

FOSTERING CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR EUROPEAN SMEs



A 2026 snapshot of sustainability action across 11 EU countries, based on survey data from 1,110 SMEs interviewed by the SDA Bocconi Sustainability Lab

SUSTAINABILITY ADOPTION REMAINS RESILIENT AMONG SMEs

41% of SMEs RESILIENT SUSTAINABILITY ADOPTION

4 out of 10 European SMEs already have, or will soon implement, a sustainability strategy.

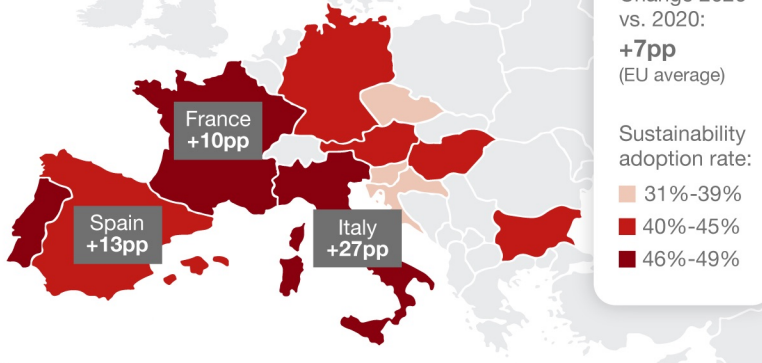
SIZE MATTERS: % OF SMEs THAT HAVE ALREADY OR WILL SOON ADOPT A SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY BY COMPANY SIZE



Larger firms lead adoption, reflecting a link between scale and sustainability engagement.

■ Micro ■ Small ■ Medium

CONVERGENCE CONTINUES WITH STANDOUT MOVERS



THE BUSINESS CASE FOR SUSTAINABILITY HAS MATURED

68% of SMEs INCREASED COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

say that adopting a sustainability plan has given them a competitive advantage

62% of SMEs BETTER INSURANCE CONDITIONS

indicate better insurance conditions from adopting a sustainability plan

57% of SMEs BETTER CREDIT CONDITIONS

identify better credit conditions as a benefit of adopting a sustainability plan

CLIMATE RISK RISES BUT THE PROTECTION GAP REMAINS WIDE

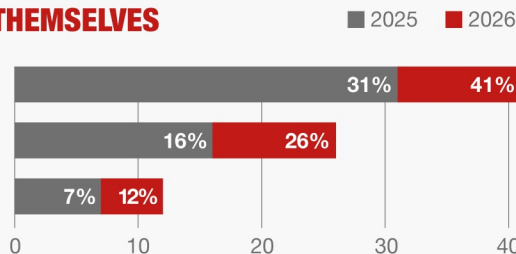
RIISING CLIMATE RISK AWARENESS

55% of SMEs

report being aware of climate change risks

HOW SMEs PROTECT THEMSELVES

Insurance against damages from extreme climate events
Business interruption insurance
Public-private partnerships for climate risk management



PERSISTENT PROTECTION GAP

59% of SMEs

remain unprotected against natural catastrophes

BARRIERS SHIFT: RULES AND INCENTIVES NOW SET THE PACE

% OF SMEs INDICATING BARRIERS AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT

Lack of institutional support (bureaucracy, regulatory complexity)
Lack of public incentives
Lack of a clear legislative framework
Lack of economic/financial resources
Lack of internal skills and competencies



The perceived barriers to sustainability for European SMEs are shifting. While financial (46%) and internal capacity constraints (39%) have become less pressing, perceived obstacles are increasingly external in nature. Today, 53–56% of SMEs identify complex regulation, bureaucracy, limited public incentives, and lack of a clear legislative framework as the main barriers to further sustainability progress.

WHAT POLICYMAKERS CAN DO



1. Deliver size-sensitive regulatory simplification while integrating risk awareness more effectively into public planning
2. Strengthen EU and national incentives targeting firms approaching sustainability adoption, and link support to risk reduction
3. Promote the sustainability business case among SMEs

WHAT THE FINANCIAL SECTOR CAN DO



1. Translate sustainability performance into financial access
2. Address the climate protection gap through innovative risk-transfer solutions
3. Act as transition partners with structured advisory services and SME-specific engagement strategies