustrates the institutional dimension of the competitiveness gap.²⁹

For Attica, this means that competitiveness policy cannot be reduced to attracting more activity into the capital region. The strategic issue is whether Attica can function as a national platform for diffusion: linking firms with research organisations, supporting technology transfer, increasing SME adoption of advanced technologies, and creating stronger channels from research and startup activity into international markets. This is directly relevant to the Clusters Meet Regions agenda, because cluster organisations and adjacent intermediaries can help overcome fragmentation by connecting firms, universities, research centres, public bodies and investors around concrete industrial and technological priorities.

²⁸ European Commission, EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0: 2022 edition, methodology and interpretation. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/maps/regional-competitiveness_en.

²⁹ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

3. Cluster landscape and the contribution to economic development

This section provides an overview of the cluster landscape in Attica. The analysis assesses the extent to which the identified clusters reflect and reinforce the region's economic specialisation, innovation strengths and strategic priorities identified in Chapter 2. It outlines the number of clusters identified in the region, their sectoral concentration, and their geographical distribution across regions, highlighting key areas of specialisation and industrial agglomeration. Building on this mapping, the section further examines the policy framework supporting cluster development.

3.1. Cluster mapping and characteristics

Attica hosts the largest concentration of cluster organisations in Greece. This reflects the region's economic profile described in Chapter 2. Cluster organisations are an important part of Greece's innovation and SME support architecture. They help address structural challenges of the Greek economy: the predominance of micro and small enterprises, limited business R&D investment, weak commercialisation of research outputs, and uneven regional innovation capacity. Greece's R&D intensity reached 1.49% of GDP in 2023 but remained below the EU average of 2.24%, while business R&D expenditure also remained below the EU average. The translation of Greece's research capabilities into marketable innovation remains constrained by comparatively weak technology-transfer and research-commercialisation mechanisms. Limited venture and growth finance continues to hinder the scaling of startups and innovative SMEs.³⁰ These challenges are partially linked to Attica, which concentrates a large share of Greece's research, business, startup and cluster activity, and therefore plays a central role in linking innovation policy with regional economic development.

Twenty-two cluster organisations are registered on the ECCP platform in Greece, distributed across four of the country's 13 NUTS 2 regions.³¹ The largest concentration is in Attica, with 12 ECCP-registered cluster organisations. This confirms that the Greek cluster landscape remains geographically concentrated, with Attica acting as the main national hub for cluster-based innovation intermediation.³²

The ECCP data also shows that Greek cluster organisations are strongly SME-oriented while maintaining important links with the research base. The member organisations of Greek ECCP-profiled clusters consist

³⁰ European Commission, 2025 Country Report: Greece, Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2025). Brussels. The 2025 report notes that Greece's science-business linkages have historically been constrained by weak technology-transfer offices and limited incentives for researchers to engage with the private sector, while technology-transfer and research-commercialisation structures require further support. It also highlights that venture capital remains below the EU average and that underdeveloped venture and growth capital markets limit access to innovation finance for startups and scale-ups. Available online: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/16cb84b6-4154-11f0-b9f2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

³¹ The cluster landscape can be described using different sources and definitions. This report relies on cluster organisations registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP). Additional organisations identified through regional sources are presented separately in Annex 1. The two datasets should not be considered equivalent, as not all organisations listed in Annex 1 are registered on the ECCP.

³² European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP), Find Clusters and Partners. Available online: [Find partners | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#).

mainly of SMEs (68.6%), followed by research organisations and technology centres (about 17.2%) and, finally, large enterprises. This makes clusters a practical interface between Greece's SMEs and their research and innovation capacity. In sectoral terms, Greek ECCP-registered clusters cover nine of the 14 EU industrial ecosystems, with the strongest representation in Digital, followed by Energy-Renewables, Construction, Mobility-Transport-Automotive, Health, and Aerospace and Defence. This profile differs from the employment structure of the Greek economy, where Tourism, Retail and Agri-Food account for major shares of employment.

This contrast between a service-based economy and a technology-oriented cluster landscape appears to be structural rather than accidental. Attica's economy is mostly service-oriented, with tourism, retail, trade, transport and logistics accounting for most employment.³³ Its cluster organisations, however, concentrate in digital, microelectronics, space, photonics, health and mobility, with digital reported as the fastest-growing ecosystem. Clusters therefore tend to be positioned where the region aims to grow, rather than where employment is already largest. This aligns with the objectives of smart specialisation, which uses research and innovation as tools to steer the regional economy. In this sense, clusters can be understood as a transformation layer between the region's scientific base and its productive economy.

This link appears to work in two directions. On one side, several clusters connect directly to the service economy: Asklepia in health tourism, Maritime Hellas and STRATEGIS in shipping, and gi-Cluster in creative and cultural industries. On the other, deep-tech clusters such as mi-Cluster, si-Cluster, Hellenic Photonics Cluster (HPhos) and HETiA supply the digital, AI and semiconductor capabilities on which these service sectors increasingly depend. Taken together, this suggests that the cluster landscape does not simply mirror Attica's sectoral profile but complements it: it reinforces high value-added technology niches while helping more mature service sectors move up the value chain.

Beyond its sectoral role, this intermediary function matters for regional economic development: clusters connect Greece's scientific capacity with firms' needs for innovation, internationalisation, digitalisation and access to finance. Beyond the cluster organisations registered on the ECCP, Greece hosts a broader ecosystem of innovation clusters, Centres of Competence, digital innovation hubs and collaborative innovation structures aligned with the National Smart Specialisation Strategy priorities.³⁴ This broader policy landscape goes beyond ECCP registration and indicates that cluster-type structures have become a relevant instrument in Greece's smart-specialisation implementation.

This mapping confirms that Attica's clusters are concentrated in the region's declared priority domains, and that they cover both its high-tech ambitions and its established service sectors.

³³ Region of Attica, Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) 2021-2027 and Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE). The contribution of Manufacturing to the economy of the Attica Region (2024). Attica's economy is described as strongly service-oriented, with strengths in transport and logistics, tourism, financial services, digital activities and cultural industries.

³⁴ Smart Attica EDIH, Official Website and Service Portfolio. Available online: [Smart Attica EDIH](#).

Figure 7 Alignment of main Attica-based clusters with smart-specialisation priority areas³⁵

Priority area	Main Attica clusters	Regional relevance
Digital tech, microelectronics & deep tech	mi-Cluster, HETiA, Pleiades IoT, gi-Cluster	Core of the region's semiconductor, AI and digital-content base
Space & photonics	si-Cluster, HPhos	High-tech niches linked to research centres and export markets
Health, life sciences & pharma	Hellenic BioCluster (HBio), HDHC, Asklepia	Connects biotech, digital health and health tourism
Transport, mobility & logistics	ITS Hellas, STRATEGIS, Maritime Hellas	Supports Attica's port, logistics and maritime functions
Creative & cultural industries	gi-Cluster	Links to tourism, culture and the service economy
Fintech & digital services	Greek Fintech Cluster	Digital financial services around the Athens hub
Safety, security & climate resilience	DRIC Defkalion, CO-PROTECT	Civil-protection and disaster-risk technologies

3.2. Cluster structure and organisation

The ECCP-registered cluster landscape in Greece includes mature technology clusters and newer thematic innovation clusters. A key feature is the presence of cluster organisations that operate at the interface between SMEs, startups, research organisations and international markets. Greek cluster organisations profiled on the ECCP are present in Digital, Energy-Renewables, Construction, Mobility-Transport-Automotive, Health, Aerospace and Defence, Energy Intensive Industries, Agri-Food and Creative & Cultural

³⁵ Source: author's own elaboration based on European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) cluster profiles and the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) for Attica.

Note: AI-assisted tools were used to support the creation of this image. The output was subject to human review and the authors retain the sole editorial responsibility for its content.

Industries.³⁶ This coverage is well aligned with the national smart-specialisation priorities and with the policy emphasis on green and digital transitions.

Several Greek cluster organisations illustrate this profile. Corallia is one of the most established cluster intermediaries in Greece. It has founded three high-tech clusters with more than 175 members: the mi-Cluster for nano/microelectronics-based systems and applications, the si-Cluster for space technologies and applications, and the gi-Cluster for gaming and creative technologies and applications. Hellenic Emerging Technologies Industry Association (HETiA) is another major ECCP-profiled organisation in Athens, representing Greece's emerging technology and microelectronics ecosystem, with 66 member organisations including SMEs, startups, larger companies and research organisations. In life sciences, Hellenic BioCluster is an ECCP-profiled organisation in Athens and the largest Health & Life Sciences cluster in Greece, with 65 member organisations, including SMEs, startups, larger companies and research organisations.

The Greek cluster landscape also includes sector-specific organisations with strong internationalisation or technology-transfer roles. Hellenic Photonics Cluster-HPhos, based in Athens, brings together photonics enterprises and research organisations active in industrial manufacturing and automation, telecoms, defence and security, cultural heritage, food, health, environment and energy applications. AgroTech Export Cluster NPO, based in Thessaloniki, focuses on agri-food internationalisation and innovation, with objectives covering research, high value-added services, strategic partnerships and export promotion. These examples show that Greece's ECCP-registered clusters combine sectoral specialisation with horizontal support functions such as networking, technology adoption, training, internationalisation and partnership development.

³⁶ European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP), Find Clusters and Partners. Available online: [Find partners | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#).

Figure 8 Selected Attica-based cluster organisations by thematic area³⁷

Deep tech and creative industries



mi-Cluster MICROELECTRONICS

Nano/microelectronics systems, embedded systems and applications.

coralia.org



si-Cluster SPACE

Satellite communications, geoinformatics and Earth observation systems.

si-cluster.gr



gi-Cluster CREATIVE / DIGITAL

Digital games, animation, VR/AR technologies and digital content.

gi-cluster.gr



DRIC Defkalion DISASTER RESILIENCE

Disaster risk management and mitigation of climate change impacts.

dric-defkalion.org

Health, photonics and maritime



Hellenic BioCluster (HBio) LIFE SCIENCES / HEALTH

Innovation in life sciences, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.

hbio.gr



Hellenic Digital Health (HDHC) DIGITAL HEALTH

AI and IoT applied to improving healthcare services.

hdhc.gr



Hellenic Photonics (HPhos) PHOTONICS

Optical systems, lasers and optical fibre technologies.

hphos.gr



Maritime Hellas MARITIME

Platform uniting the Hellenic maritime and shipping community and related activities.

maritimehellas.org

Mobility, innovation and civil protection



ITS Hellas SMART MOBILITY / TRANSPORT

Intelligent transport systems for safe, efficient and sustainable mobility.

its-hellas.gr



Innovation Greece CROSS-SECTOR INNOVATION

Links innovative SMEs with investment funds and international markets.

innovationgreece.com



CO-PROTECT CIVIL PROTECTION

Solutions for natural disaster and crisis management, security and interoperability.

co-protect.gr



STRATEGIS Maritime ICT MARITIME / ICT

Digital innovation for shipping, ports and maritime tourism in the blue economy.

strategis-cluster.net

Fintech, health tourism and connected technologies



Greek Fintech Cluster FINTECH

Coordination of companies and organisations across digital financial services.

fintech.net.gr



Asklepieia Cluster HEALTH & HEALTH TOURISM

Healthcare providers and hotels attracting international medical and wellness travellers.

asklepieiahealth.com



Pleiades IoT Innovation ICT / IOT

Connects businesses, universities and investors to pilot ideas in real environments.

wearepleiades.com



HETiA Emerging Technologies EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Semiconductors, micro/nanoelectronics, embedded systems and deep tech.

hetia.org

³⁷ Source: author's own elaboration based on European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) cluster profiles.

Note: AI-assisted tools were used to support the creation of this image. The output was subject to human review and the authors retain the sole editorial responsibility for its content.

3.3. Contribution of clusters to economic development

The contribution of cluster organisations to Attica's economic development is best understood as an intermediation effect. The portfolio of Greek ECCP clusters suggests that their economic contribution lies primarily in coordination and innovation diffusion. They provide coordination and networking capacity for SMEs that often lack the resources to innovate or internationalise alone. The Greek economy is dominated by micro and small enterprises that tend to be less capable of entering global markets and investing in R&D.³⁸ Cluster organisations can partially address this structural constraint by helping SMEs to work together with large companies and European partners.

In Attica, these mechanisms can be observed in concrete services. Corallia operates an Innovation Hub in Maroussi and has established three high-technology clusters covering microelectronics, space and creative digital technologies. Its support model combines training, acceleration and incubation programmes with cluster development and international cooperation. Corallia describes its international activities as a means to facilitate SME internationalisation and create new competitive value chains. Its project portfolio illustrates how this role is implemented. The now-completed EU-funded projects SURE5.0 and Space2Waves are two illustrative examples: SURE5.0 supported the sustainability and resilience transition of SMEs in mobility, aerospace and electronics, while Space2Waves was designed to support the internationalisation of Earth-observation SMEs towards Blue Growth markets. These activities create practical routes from specialised technological capabilities to new applications, partnerships and markets.

The European Cluster Panorama shows that clusters mainly support SMEs. Across Europe, SMEs represent 83% of cluster members.³⁹ Cluster organisations help companies connect with partners, work with research organisations and access international opportunities. Their services often include networking, participation in trade fairs, matchmaking activities and support in finding new business partners.

The Panorama also shows that regions with more cluster organisations tend to perform better on several innovation and economic indicators. These include business R&D investment, patenting activity, employment in knowledge-intensive sectors, productivity and GDP per capita. The strongest link is observed with business R&D expenditure. These findings do not prove that clusters directly cause better economic performance. However, they suggest that clusters are often part of strong innovation ecosystems and can help firms collaborate, innovate and grow.

The Hellenic BioCluster provides a second example. It offers technical and business guidance to life-science companies and research institutes. Its services include technology scouting, innovation matching, cross-cluster activities, tailored business missions and participation in international business-to-business events. It also advises on commercialisation pathways, including licensing, joint ventures, spin-offs and research-for-equity arrangements. The InnoMedCatalyst Accelerator translated these services into an eight-week programme for MedTech and HealthTech startups, spin-offs and SMEs at technology-readiness levels 4-6. It combined individual mentoring, commercialisation expertise and investor-readiness guidance. The cluster's cooperation with Enterprise Greece at the 2026 BIO International Convention provides a measurable market-

³⁸ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

³⁹ European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP), European Cluster Panorama Report 2024. The report analyses the role, characteristics and performance of cluster organisations across Europe. Available online: https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/sites/default/files/document-store/Cluster_Panorama2024.pdf.

access example: eight member companies participated in the national pavilion and held more than 200 targeted business meetings with potential commercial, research and investment partners.⁴⁰

The Hellenic Digital Health Cluster shows how clusters can help connect research organisations and businesses. By April 2026, it brought together more than 40 members from the digital health ecosystem. The cluster supports collaboration through working groups, joint projects, training and networking activities.

According to Interreg Europe, these activities have helped SMEs find new partners and access funding opportunities. They have also strengthened cooperation between companies and research organisations and supported participation in programmes such as Horizon Europe and Digital Europe. For Attica, the cluster provides a practical platform for developing joint projects and connecting local actors with European health innovation networks.⁴¹

Clusters also contribute to technology transfer, but their role should be distinguished from that of TTO. The General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI) defines the core functions of TTOs as intellectual-property protection and the commercial exploitation of research through industry collaboration, licensing, technology transfer and spin-off creation. It also identifies technology transfer as a weak link in the Greek innovation system because many public research organisations historically lacked structured commercialisation mechanisms. The Technology Transfer Unit/Office Networks 2021-2027 action addresses this institutional gap. It has a budget of EUR 25 million, requires networks of at least three research organisations and supports four-year operating plans, including proof-of-concept expenditure, intellectual property protection, specialised personnel and legal or advisory services.⁴²

Cluster organisations perform a different enabling function. They can identify business demand, bring potential users and technology providers together, assemble collaborative projects and connect firms to buyers, investors and European partners. This distinction matters. TTOs manage research assets and formal commercialisation processes; clusters organise relationships and market-facing collaboration. This complementarity can shorten the distance between a protected research result and its testing, adoption or commercial application. It should, however, be presented as an analytical interpretation of their documented functions, rather than as a formal division of responsibilities established by Greek law.

Centres of Competence provide a further complementary layer. According to GSRI, 11 centres had been established by April 2025 as public-private legal entities offering specialised innovation and technology-transfer services to firms. Their functions include shared facilities, technology uptake, knowledge exchange and training in advanced technologies, particularly in Industry 4.0. The original action had public funding of EUR 30 million. A subsequent 2025 pre-publication proposed EUR 20 million for existing and new centres across the eight National Smart Specialisation Strategy priority areas.⁴³ A useful analytical distinction is therefore that Centres of Competence provide specialised infrastructure and technical services, TTOs manage the protection and commercialisation of public research and clusters mobilise firms and partners around joint opportunities.

Overall, the evidence supports a bounded but significant conclusion. Attica's cluster organisations contribute to regional development by increasing the capacity of SMEs to collaborate, innovate and internationalise.

⁴⁰ Hellenic BioCluster (HBio), Activities and Services. HBio provides support services to life-science companies and research organisations. Available online : <https://www.hbio.gr/services>.

⁴¹ Interreg Europe, Hellenic Digital Health Cluster: A Successful Model of Innovation and Collaboration in Digital Health. Available online: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/hellenic-digital-health-cluster-successful-model-of-innovation-collaboration-in-digital-health>.

⁴² General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI), Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs). Available online : <https://gsri.gov.gr/en/protovoulies-draseis/technology-transfer-offices-ttos/>. Special Service for the Management of the Competitiveness Programme, Pre-publication of the Action "Support for Technology Transfer Structures 2021-2027". Available online: <https://21-27.antagonistikotita.gr/en/support-for-technology-transfer-structures-2021-2027/>

⁴³ Special Service for the Management of the Competitiveness Programme, Pre-publication of the Action "Support for Technology Transfer Structures 2021-2027".

3.4. Involvement of regional clusters in cross-border and interregional cooperation

Greek cluster organisations are active in European cluster cooperation mechanisms. During the 2021-2027 period, Greek cluster organisations took part in 11 Euroclusters. This includes eight first-generation Euroclusters projects (B-Resilient, CREATHRIV-EU, EU Rural Tourism, IKAT, MedBAN, METASTARS, SUSTAIN, and XBuild-EU) and three second-generation Euroclusters projects (CR.EU.IN. HERITAGE, FutureProofTextile, and GRAPPA). These Euroclusters covered several industrial ecosystems, including Tourism, Digital, Agri-Food, Cultural and Creative Industries, Mobility, Renewables, Aerospace and Defence, Textile and Construction. This participation is important because Euroclusters provide direct SME support, cross-border matchmaking, internationalisation services, resilience support and access to cascading funding.

Examples from both Attica-based and other Greek cluster organisations illustrate the diversity of Greece's participation in Euroclusters. Several Attica-based cluster organisations were and are directly involved in Euroclusters. Corallia, one of Greece's most prominent innovation cluster initiatives, participated in CREATHRIV-EU, a Eurocluster supporting Cultural and Creative Industries, and was also a partner in METASTARS, which supported SMEs in the Aerospace and Defence ecosystem through resilience, internationalisation, innovation, green and digital transition, and upskilling services. Corallia is currently participating in CR.EU.IN. HERITAGE (together with New Metropolitan Attica among other partners) which focuses on strengthening Europe's Cultural Heritage Value Chain and strategic autonomy. Additionally, Corallia was a founding member of the CR.EU (Creative Europe) metacluster⁴⁴ and participates in CLUSTERATLAS4MED, a trans-Mediterranean meta-cluster focused exclusively on rural tourism, designed to foster synergies among public, private and R&D stakeholders, funded under the Interreg NEXT MED programme.⁴⁵ These initiatives provide direct opportunities for Attica-based SMEs to access European partnerships, specialised services and transnational value chains.⁴⁶

Other Greek cluster organisations are also active in European cooperation initiatives. Strategis Maritime ICT Cluster participated in IKAT, a tourism-focused Eurocluster, and in MedBAN (Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network), which supported blue economy and maritime innovation ecosystems. In the construction ecosystem, SUSTAIN included Greek organisations such as CERTH, isZEB and the National Centre for Scientific Research Demokritos, supporting SME innovation in sustainable construction, digital building technologies and green-transition solutions. AgroTech Export Cluster is currently involved in GRAPPA, an Agri-Food-focused Eurocluster project that promotes the valorisation of Agri-Food biomass and side-streams into circular ingredients, advanced processing technologies, and digital solutions. The University of West Attica also coordinates FutureProofTextile, a Eurocluster project that aims to support SMEs in the textile industry as they navigate the twin transitions toward digital transformation and green sustainability.

⁴⁴ European Cluster Collaboration Platform, The Cultural and Creative Industries Meta-Cluster is born: the agreement signed in Brussels opens a reality of sharing and innovation between companies and public bodies at European level. Available online: [The Cultural and Creative Industries Meta-Cluster is born. The agreement signed in Brussels opens a reality of sharing and innovation between companies and public bodies at European level. | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#) and [CR.EU Metacluster | Cultural and Creative Industries in Europe](#).

⁴⁵ CLUSTERATLAS4MED, Cluster for a data-driven rural sustainable tourism for Mediterranean SMEs, Interreg next MED programme. Available online: [CLUSTER for a data-driven rural sustainable tourism for Mediterranean SMEs - Interreg NEXT MED](#).

⁴⁶ Assigned Euroclusters to each of the 14 industrial ecosystems can be found here: <https://clustercollaboration.eu/euroclusters>.

Figure 9 Participation of Greek cluster organisations in Euroclusters by industrial ecosystem (2021-2027)⁴⁷



Overall, participation in Euroclusters strengthens the integration of Greek clusters into European innovation ecosystems. For Attica in particular, involvement in initiatives such as CREATHRIV-EU and METASTARS reinforces the region's position as Greece's main cluster hub and creates additional opportunities for SME internationalisation, innovation, collaboration and participation in European value chains.

3.4.1. Involvement in the I3 Instrument and related interregional innovation initiatives

The Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument is particularly relevant for Greek cluster organisations because it supports projects that are ready to move beyond research and towards testing, market deployment and investment.⁴⁸ It brings together SMEs, research organisations, public authorities and

⁴⁷ Source: author's own elaboration based on European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) and Euroclusters project data (2021-2027).

Note: AI-assisted tools were used to support the creation of this image. The output was subject to human review and the authors retain the sole editorial responsibility for its content.

⁴⁸ European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument. Available online: https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/programmes/interregional-innovation-investments-i3-instrument_en.

clusters from different regions that share common Smart Specialisation priorities. In addition to supporting collaboration, the programme helps partners validate innovations and launch pilot activities.⁴⁹

Cluster organisations play an important role in many I3 projects. As intermediaries between businesses, research organisations and public authorities, they help identify project opportunities, build partnerships and engage SMEs in interregional initiatives. Their strong presence across I3-funded projects highlights the role they can play in turning regional innovation priorities into concrete investment and business opportunities.

A good example from Greece is the participation of the Hellenic Digital Health Cluster in IRHIS (Interoperable Remote Health Innovation brought to Scale). Running from September 2024 to August 2027, the project aims to expand the use of advanced remote healthcare solutions across several European regions, with a particular focus on AI-based technologies. Attica is one of the transition regions involved in the initiative. The project brings together 21 partners from 13 European regions, including SMEs, healthcare providers, universities, research organisations, intermediary bodies and public authorities. For Attica, IRHIS shows how participation in an I3 project can connect local companies and innovation actors to cross-border testing, demonstration and market deployment activities. It also illustrates how cluster organisations can help regional ecosystems access European partnerships and scale innovative solutions beyond their home market.

Box 1 Examples of Greek startups' involvement in the I3 Instrument

BIO-RED is an I3 project focused on red biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. The consortium brings together 11 partners from seven European countries, including cluster organisations, companies, research institutes and public authorities. Attica is represented through the Athens-based Hellenic BioCluster, while the official I3 project profile identifies Attica among the regions involved.

For the CMR Attica event, BIO-RED is a useful example of how a Greek cluster organisation can use interregional cooperation to turn collaboration with partners in other regions into concrete business and investment opportunities.

⁴⁹ European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), Interregional Innovation Investments Strand 2a (I3-2023-INV2a). Available online: https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/interregional-innovation-investments-strand-2a-i3-2023-inv2a_en.

⁵⁰ Hellenic Bio Cluster (2026), BIO-RED: HBio is participating in a €1.5 million I3 project for regional innovation in biotechnology, 2 February 2026. Available online: <https://hbio.gr/news-item/2026/02/02/114>.

4. Policy support framework

Greece's current policy framework for cluster development is best understood as a multi-instrument innovation-intermediary system, rather than as a single stand-alone cluster law, agency or programme. Cluster support forms part of a wider research, innovation and business support framework.

The National Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027 sets the main priorities.

The Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027 and the regional programmes, including the Regional Programme Attica 2021-2027, provide funding for their implementation.⁵¹ Other instruments support specific needs, such as collaborative R&D, technology transfer, digital adoption, skills and access to research infrastructure. This structure reflects the challenges discussed in Chapter 2. Greece and Attica have considerable research and innovation assets. However, firms do not always make full use of them. The purpose of the policy framework is therefore to improve links between research, businesses and markets.

Cluster organisations operate within this wider system. They are not a separate delivery chain. Their potential role is to identify business needs, build partnerships and direct firms towards suitable support instruments. The available evidence supports this enabling role, but does not indicate a formal mandate across all programmes.

This policy architecture responds to a persistent structural challenge in the Greek innovation system: weak diffusion of research into the productive base, limited private R&D investment and fragmented governance. The European Commission's 2025 Country Report notes that Greece's R&D intensity reached 1.49% of GDP in 2023, but remained below the EU average, and that innovation policy management and funding sources have long been fragmented across several ministries, GSRI, the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation and regional R&I authorities. In this context, cluster organisations and cluster-like intermediaries are positioned as mechanisms to strengthen collaboration between businesses, research organisations and public authorities.

4.1. Institutional and strategic framework

The National Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027 provides the main strategic framework for research and innovation policy. It aims to support economic transformation through research, technology and innovation. It also seeks to improve SME competitiveness, digitalisation and the uptake of advanced technologies.

The strategy identifies eight priority areas. These include digital technologies, health and pharmaceuticals, transport and logistics, sustainable energy, and tourism, culture and creative industries. These areas correspond closely to Attica's economic profile and to the domains covered by many cluster organisations in the region.

The strategy does not fund projects directly. It guides the design of actions financed through national and regional programmes. This distinction should be made clear in the paper. The RIS3 sets priorities, while other programmes provide financial support.

⁵¹ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en

Hellenic Republic, Ministry of National Economy and Finance, Special Service for the Management of the "Competitiveness" Programme: "Competitiveness" Programme 2021-2027. Available online: ['Competitiveness 2021-2027' Programme - 21 27](#)

At national level, the Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027 is the main implementation tool of the strategy. It supports investment, research, innovation, digitalisation and the internationalisation of firms. Its public expenditure envelope is approximately EUR 3.9 billion, including EUR 3.1 billion from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund Plus.⁵²

At regional level, the Regional Programme Attica 2021-2027 adapts these priorities to the needs of the region. It supports research and innovation, entrepreneurship, digital transformation, SME competitiveness and critical technologies. The programme has a total public contribution of EUR 1.59 billion. This includes EUR 808.5 million in EU investment and EUR 781.5 million in national public funding.⁵³

The programme also addresses the green transition, mobility and sustainable urban development. These priorities are relevant to Attica's economy (particularly in transport, logistics, energy, tourism and urban services).⁵⁴

The Innovation Centre of Attica Region supports the regional governance of research and innovation. Its work covers the Creative Economy, Blue Economy and Sustainable Economy. It supports the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process and promotes links between businesses, research centres and universities.

Figure 10 Selected public funding envelopes relevant to cluster and innovation support in Greece and Attica⁵⁵

PROGRAMME TIMELINES: 2018-2027



⁵² General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI), Action Research Innovate 2021-2027. Available online: <https://gsri.gov.gr/en/mission/>.

⁵³ European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), Programme under the Investment for Jobs and Growth Goal - Attica. Regional Programme Attica 2021-2027. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2021-2027/el/2021el16ffpr017_en.

⁵⁴ European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), Programme under the Investment for Jobs and Growth Goal - Attica. Regional Programme Attica 2021-2027. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2021-2027/el/2021el16ffpr017_en.

New Metropolitan Attica S.A., Regional Programme “Attica” 2021-2027. The programme focuses on innovation, entrepreneurship, digitalisation, climate action, sustainable mobility, social cohesion and Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) in the Region of Attica. Available online: <https://www.developattica.gr/en/programmata-attiki-2021-2027>.

⁵⁵ Amounts are not additive across programmes because some instruments are implemented within broader national or regional funding frameworks. Source: author's own compilation based on the Greece Country Factsheet 2024.

The figure above illustrates how the different instruments operate within the broader innovation ecosystem. At the strategic level, the National Smart Specialisation Strategy and the Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027 provide the overall policy direction and funding framework. At the implementation level, a range of complementary instruments support different stages of the innovation process.

Research Innovate 2021-2027 focuses on collaborative R&D and the commercial exploitation of research results. Technology Transfer Unit/Office Networks and Centres of Competence support technology transfer, industry-research collaboration and the adoption of advanced technologies. Smart Attica EDIH and the Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence provide specialised support for digital transformation and semiconductor-related innovation. Dedicated cluster initiatives complement these instruments by facilitating collaboration between firms, research organisations and public authorities.

Rather than operating as isolated programmes, these instruments form a broader innovation-support ecosystem that aims to connect research, technology development, business innovation and SME growth.

4.2. Policy instruments and support measures

Greece's innovation support framework is best understood as a set of complementary instruments designed to strengthen research-business collaboration, technology transfer, digital adoption and SME innovation. The Research Innovate 2021-2027 action provides grant support for enterprise R&D, partnerships between enterprises and research organisations, the uptake of research results and Seal of Excellence projects.⁵⁶ It is implemented under the Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027 and supports the objectives of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Technology Transfer Offices and Technology Transfer Unit/Office Networks complement this framework by supporting the commercial exploitation of research results, including intellectual property management, industry collaboration, licensing, spin-off creation and the transfer of research outputs towards firms and value chains.⁵⁷ Centres of Competence provide a further intermediary layer through public-private collaboration structures offering specialised innovation and technology-transfer services, shared infrastructure, training and support for the adoption of advanced technologies, including Industry 4.0 solutions.⁵⁸

Within this broader ecosystem, cluster organisations should be understood as facilitation and intermediation structures rather than as a separate linear delivery chain. They can help articulate business needs, bring together SMEs, startups, research organisations and other support actors, and support partnership-building around Smart Specialisation priorities. In this sense, clusters may complement Research Innovate, TTOs and Centres of Competence by helping firms identify collaborative R&I opportunities, connect with relevant knowledge providers and access wider innovation-support services. This role should, however, be framed as

⁵⁶ General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI), Action Research Innovate 2021-2027. The action is a strategic intervention under the 2021-2027 Competitiveness Programme, co-financed by the ERDF and national resources. It aims to link research and innovation with entrepreneurship, improve the competitiveness, productivity and outward orientation of Greek enterprises and supports four interventions: enterprise R&D, enterprise research organisation partnerships, uptake of research results, and Seal of Excellence projects. The total public budget amounts to EUR 300 million. Available online: <https://gsri.gov.gr/en/mission/>.

⁵⁷ GSRI, "Technology Transfer Offices"; Competitiveness Programme 2021-2027, "Technology Transfer Unit/Office Networks 2021-2027". GSRI defines technology transfer as the process through which research-conducting organisations transfer research results to public or private organisations for further development into innovative products and services. TTO activities include intellectual-property protection, commercial exploitation of research results, collaboration with industry, licensing or transfer of technologies and spin-off creation. The 2021-2027 TTO Networks action has a budget of EUR 25 million. Available online: <https://gsri.gov.gr/en/protovoulies-draseis/technology-transfer-offices-ttos/>.

⁵⁸ GSRI, Centres of Competence. The initiative defines Centres of Competence as structured public-private collaborations designed to bridge the gap between demand and supply of specialised innovation and technology-transfer services.

Available online: <https://gsri.gov.gr/en/protovoulies-draseis/centres-of-competence/>.

an enabling function, since the available sources document the complementary objectives of these instruments rather than a formal operational mandate linking clusters to each programme.

The Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence add a strategic technology dimension to this landscape. Launched in 2025, HCCC supports Greece's semiconductor and microelectronics ecosystem through services related to design platforms and pilot lines, skills and training, technical knowledge transfer, prototyping, co-development, innovation networking and investment support.⁵⁹ It is therefore relevant to the Attica event's focus on advanced digital technologies, AI and industrial resilience.

At regional level, Smart Attica EDIH provides a practical digital-transformation interface for SMEs and public-sector organisations. As Greece's first European Digital Innovation Hub for Artificial Intelligence, it supports digital-maturity assessment, test-before-invest services, demonstrations, pilots, skills development, ecosystem networking and investment support, with a focus on Energy & Environment, Supply Chain & Mobility, and Culture & Tourism.⁶⁰

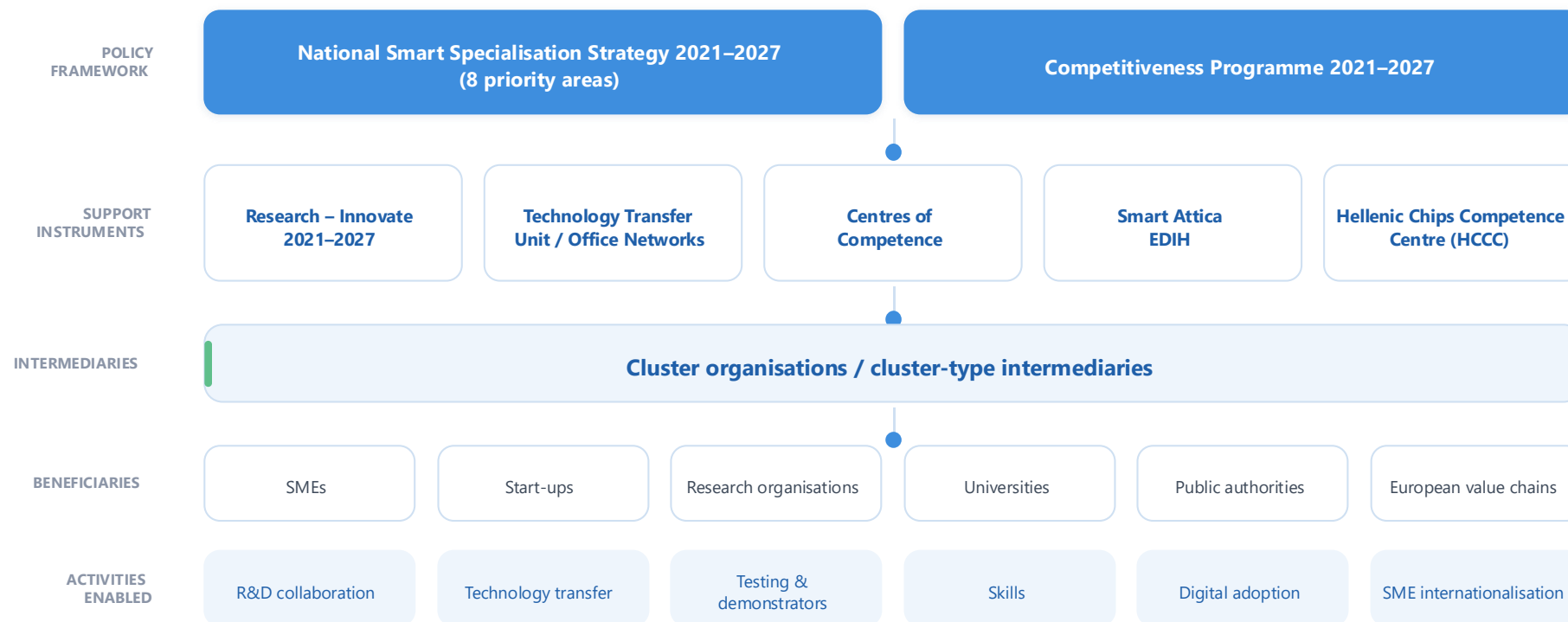
Greece and Attica now rely on a broader innovation-support architecture than a single cluster-policy instrument (see Figure 10 for an overview). However, coordination remains a policy challenge. Greece's innovation performance is still affected by fragmented governance and funding structures in the national research and innovation system.⁶¹ In this context, the Smart Specialisation governance framework, technology-transfer networks, Centres of Competence, EDIHs and cluster organisations can be presented as complementary mechanisms. Their effectiveness depends on their ability to connect research actors, SMEs, public authorities and market opportunities.

⁵⁹ Hellenic Chips Centres of Competence (HCCC), official website and press release "Greek chips at the heart of innovation", 17 July 2025. HCCC is Greece's national hub for innovation, skills development and collaboration in the semiconductor and microelectronics ecosystem. It is backed by the EU Chips Act and supported by Chips JU, the EU and the Greek Government through the Competitiveness Programme. Available online: <https://hccc.org.gr/greek-chips-at-the-heart-of-innovation/>.

⁶⁰ Smart Attica EDIH, Official Website and Service Portfolio. Available online: [Smart Attica EDIH](#).

⁶¹ European Commission, 2026 Country Report: Greece, Economic developments and key policy challenges; productivity, investment, R&D, digital adoption, startups and scale-up constraints. Available online: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages-including-country-reports/country-report-greece_en.

Figure 11 Innovation support framework for Attica (2021-2027)



5. Outlook for the event

The Attica Clusters Meet Regions event will focus on the main challenges identified in this paper: how to turn research, innovation and entrepreneurship into business growth.

Attica has assets. The region hosts universities, research centres, cluster organisations, startups, SMEs and innovation support structures. However, these actors do not always work together effectively. The event will therefore explore how cooperation can help innovative firms reach the market, grow faster and connect with European partners.

The first day will focus on innovation commercialisation and scale-up. Discussions will examine the main barriers that prevent research and innovation from reaching the market. Attention will be given to access to finance, testing and pilot facilities, technology transfer, internationalisation and support for innovative SMEs. The event will also create opportunities for cooperation. Cluster pitches and matchmaking sessions will allow participants to present their expertise, identify common interests and explore potential partnerships. The objective is to move beyond networking and identify concrete areas for collaboration.

The second day will focus on practical solutions. Three Opportunity Labs will address digital and deep-tech innovation, health and life sciences, and ecosystem coordination, funding and internationalisation. Participants will identify key bottlenecks, discuss possible solutions and explore future cooperation opportunities.

The event is expected to produce practical outcomes. These include recommendations for improving innovation commercialisation in Attica, new cooperation opportunities between clusters and innovation actors and project ideas linked to regional and European priorities. Discussions on regional cooperation will also explore how Attica can strengthen its links with other European innovation ecosystems and value chains.

The event will not solve all of Attica's innovation challenges. Its value will depend on the partnerships, projects and follow-up actions that emerge after the event. In this sense, the event should be seen as a starting point for longer-term cooperation rather than as a stand-alone activity.

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7. Annex

The following list is broader than the 22 ECCP-registered cluster organisations referred to in the main text. It is based on the list provided by the Attica Region Innovation Centre and includes organisations that are not all registered on the ECCP. The two datasets are therefore not equivalent and should not be read as such.

Table 1 List of Greek cluster organisations provided by the Attica Region Innovation Centre.

	Cluster	HQ Region / City	Sector	Focus	Description	Website
1	mi-Cluster	Region of Attica	Microelectronics	Nano/microelectronics , embedded systems, applications	Focuses on the development of products and applications in the field of Nano/Microelectronics Systems and Applications.	https://corallia.org/
2	si-Cluster	Region of Attica	Space	Space technologies & applications	Focuses on space-related technologies and applications, such as satellite communications, geoinformatics, and Earth observation systems.	https://www.si-cluster.gr/
3	gi-Cluster	Region of Attica	Creative Digital	Gaming, creative technologies, digital transformation	Supports the creative economy. It includes companies active in digital games, animation, virtual/augmented reality (VR/AR) technologies, and digital content in general.	https://gi-cluster.gr/
4	DRIC Defkalion	Region of Attica	Disaster Resilience	Disaster Management, Technologies and Systems	Focuses on innovation for protection and security against environmental hazards. It develops solutions for the prevention and mitigation of climate change impacts.	https://www.dric-defkalion.org/
5	Hellenic BioCluster - HBio	Region of Attica	Life Sciences / Health	Biotech, health innovation	Promotes innovation in the fields of Life Sciences, health, biotechnology, and pharmaceuticals.	https://hbio.gr/
6	Hellenic Digital Health	Region of Attica	Digital Health / Health	Digital Health, Health innovation	Focuses on the application of digital technologies (AI, IoT) to improve healthcare services.	https://hdhc.gr/

	Cluster HDHC	-				
7	Hellenic Photonics Cluster - HPhos	Region of Attica	Photonics	Optics, photonics, laser/photronics technologies	Focuses on companies and research organizations active in photonics technologies, such as optical systems, lasers, and optical fibers.	https://www.hphos.gr/
8	Maritime Hellas navigate the Greek Cluster	Region of Attica	Maritime		The Hellenic Chamber of Shipping, the Union of Greek Shipowners, and the Piraeus Chamber of Commerce and Industry established this platform to incorporate members from all sectors of the Hellenic Maritime and Shipping community, as well as its related activities.	https://www.maritimehellas.org/
9	Greek Fintech Cluster	Region of Attica	Fintech	Financial technology, digital financial services, fintech ecosystem	Creation, management, support, and coordination of an innovation cluster – a group of companies and organizations operating within the fintech sector.	https://fintech.net.gr/el/
10	Asklepieia Cluster	Region of Attica	Health & Health Tourism	Health & wellness tourism, medical travel ecosystem	Brings together healthcare providers (physicians, clinics, centres) and hotels focused on service quality. It aims to attract international travelers seeking medical services, treatments, and wellness by leveraging both medical expertise and hospitality services.	https://www.asklepieiahealth.com/
11	Pleiades IoT Innovation Cluster	Region of Attica	ICT / IoT / Innovation	IoT, innovation ecosystem, pilots, cities-corporates-research links	Connects businesses, universities, and investors. Facilitates the transformation of pioneering ideas into applicable and funded solutions in real-world environments.	https://www.wearepleiades.com/

12	HETiA Hellenic Emerging Technologies Industry Association	- Region of Attica	Emerging Technologies	Semiconductors, micro/nanoelectronics, embedded systems, deep tech	HETiA is the alliance of highly innovative industrial and academic performers, promoting digital technology proliferation and entrepreneurship in emerging technology domains.	https://hetia.org/
13	ITS Hellas	Region of Attica	Smart Mobility / Transport	Intelligent transport systems, smart mobility, transport digitalisation, logistics	Adoption of innovative technologies in transport. Creation of a safe, efficient, and environmentally sustainable mobility system.	its-hellas.gr
14	Innovation Greece	Region of Attica	Cross-sector Innovation	innovation management, product development, innovation ecosystem, knowledge-intensive SMEs	Connection of innovative companies with each other, as well as with investment funds in Greece and abroad, for the development of new products, securing of working capital, and access to international markets.	innovationgreece.com
15	CO-PROTECT	Region of Attica	Civil Protection / Safety & Security	Civil protection systems, crisis management, disaster resilience, interoperability, remote sensing, security technologies	Development of innovative solutions for improving the management of natural disasters and related crises in Greece.	co-protect.gr
16	Strategis Maritime ICT Cluster	Region of Attica	Maritime / ICT	maritime ICT, blue economy, maritime digitalisation	Promotion and application of digital and technological innovation in the sector of shipping, ports, and maritime tourism.	strategis-cluster.net
17	AgroTech Export Cluster	Region of Central Macedonia	Agri-food	Agri-food, agrotechnology, agrobiotechnology, exports	Provision of innovative solutions, expertise, high value-added products and services, aimed at equipping the Agri-food Sector in Greece and abroad with competitive advantages	https://atecluster.gr/

18	AI-cluster	Region of Central Macedonia	Digital Technologies	Applied Intelligence	Artificial	IT integrator that develops and deploys in-house and third-party solutions, based on ML and NLP tools and methodologies. Supported by a large number of specialized engineers it is able to compete with big firms and important competitors locally and internationally.	https://www.ai-cluster.gr/
19	isZeb	Region of Central Macedonia	Construction / Energy	Intelligent positive buildings, buildings	zero & energy smart	Construction and renovation of smart, zero and positive energy buildings	https://iszeb.gr/el
20	Agile4.0-Cluster	Region of Central Macedonia	Digital Manufacturing	Agile manufacturing, Industry 4.0, DIH		A Digital Innovation Hub for the industrial sector, connecting manufacturing plants with technology solution providers. Its goal is to drive the digitalization of its member companies through the adoption of emerging technologies, ultimately enhancing their productivity and enabling agile manufacturing.	iti.gr/iti/project/agile4-0-cluster/
21	GRawMat	Region of Central Macedonia	Raw Materials	Mining, metallurgy, mineral raw materials		Design and implementation of a unified strategy for the sustainable and efficient use of mineral raw materials, to be deployed by companies operating in the mining and metallurgy sector in cooperation with public and private research institutions	grawmat.gr
22	Innovative Design Cluster	Region of Central Macedonia	Creative Industries / Design	Creative design, design innovation		Highlighting the dynamics of Greek creative design in developing innovations. Promoting it internationally and improving the competitiveness and outward orientation of design-related businesses.	innovativedesigncluster.gr

23	InoFA (Internet of Food Alliance)	Region of Central Macedonia	Agri-food	Internet of Food, foodtech, agri-food innovation	Promotion of the integration of cutting-edge technologies into the food supply chain. Implementation of "smart" solutions to reduce production costs, optimize resource utilization, and ensure product traceability.	inofa.gr
24	AgriDiverCluster	Region of Central Macedonia	Agri-food	Biodiversity, plant genetic resources, aromatic/medicinal plants, traditional varieties	Utilization of Greek biodiversity and phylogenetic resources, with emphasis on aromatic/medicinal plants and traditional varieties, for the creation of innovative food products.	agridivercluster.org
25	The M&L Cluster / Smart Mobility & Logistics Solutions Cluster	Region of Central Macedonia	Mobility & Logistics	Smart mobility, transport, logistics	Development of innovative products and high value-added digital solutions in the fields of Transport, Smart Mobility, and Logistics.	https://mlcluster.imet.gr/
26	CLuBE – Cluster of Bioeconomy and Environment of Western Macedonia	Region of Western Macedonia	Bioeconomy / Environment / Clean Energy	Bioeconomy, environment, clean technologies, energy saving, biomass, biogas, smart cities	Development of business activities and R&D in the fields of bioeconomy, bioenergy, and the environment, in order to strengthen the green and circular economy in the Region of Western Macedonia and its neighboring areas.	https://clube.gr/
27	Hephaestus Smart Manufacturing Cluster	Region of Western Greece	Manufacturing	Smart manufacturing, production systems, automation, Industry 4.0	Integration of cutting-edge technologies for the modernization of traditional Greek industry. Direct connection of research and technology with the factory floor.	hephaestus-smc.gr
28	Δίκτυο ePAITHROS	Region of Crete	Tourism	Agrotourism / Sustainable rural tourism	Digitalization, organization, and international promotion of alternative tourism in the Greek countryside, enhancing local entrepreneurship.	https://www.epaithros.eu/el/

29	eMT Cluster	Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	ICT / Digital Transformation	Agri-food manufacturing, smart cities, human capital transformation	Digital transformation of businesses through fast digital onboarding.	emtcluster.gr
30	Idean Cluster	Region of Epirus	EdTech	Personalised education, translational integrative neurosciences &	Online educational platform offering personalized education in Translational and Integrative Neurosciences, at the levels of secondary and higher education, both undergraduate and postgraduate.	idean-cluster.gr
31	e-CODOMH	Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	Construction / Built Environment	Sustainable constructions, buildings, infrastructures	Connects businesses, educational/research institutions, and other stakeholders active in the construction and building materials sector. It aims to accelerate their development and foster innovation in Sustainable Construction, Buildings, and Infrastructure.	https://e-codomh.gr/