

Enabling rural businesses to thrive

Rural Pact Conference

17 September 2025

Crispin Waymouth, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs



Business and SME support

EEN

World's largest SME support network

- 365mEUR over MFF
- 600 business support organisations in 60 countries
- 20%+ average increase in revenues

EYE

Exchange programme for new entrepreneurs

- 80mEUR over MFF
- 13 000 exchanges since 2009
- 43 countries involved

ECCP

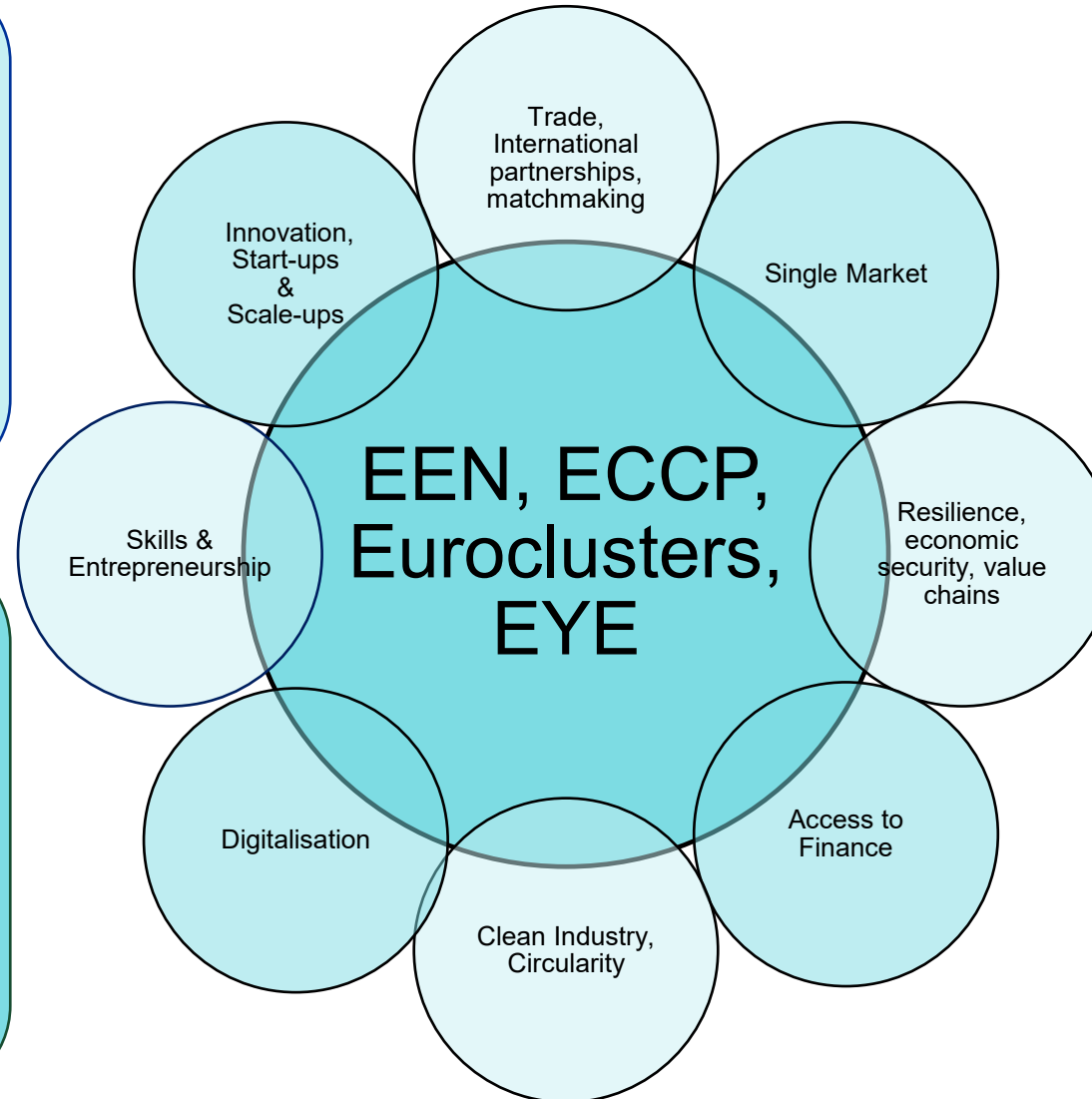
Connecting clusters

- 19mEUR over MFF
- Over 1500 cluster organisations
- 140,000 SMEs
- 16,000 large enterprises

Euroclusters

Building EU value chains

- 84mEUR over MFF
- 75% directly to SMEs
- 1st Call: 30 projects with 160 partners from 23 countries
- 30mEUR distributed to about 1800 SMEs



Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

- ▶ Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) is an international business exchange programme between new and experienced entrepreneurs
- ▶ New or potential entrepreneurs gather and exchange knowledge and business ideas with an experienced entrepreneur **abroad**, with whom they collaborate for a period of **1 to 6 months**
- ▶ The stay is **partly financed** by the European Commission



Enterprise Europe Network

581

Business Support Organisations

53

countries in Europe and beyond

€182.5

Millions for 3 years

+260K

Companies supported
every year
since 2008

97%

of our clients rate our support as **fast**,
efficient and **tailored**

91%

of our clients say our services
accurately **match** their **business needs**

83%

of our clients looking to
expand globally say we
helped make it happen

21%

average **increase in revenues**
reported by individual clients **on a**
yearly basis

6

created jobs reported by individual
clients **on a yearly basis**, on average

Activities & Priorities



Sustainability



Digitalisation



Single Market



Research and
innovation



Access to finance



Start-ups & scale-
ups



Business
Partnering



Internationalisation



Value Chain
Resilience

Importance and impact of clusters

Clusters driving competitiveness

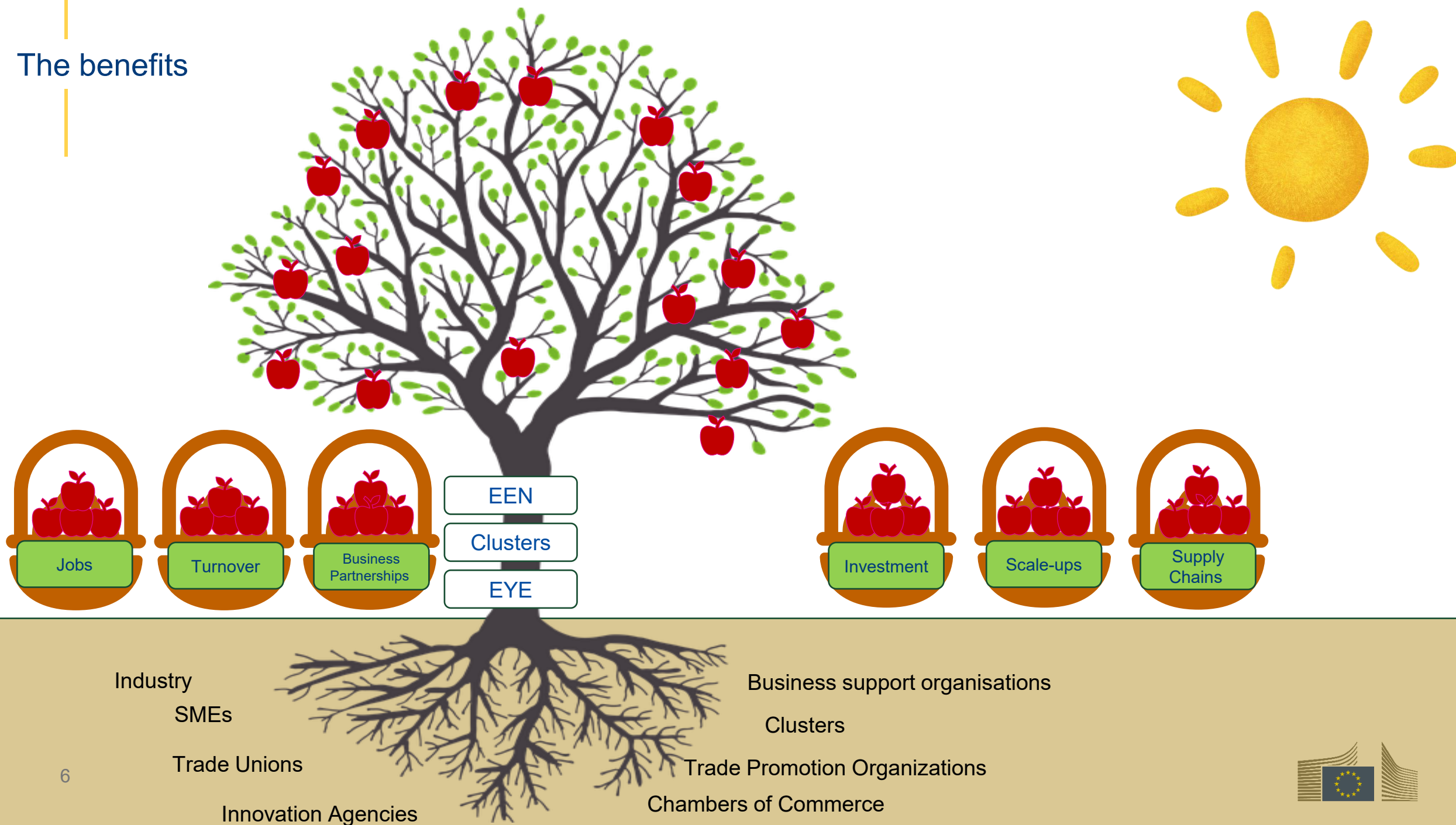


- Employment rate
- Birth of enterprises
- Investment in R&D
- Patent per capita
- Growth of regional GDP
- Higher productivity
- Building value chains

Support to clusters - examples

- EU and international matchmakings (focus on all sectors, also AgriFood)
- Cluster meet Regions (e.g. event in Cluj-Napoca also focused on how education, research, and regional branding can work to safeguard food heritage and promote rural development)

The benefits



The rural dimension and impact

- Very useful for rural entrepreneurs:
 - Dedicated advice;
 - Finding partners;
 - Innovation support;
 - Access to funding;
 - Entrepreneurship and skills
- Sector-specific actions:
 - Agrifood;
 - Tourism;
 - Renewable Energy
 - Craft industries



Thank you



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