

Tourism innovation policy in Spain: the evaluation of a cluster experience



**Evolution and transformation in tourism destinations:
Revitalisation through innovation?**

International Workshop of the Regional Studies Association

Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona 10-13th February 2014

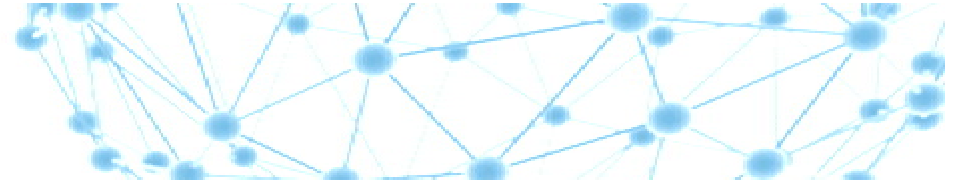




Research done under the framework of the project (2012-2014):

"Methodology, criteria and implementation of the cluster theory in consolidated tourism areas: innovation, competitiveness and territorial synergies".

Spanish National R&D&I Plan 2008-2011. Ministry of Science and Innovation. Main researcher: Fernando Vera Rebollo, University of Alicante



1 GENERAL FRAMEWORK AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

2 THE AEI PROGRAMME

3 RESEARCH METODOLOGY

4 RESULTS PRESENTATION

5 CONCLUSIONS



Universitat d'Alacant
Universidad de Alicante

Institut Universitari d'Investigacions Turístiques
Instituto Universitario de Investigaciones Turísticas





1 GENERAL FRAMEWORK

- A research gap: the study of tourism innovation from a policy perspective. Still fragmented and largely ignored (Hjalager, 2012).
- Limited literature on tourism innovation policies (Hall, 2009; Hjalager, 2010, Hall&Williams, 2008). Empirically weak or vague evidence on outcomes or effectiveness.
- Symptomatic of a more general lack of research on tourism policies (Velasco, 2011).





1 STUDY OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate the implementation of an innovation policy Programme applied to tourism: the Innovative Business Groups (Agrupaciones Empresariales Innovadoras, AEIs for its initials in Spain).
- Evaluate the policy outcomes from a qualitative perspective: both funding beneficiaries and policy responsible.
- Determine the nature of the activities and type of innovation resulting
- Identify barriers and facilitators to policy objectives and outcomes

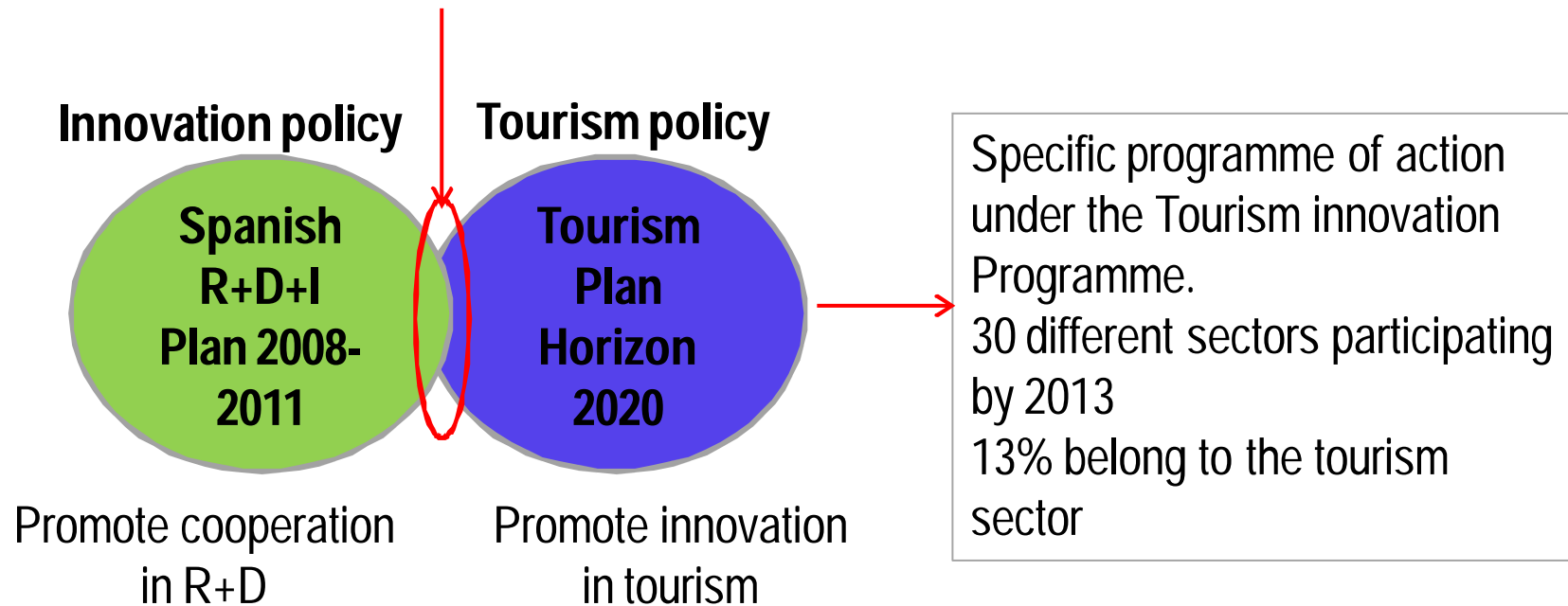


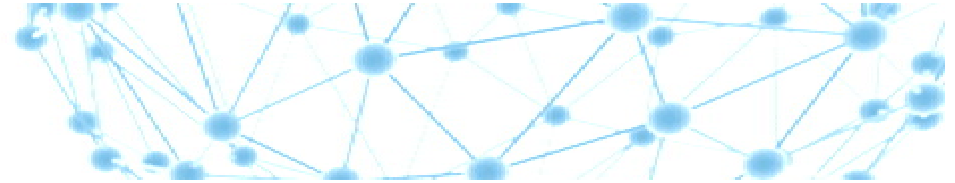


2 THE AEI PROGRAMME

AEI PROGRAMME

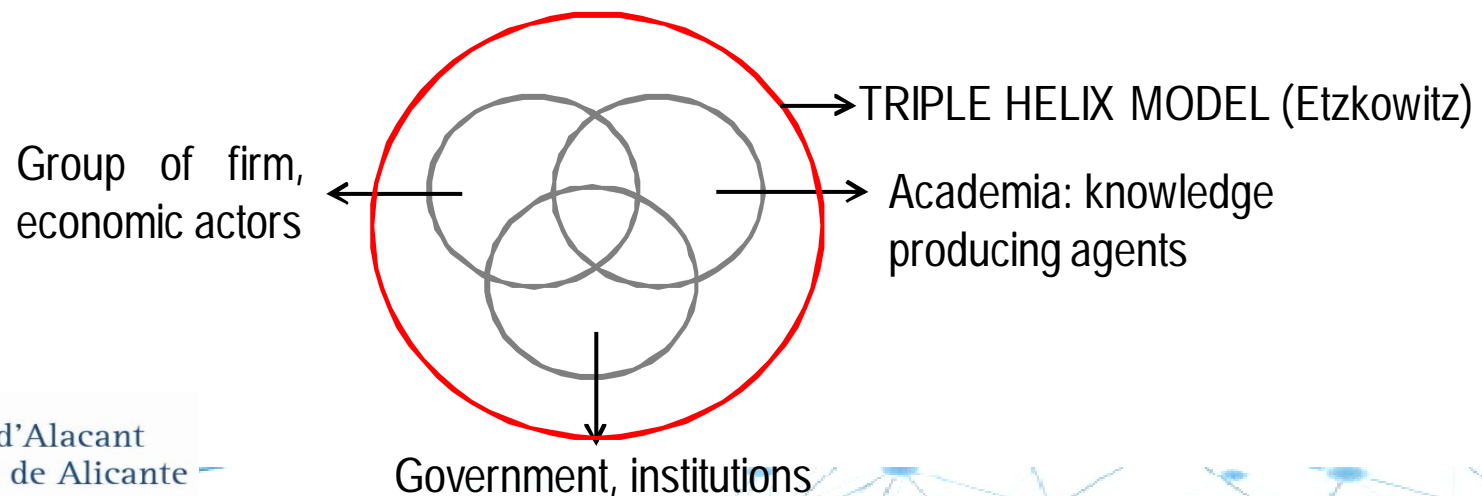
Competitiveness and **innovation** in the business sector
through a **cluster** approach





2 THE AEI PROGRAMME

The AEIs are defined as 'a combination of **businesses** and public or private **training and research centers** in a **geographic area** or **specific industrial sector** involved in processes of **collaborative exchange** to obtain benefits from the execution of **innovative joint projects**' (AEI Base Regulatory Order 2691/2006, subsequently updated).



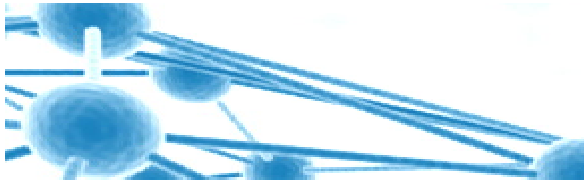


2 THE AEI PROGRAMME

The Programme provides financial support for four main types of actions:

- a) Preparation of **strategic plans**.
- b) Coordination and **management structures for** existing AEIs
- c) Development of **specific projects** to strengthen businesses' potential for innovation
- d) Promotion of **joint actions** between Spanish AEIs and as well as clusters in other EU countries.





THE CLUSTER ECOSYSTEM

AEIs with a clear thematic specialisation

AEIs specialized in new technologies

AEIs linked to a territorial area

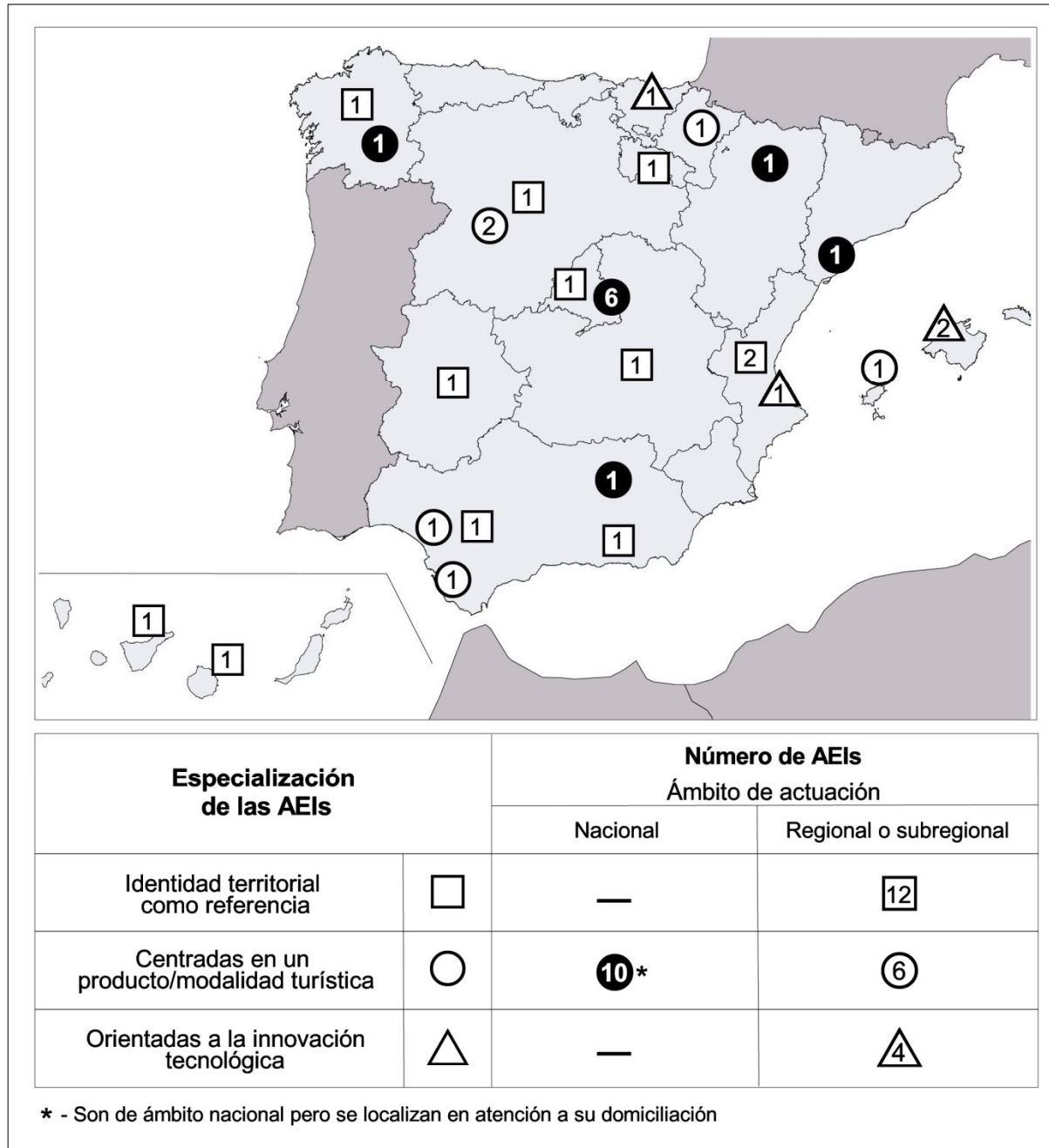
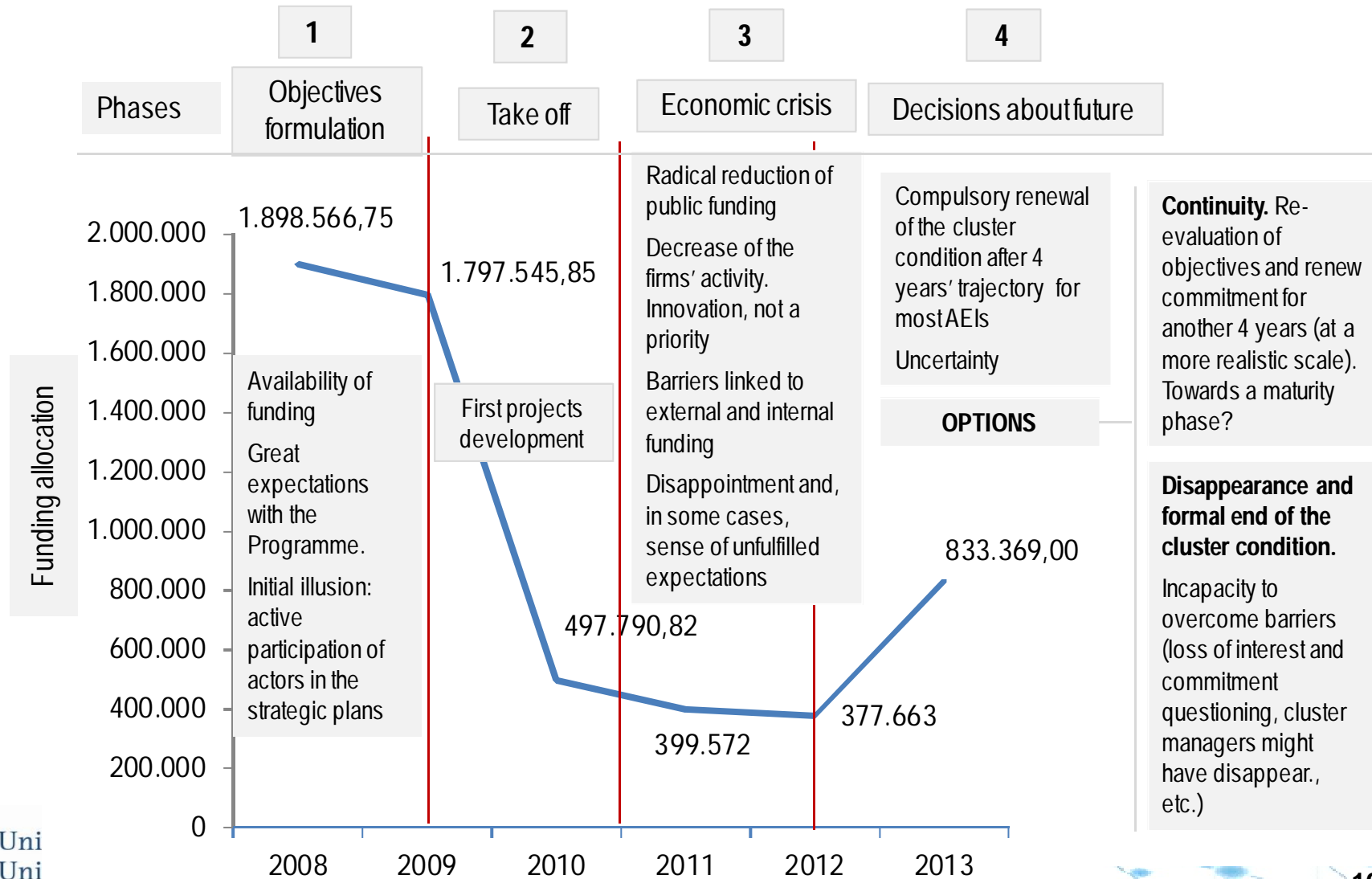




Fig. 1 Life cycle of the AEI Programme , 2008-2013





3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

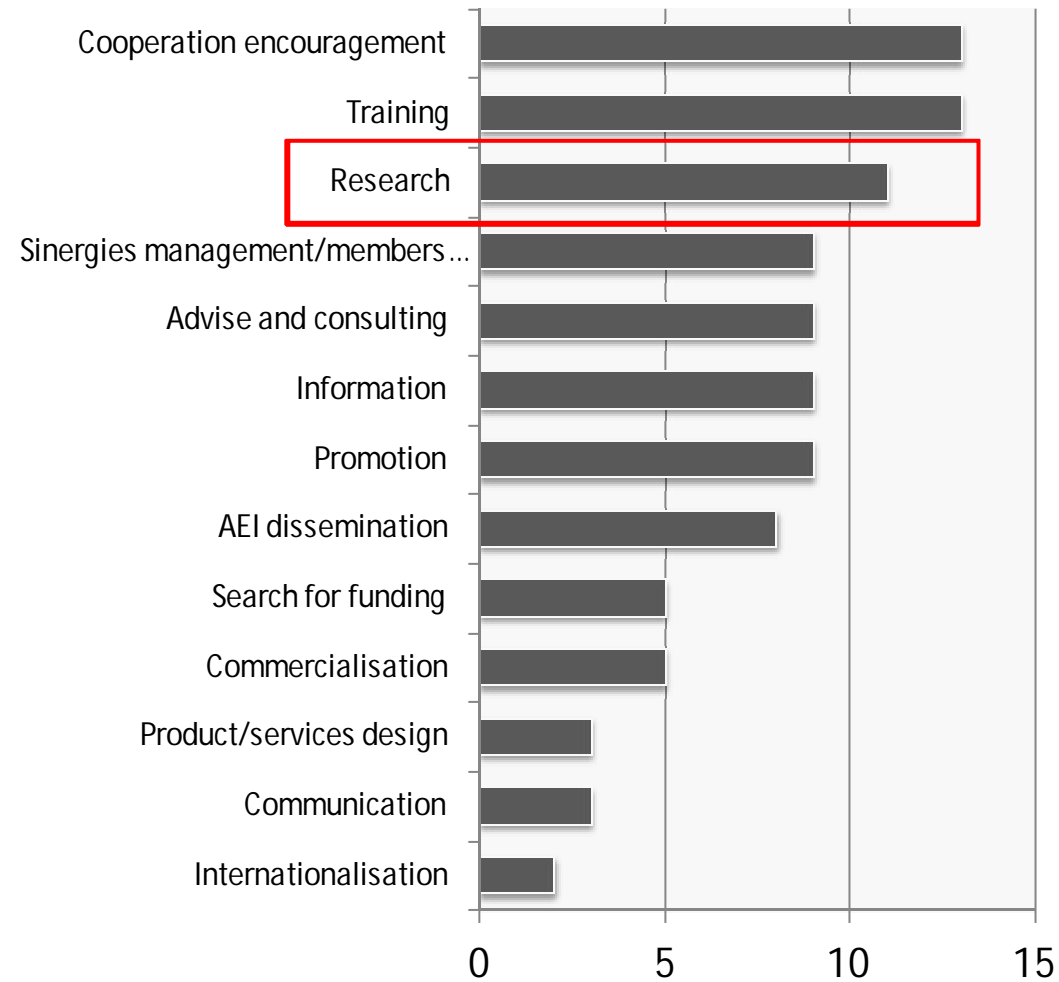
- A) Internal documents relating to Programme management facilitated by Segittur.
- B) Management responsible for the tourism AEIs. Semi structured phone interviews to 28 AEI managers from the 33 officially listed. November and December 2012.
- C) Face to face interviews with the two main individuals in Segittur responsible for supervising the overall AEI Programme for tourism.





4 RESULTS

Fig. Main activities undertaken by the tourist AElS





4 RESULTS

- » **Networking activities**
- » **Projects involving basic research (exploratory studies): 11**
- » **Three types of R+D projects involving a prototype development: 30**
 - » **never implemented**
 - » **implemented at pilot stage**
 - » **in a commercialization stage**
- » **Most common types of innovation in projects: organizational and product/service innovation**
- » **Predominance of projects with a technological component**
- » **Incremental rather than radical innovations**





4 RESULTS

- » Difficult to quantify the outcomes of the Programme.
- » Abandonment of 11 AElS.
- » Lack of tangible innovations: only 4 projects only being commercialized.
- » Intangible benefits:
 - » Changes in cognitive and behavioral attitude towards innovation and cooperation (work processes).
 - » Innovation awareness and initial impulse to R+D projects.
 - » Access to new and complementary knowledge.



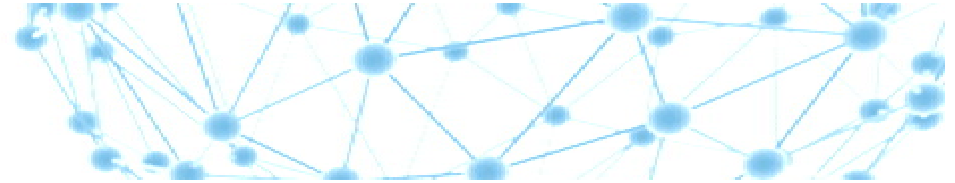


Fig. Positive impacts of the AEI Programme

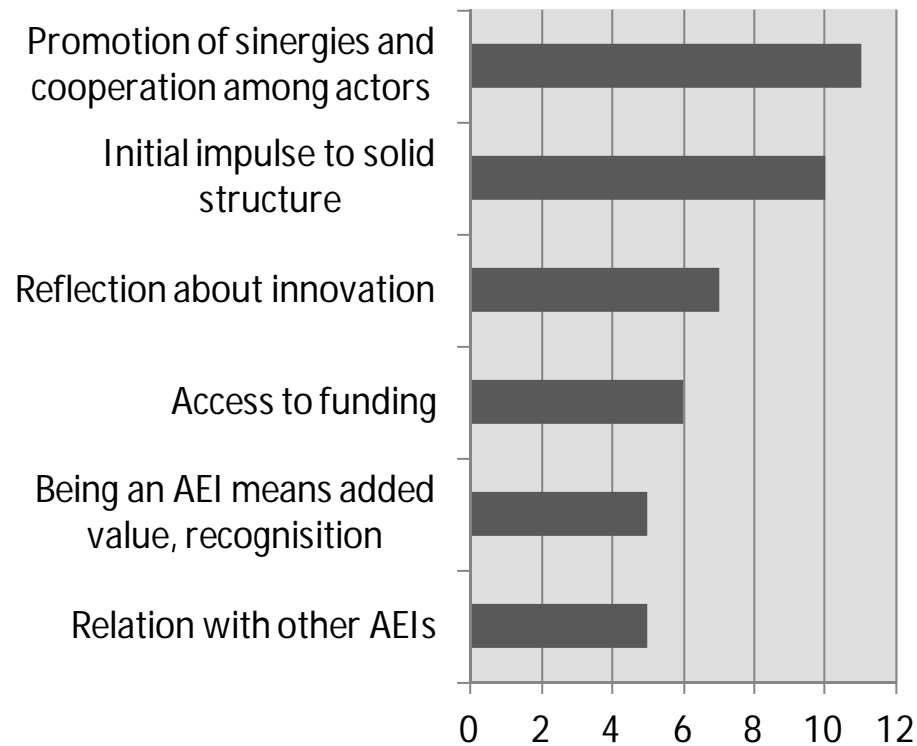
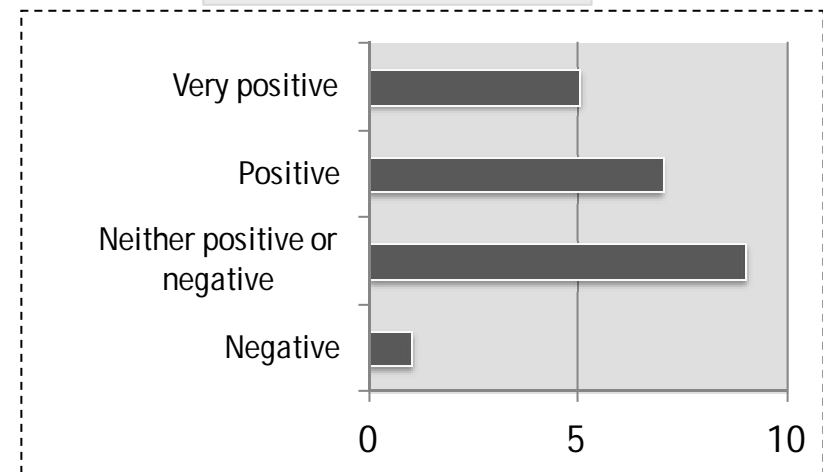


Fig. Evaluation of the AEI Programme



Author's interviews/survey



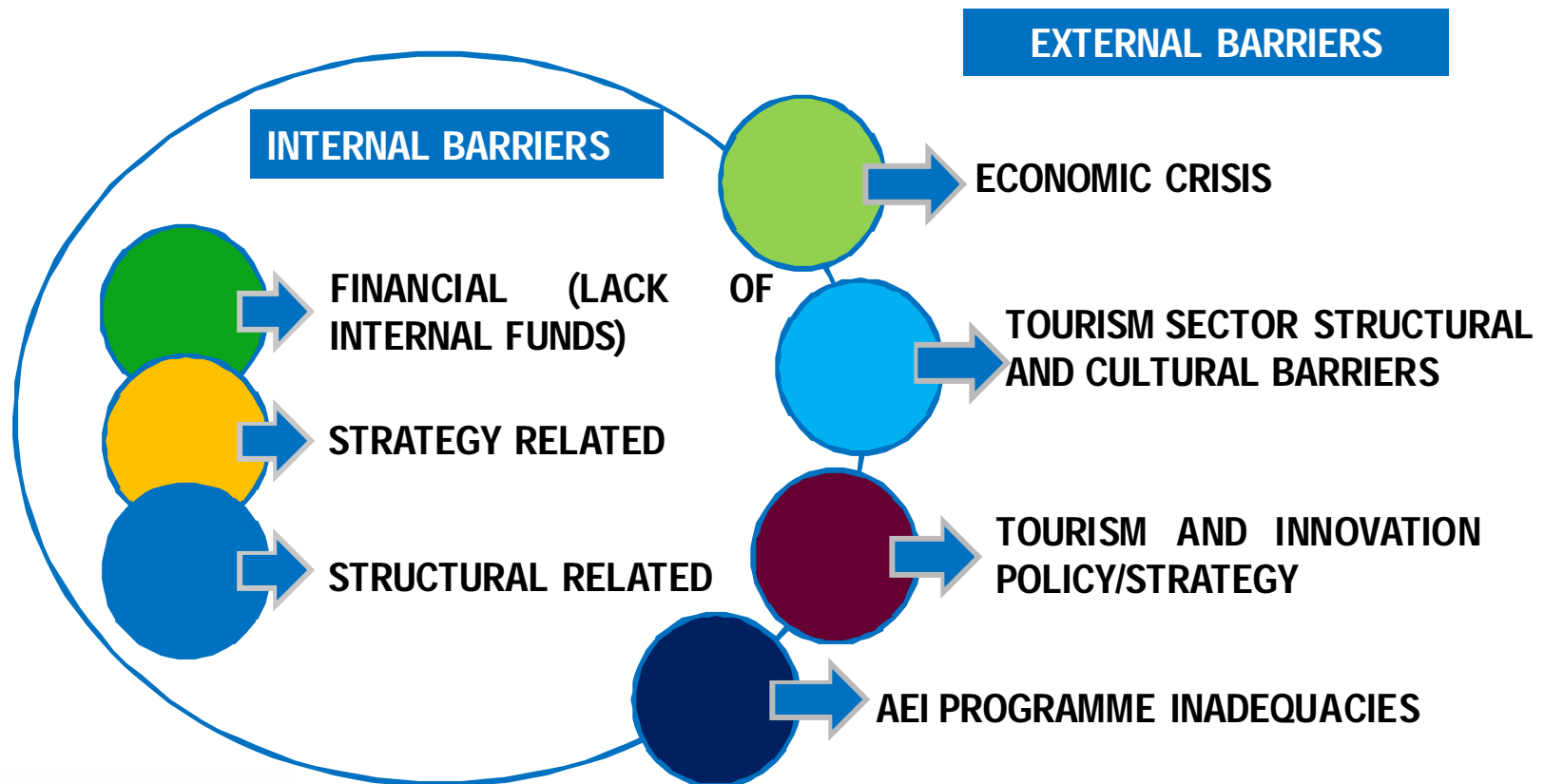
4 RESULTS

Where the cluster idea has been more effective and the innovation outcomes more successful?

- >> Resources availability**
- >> Type of innovator**
- >> Previous collaboration trajectory**
- >> Regional policies in innovation**
- >> Bottom-up impulse**

4 RESULTS

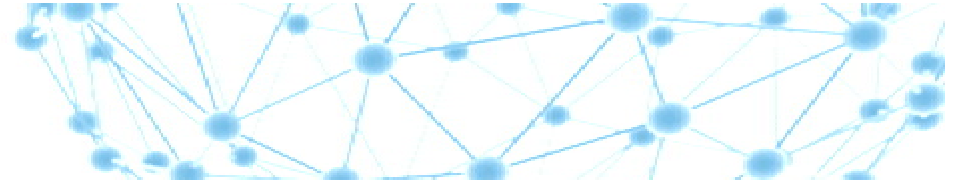
EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL BARRIERS TO INNOVATION





5 CONCLUSIONS

- » **Empirical evidence of the gap between policy theory and action (outcomes).**
- » **Policy outcomes initially disappointing but a more nuanced evaluation recognizes positive benefits overall.**
- » **Artificial clusters linked to a funding opportunity?**
- » **This policy has stimulated the propensity to innovate. After, different policies need to focus on the intensity.**
- » **Economic crisis a severe testing ground but there is a vicious circle of mutually reinforcing barriers to innovation**



Thank you very much for your attention!

Further queries:

isabel.rodriquez@ua.es



Universitat d'Alacant
Universidad de Alicante

Institut Universitari d'Investigacions Turístiques
Instituto Universitario de Investigaciones Turísticas

