



# ACCIÓ Flash Report 2021



# ACCIÓ Flash Report

## 2021

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ACCIÓ, 2022

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Barcelona, July 2022

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# Agency for Business Competitiveness (ACCIÓ)

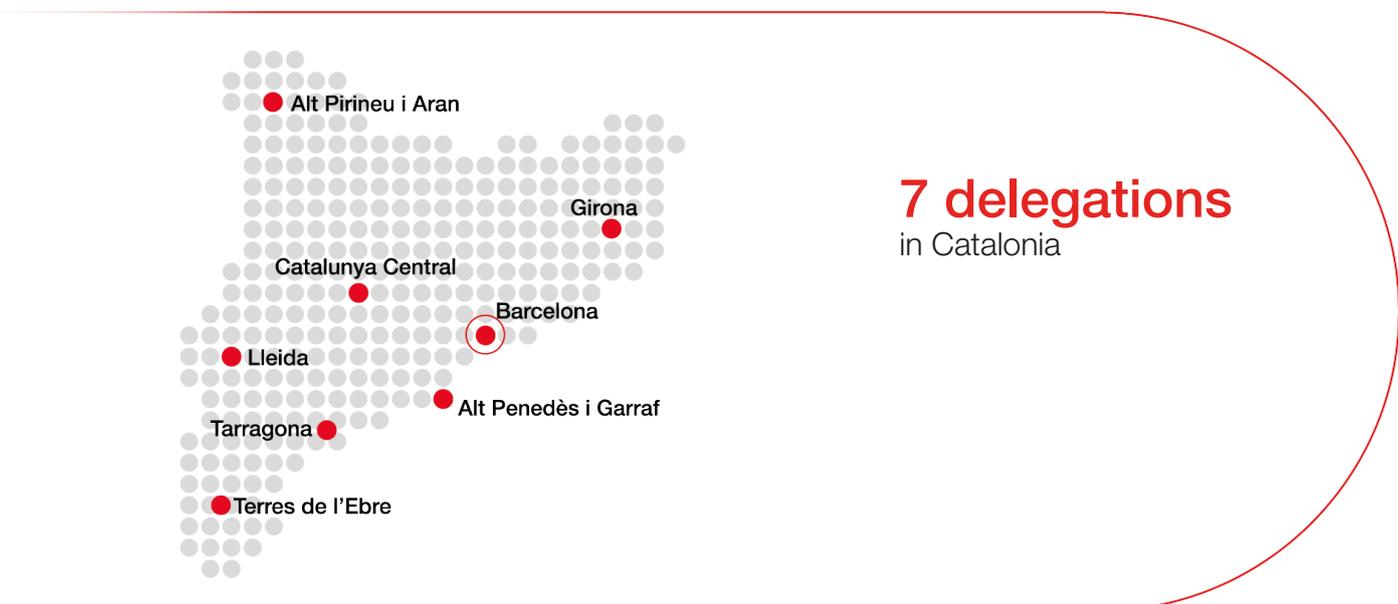


ACCIÓ is the **agency for business competitiveness of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Regional Government of Catalonia)**. Attached to the Department of Enterprise and Labour, it is the public benchmark for contributing to the transformation of Catalan companies. It boasts a network of **40 offices around the world**, **7 delegations in Catalonia** and collaborates with public and private institutions to create today the company of tomorrow.

**In 2021, the Network of Foreign Trade and Investment Offices has managed more than 2,200 projects (an all-time high)**



**More than 1,000 companies advised by the regional delegations**



## A winning combination

ACCIÓ works to ensure that companies identify changes in their environment, take advantage of them and transform themselves, while strengthening what can make them different and more competitive. This differentiation occurs fundamentally through the **key binomial** for business competitiveness: **innovation + internationalisation**.

## Shared goals

We are driven by three objectives: **to increase** the productivity of Catalan companies, **to accompany them** in their challenges of transformation and global positioning and, eventually, **to strengthen** the attractiveness of Catalonia as a destination for high added value investments. These objectives have a positive impact on economic growth and job creation.



## What do they say about us?

“

### Startup

*ACTION is a **key catalyst to grow our business**. From the outset, they have helped us with financial advice, promotion and, above all, by introducing us to clients to grow the company.*

 HumanITcare

”

“

### An SME

*ACCIÓ has given us enough confidence to **take the leap and set up a branch in Colombia**. Our experience with them has made easy what for us was highly complex. We cannot imagine exporting to a country without relying on ACCIÓ.*

 tai smart factory

”



### A Catalan multinational

*One of the keys to our continued growth is the wish to be very close to our customers and to remain competitive thanks to our constant efforts to innovate and adapt. ACCIÓ continues to be a **key tool that helps us promote and strengthen this innovation** in an increasingly changing environment.*



### A multinational established in Catalonia

***Working with Catalonia Trade & Investment has been very positive.** They advised us on the type of incentives we could get and matched them with our project.*



# Overall results 2021



**+33,000**  
customers served

**10,900**  
directly and indirectly  
generated jobs



**+19,000**  
**accompanied** projects

**+€1,300 M**  
of investment mobilised



**+3,100**  
aid applications **submitted** of

**+3,300**  
companies

**1,154**  
aid applications **approved** of

**1,350**  
companies



**€55.6 M**  
aid amount

**€1**  
of aid budget



**€488.7 M**  
of investment  
mobilised through  
aid



**€8.8**  
of investment  
mobilised through  
aid



**8.1**  
average **overall satisfaction** index  
of ACCIÓ



**+50.2**  
**ACCIÓ recommendation** index  
(Net Promoter Score)

## 2021 Awards

### fDi European Cities and Regions of the Future 2022/2023

ACCIÓ's strategy for attracting foreign investment has been recognised by the Financial Times Group as the best in the **"Major European Regions of the Future 2022-2023"** category. Barcelona's strategy has also been recognised as the best among European cities.



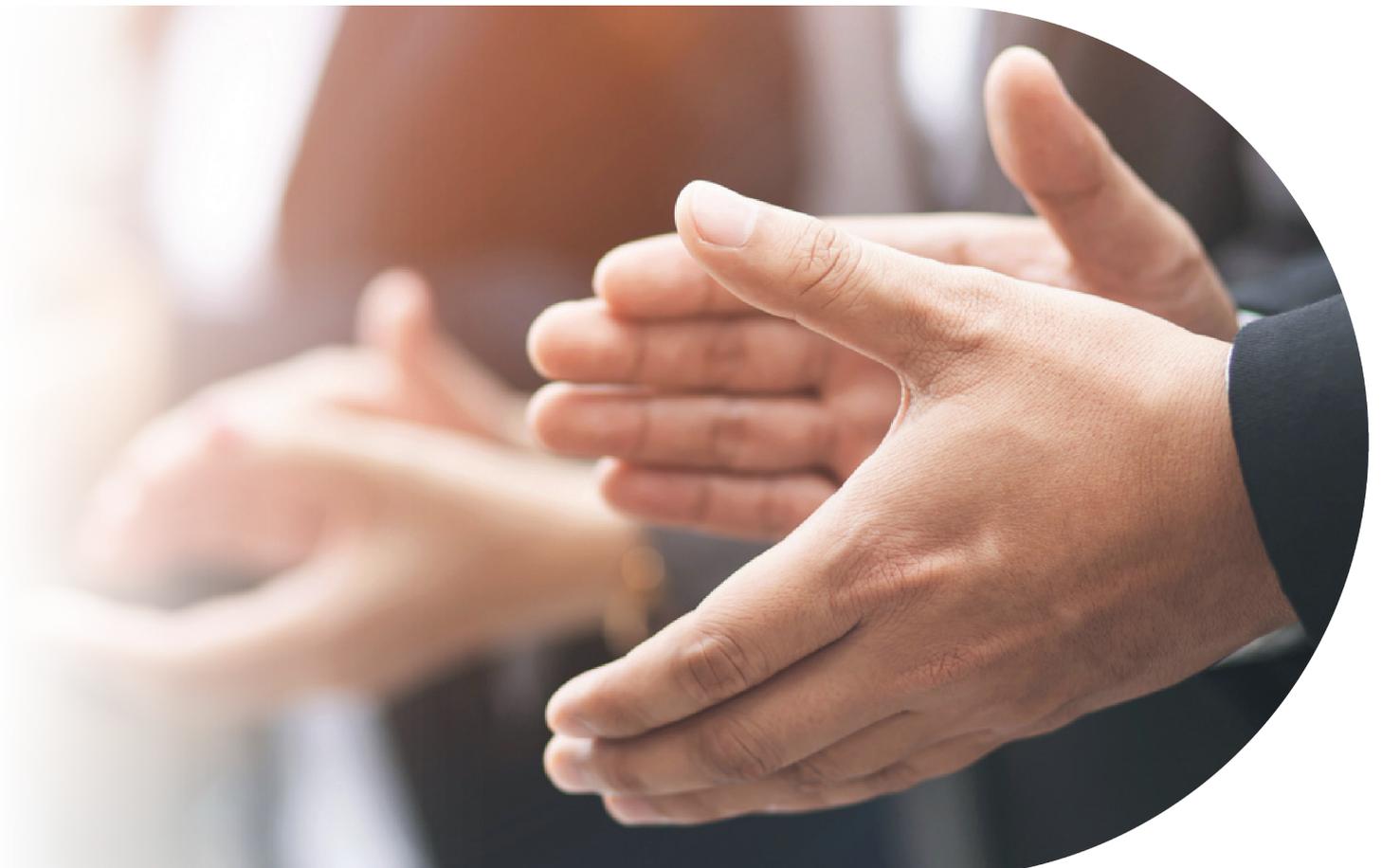
### Exo Awards

ACCIÓ, through the Catalonia Exponential programme, has won the **EXO Award** in the **Open Category** as an example of good practice in the implementation of **business transformation processes** within organisations.

 exoawards

Introducing the 2021  
ExO Transformation  
Awards!

29th July between 3pm and 7pm CEST





# ACCIÓ 2021 Impact

## Impact on R&D

**€258.5 M**

investment mobilised in private R&D  
in Catalonia

=

**12%**

of total private R&D expenditure in  
Catalonia<sup>1</sup>

## Impact of Foreign Offices

**€1**

invested in Foreign Offices

=

**€29**

in exports

**€38**

in attracting investment

<sup>1</sup> Latest data available on private R&D in Catalonia.



## Impact of ACCIÓ on Internationalisation



**€471.7 M** in exports through projects managed by ACCIÓ.



Exports of projects managed by ACCIÓ have promoted the creation of **+1,430** jobs in Catalonia.

## ACCIÓ's impact on attracting Foreign Investment



**€612 M** in foreign investment attracted to Catalonia. All-time high of investment attracted to Catalonia with ACCIÓ's support.

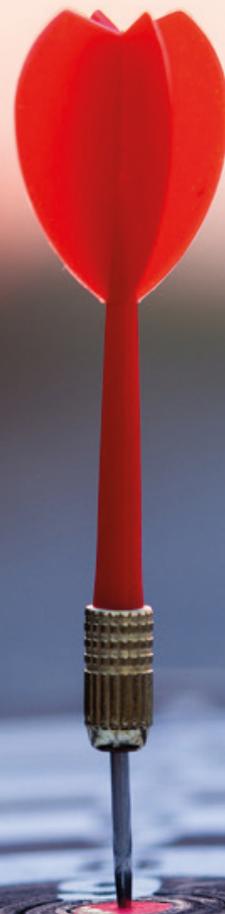


**€221** of investment attracted for every euro of the budget allocated to attracting investment.



**134** jobs created or maintained for each human resource of Catalonia Trade & Investment.

# Priority programmes and highlighted actions



In addition to its commitment to innovation and internationalisation, ACCIÓ, as a leading agency in supporting business competitiveness in Catalonia, has long been **promoting technological change and the circular economy** to transform businesses and sectors of the Catalan economy.

2021 was still very much marked by the context of change generated as a result of COVID-19. A context that makes clear the need **to move forward in order to make companies competitive** on a global scale.

Along these lines, ACCIÓ has worked throughout the year to set up programmes, instruments and services available to companies **to respond to new challenges** and **accompany businesses** in this process in order to contribute to their competitiveness.

Below are some of the most relevant results:

-  ProACCIÓ 4.0
-  ProACCIÓ Green
-  Catalonia Exponential
-  International e-Trade
-  Startups Programme
-  Next Generation EU
-  New Business Opportunities Programme
  
-  Foreign investment
-  Technical Office on Barriers to Internationalisation
-  Catalonia Clusters Programme





# ProACCIÓN 4.0

**€6 M**

in aid for the digital  
transformation of SMEs

In 2021, the first stage of **ProACCIÓ 4.0**, a programme aimed at accompanying Catalan small and medium-sized companies in their technological transformation process, with special emphasis on their digitisation.

This programme consists of various actions, from **training courses** for managers to **specific support in defining a digital transformation plan**. It also includes direct aid to facilitate the diagnosis of the necessary technologies and their implementation.

In 2021:

**+400**

digitised Catalan SMEs

**+70**

professionals trained in advanced Industry 4.0 technologies

**+260**

accredited 4.0 technology providers

## Programme recognised as a good public policy practice

The **ProACCIÓ 4.0** programme has been recognised by the **European Commission** as a **good public policy practice in the acceleration of Catalonia's innovative ecosystem** and the transformation of SMEs towards Industry 4.0.

**The programme has incorporated an Advanced Diagnosis 4.0 method** that offers the possibility of drawing up a digital transformation plan for the company in four stages: description, inspiration, vision and action.

Each stage consists of **tools and activities to help companies** carry out the digital transformation.

This method has been developed by ACCIÓ together with a working group made up of **industrial companies**, organisations such as the **Association of Industrial Engineers of Catalonia**, **Eurecat** and **approved consultants in Industry 4.0**.



# ProACCIÓN Green

Launch of a new programme  
to fight climate change

Tackling climate change is another need that has been focused on in 2021. With this goal in mind, the **ProACCIÓ Green** programme promotes **business innovation** as one of the major levers of change to fight climate change. It does so by placing sustainability as one of the strategic axes to guarantee the company's competitiveness.

**+1,300**

companies and organisations have been impacted through the different sessions and activities framed within the initiative.

The programme consists of the following:



**Direct aid** for the development of innovation and R&D projects related to the fields of energy and waste.



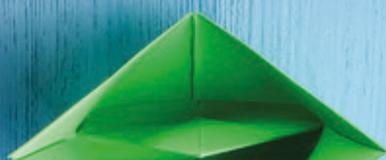
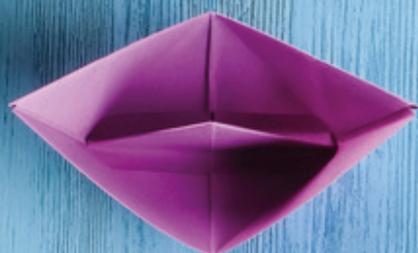
**Awareness-raising workshops** with examples of success stories in the circular economy.



Specific **training and advice**.

These actions aim to ensure that Catalan SMEs carry out processes of **technological transformation** and **disruption** in the field of climate emergency, thereby setting up technological projects that contribute to climate neutrality.

The **ProACCIÓ Green** programme is aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and the policies promoted by the European Commission.



# Catalonia Exponential

**€1 M**

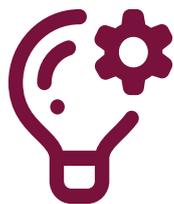
to promote disruptive  
business projects

Disruption is here to stay and, in 2021, ACCIÓ has promoted the first call for business disruption grants, which has included projects working in areas such as **artificial intelligence, blockchain and robotics**.

This year was the first time that a line of aid focused on disruptive projects that generate a positive impact on society has been launched.

The grants have been allocated to the **development, evolution or pilot testing** of new initiatives that may represent a change in the reality of the sector or the creation of new industries.

**70 projects** have been promoted along the following lines:



**21**

projects for new disruptive initiatives, aimed at **encouraging the company's entrepreneurial capacity and its culture of experimentation** to generate new disruptive initiatives through business transformation methods.



**21**

projects for the evolution of disruptive initiatives **to experiment, evolve and mature** an existing disruptive idea until it finds its place in the market.



**28**

startup/company collaboration projects, aimed at validating the product, service or technology by conducting **pilot tests to obtain a minimum viable product** and test it.

All projects involve the **use of exponential technologies**, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, 5G/Connectivity, blockchain, Cloud/Edge, additive manufacturing (3D), virtual reality, robotics, photonics, quantum or cybersecurity.

The grants for business disruption are part of the **Catalonia Exponential** initiative, launched by ACCIÓ in January 2019 to accompany companies and organisations in the need for transformation in the face of disruptive changes in the environment caused mainly by exponential technologies, as well as by global challenges, such as climate change.

**75% of those attending Exponential Day #3** believe that the event will help them introduce changes in their company.

**25 disruptive companies** participating in the second edition of **Catalonia Exponential Leaders**.

A composite image featuring a globe with a white network overlay of dots and lines, a pair of glasses, and a tablet. The globe is the central focus, with the network overlay suggesting global connectivity. The glasses and tablet are positioned in the foreground, adding a professional and technological context.

# International eTrade

**More than €1 M**  
in aid for online  
internationalisation

The context of the pandemic has accelerated the upward trend in **e-commerce**, with almost a quarter of Catalan companies introducing e-commerce services throughout 2020.

To boost online internationalisation, ACCIÓ has continued to work during 2021 through the **International eTrade** programme, which offers support in the development of **strategic plans and the introduction into marketplaces**, as well as **specific help lines** for diagnosis and implementation.

In 2021:

**101**

approved coupon projects

**45**

approved implementation projects

**+€1.1 M**

of investment generated by implementation projects

With a maximum of **10,000 euros** per project, these grants can be used to **promote digital growth plans, marketing actions and international advertising campaigns** or to **finance intangible assets**, such as the purchase of software licenses to analyse their digital competitors in foreign markets.

**+2,200**

companies participating in the International eTrade programme

**75%**

of companies participating in the training module believe the programme helps them increase overall sales

Nearly **450 attendees** at the **28th edition of Internationalisation Week**, which focused on **e-commerce** and **digitalisation**.

A person's hand is shown drawing a glowing blue rocket and several upward-pointing arrows on a transparent surface. The rocket is the central focus, with a bright light at its tip. The arrows are of varying heights and are also glowing. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green foliage.

# Startups Programme

**€1.8 M**

earmarked as aid for the  
initial stages of startups

Catalonia is a **consolidated startup hub**. In fact, it is the **5th startup hub in the European Union** and the **first in Southern Europe**.

With the aim of strengthening this position, raising startups and projects with high growth potential and increasing the ecosystem's international connections, in 2021 **support for entrepreneurial projects** has been intensified through ACCIÓ's Startup Capital grants. This line supports startups in the creation stage, i.e. the most crucial stage of their growth, and brings them closer to the first customers and private funding rounds.

In 2021:

**25 projects**

which have involved

**€3.6 M**

of investment mobilised through Startup Capital grants

The beneficiaries have been **startups that are less than 18 months old**, established by entrepreneurs and which, until applying for aid, had not received previous funding in excess of **250,000 euros**. The initiative helps to ensure the survival of projects in their initial stages, so that they can validate their technology.

This aid helps to finance personnel costs, patent applications or maintenance, material or equipment or the hiring of services, among others, hence providing support in the initial stages of projects, where the risk is very high.

## Leaders in startups

In 2021, Catalonia had



**1,900**

startups, **11%** more than the previous year

All of them employ



**19,300**

people

It is an ecosystem in full swing, in a year where they have set an all-time high of



**€1,479 M**

of investment



**47% of startups**

work with  
**deep tech**

The **ACCIÓ Startup Forum** event connected investors and startups within the framework of **Tech Spirit Barcelona**: in the "**Startups to Funding**" session **more than 500 meetings** between entrepreneurs and the **60 most representative investors** in Catalonia were held.

A photograph of several European Union flags flying in front of a modern, multi-story building with a glass facade. The flags are arranged in a row, with the EU flag being the most prominent. The building has a curved facade and a grid of windows. The sky is clear and blue.

# Next Generation EU

The gateway to the largest  
European funding in history  
for Catalan companies

In the post-pandemic context, the **Next Generation EU funds**, endowed with **750,000 million euros for the period 2021-2026**, are a huge opportunity for social and economic transformation. To coordinate the opportunity that these grants represent for Catalan companies, in 2021 ACCIÓ has created the **Next Generation Office**.

Main functions of the NGEU Office:

-  **Inform** about open calls (webinars, sessions ...)
-  **Identify** potential projects
-  **Accompany** calls for proposals
-  **Coordinate** consortia

The aim of this initiative is to help Catalan companies attract **more than 20% of the Next Generation funds allocated to companies in Spain**. To make this possible, ACCIÓ performs a **monitoring** and **support** role in companies, so that they can prepare and apply for the different lines of aid.

Likewise, in order to provide advice in areas of state competence, an **office has been opened in Madrid** to provide ongoing support to Catalan companies in the application process for Next Generation calls for proposals that are published.

Since the opening of the office in November 2021

**+1,700**  
applications received

**+700**  
Catalan companies have submitted project proposals

## Flagship projects led by ACCIÓ within the framework of the Next Generation Catalonia Plan



Battery Hub



Mobility of the future: connected, smart and autonomous



Urban Tech Hubs



Hydrogen Valley of Catalonia (H2ValleyCAT)



Carbon Recovery



Digital and technological transformation of Catalan industry



# New Business Opportunities Programme

**More than €1 M**  
in aid to transform  
business models and boost  
shared value

The world does not stand still and neither can companies. In order to help them redefine or promote new lines of business, in 2021 ACCIÓ has promoted **aid lines of up to 30,000 euros** per company aimed at **companies that start an unusual activity** for the company or that **promote an existing activity** that could constitute, in the future, an important business line.

In total, in 2021:

**51**  
approved projects

**€1.1 M**  
of total amount

**€1.6 M**  
of investment mobilised

Examples of new business opportunities:



Sector diversification



Integration with distribution channels



Creation of a new range of products with higher added value



Access to markets in other business areas

This action also aims to focus on the capacity to generate **shared value**, i.e. to incorporate social and environmental criteria into the **new business strategy** beyond those strictly linked to financial profitability, thus making it possible to have a positive impact not only on customers, but also in society.



# Foreign investment

**€612 M**

of foreign investment attracted in 2021, the highest figure in the historical series

In a context which was still affected by the pandemic, in 2021, Catalonia Trade & Investment – ACCIÓ's area responsible for attracting and managing foreign investment for the Generalitat – attracted **82 foreign investment projects** (7% more in year-on-year terms), which led to the creation of **3,211 jobs** (+37%) and the maintenance of **2,471 additional jobs** (+116%). This figure is **28%** higher than that of the previous year and the highest in the historical series, which starts off in 1985.

## Evolution and impact of the investment volume

The volume of foreign investment attracted by ACCIÓ in the last five years (2017-2021) has exceeded

**€2,000 M**

31% more than the previous five-year period (2012-2016)

In the last five years,

**27,444**

jobs have been created thanks to the investments of **multinationals** in Catalonia

For every euro of budget allocated to this area in 2021,

**€221**

of **private investment** by international companies have been attracted

**134**

**jobs created** for each Catalonia Trade & Investment employee

**75%**

of the companies that have invested in Catalonia in 2021 say they plan **to invest there again** in the future

## Some project highlights



## Foreign offices as a way of entry

ACCIÓ's Foreign Offices are leading the **way in terms of project entry**:

**25**

**realised projects**

**31%**

**of total realised projects**

# Graphical summary

## Realised investment projects

**82**  
realised projects

**3,122**  
jobs created

**2,471**  
additional jobs  
maintained

## Greenfield investment

**37%**  
of the realised projects have been investments by companies with no previous presence in Catalonia

## Main foreign investors in Catalonia (in terms of number of realised projects with the support of Catalonia Trade & Investment)



### United States and Germany

with **16%** of the total number of projects each



### United Kingdom

with **12%** of the total number of projects



### France

with **11%** of the total number of projects

## Main projects by value chain



Manufacturing  
(32%)



Information and communication technologies (ICT)  
(27%)



R&D  
(12%)

## Main projects by sector



ICT and digital transformation  
and car and engine  
(19%)



Chemistry and plastics  
(13%)



Pharmaceutical industry  
(8%)

## Managed investment projects

**574**

projects managed by Catalonia Trade & Investment

**525**

open investment projects. All-time high in terms of projects in the pipeline



# Technical Office on Barriers to Internationalisation

Support to solve queries or issues and import and export procedures, both at origin and destination

To accompany companies and support them with regard to those obstacles and doubts that arise when exporting and doing business abroad, the **Technical Office on Barriers to Internationalisation** has become a one-stop shop for **fast resolution of queries** (within 48 hours) **and needs** arising from the international business process.

In 2021, the following results stand out:

**1,894**

queries resolved

**565**

companies served

**17**

business projects managed

**17**

technical sessions with

**2,070**

participating companies

## Catalonia Trade Portal

Throughout the year, this service has been complemented by the **Catalonia Trade Portal**, a digital platform that tracks **more than 800 documentary sources from around the world** and immediately offers **more than 30 types of information resources** that facilitate international business processes.

**30,417**

online queries generated through the portal

## International trade alert service

In 2021, a new **alert service** was launched with the aim of informing companies about **new regulations, agreements, protectionist measures and rules** for doing international business that may affect companies.

**30**

international trade alerts have been performed



# Catalonia Clusters Programme

**More than €2 M**  
in aid to strengthen  
competitiveness

The **Catalonia Clusters Programme** brings together all the actions around business associations and organisations, grouped by different value chains. It currently includes:

**25**  
clusters that gather  
**2,300**  
members and  
**€69,000 M**  
in aggregate turnover

During 2021, grants for initiatives to strengthen competitiveness have enabled the implementation of:

**21**  
projects to consolidate cluster structures with  
**+€1.1 M**  
mobilised

**47**  
development and innovation projects with  
**€3.1 M**  
mobilised

In 2021, the creation of the **ICT Tourism cluster** and the **waste cluster** was promoted.

Another pillar of the Catalonia Clusters Programme is the **generation of shared value**, which aims to reconcile the creation of economic business value with that of value for the well-being of society.

In 2021:



**10**  
awareness-raising sessions



**+200**  
attendees



**12**  
activities in three pilot tests to apply the method B Corp

86% of those attending the 1st edition of **Clusters Day**, dedicated to **shared value**, have a clearer vision of corporate sustainability.





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