2025

Eurochambres Economic Survey

Table of Contents

FOREWORD

The Eurochambres Economic Survey 2025 (EES2025) comes at a crucial juncture, on the cusp of a new EU term that is – in line with the chamber network's demands – set to attach greater importance on reviving Europe's growth.

The high-level reports on the future of the Single Market and the future of Europe's competitiveness, authored by Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi respectively, diagnose the challenge in detail and provide the basis for EU policymakers for the coming years. Europe's lack of competitiveness is the result of a steady decline in productivity levels. Inadequacy in investment opportunities and an oppressive over complex regulatory framework continue to hold back European businesses, compared to their counterparts in the US, China and emerging economies. It goes without saying that the European business community is critical to reversing this trend.

While volatile energy prices seem to have become a new normal for business owners, structural challenges continue to weigh heavily on entrepreneurs' capacity to hire, invest, and expand their activities, as suggested by the EES2025. Moreover, new legislation, when drafted without smaller businesses in mind, results in a heavy burden for entrepreneurs that further stifles their growth potential. To avoid the build-up of unnecessary reporting obligations on businesses, it is critical to systematically involve the business community in the process of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of legislation.

EES2025 findings are based on almost 42.000 replies from businesses in 27 European countries. Policymakers should remain acutely aware of the business community's cautious optimism, tempered by an ongoing sense of uncertainty about the economic outlook. The EU institutions and member states must thus redouble their efforts to ensure that favourable conditions are in place for businesses of all sectors and sizes, that access to European and international markets is increased, and that the skills mismatch in the labour market is urgently closed.

With the EES2025 findings serving as a reminder of what is at stake in the real economy, Eurochambres invites the EU and national leaders to deliver decisive measures to uphold Europe's competitiveness and ensure a favourable economic framework for millions of entrepreneurs across Europe.

Vladimír Dlouhý
President of Eurochambres

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Eurochambres Economic Survey report is only the tip of the iceberg, with the contribution of the European network of chambers of commerce and industry being the much larger and vital part of it. We would like to warmly thank colleagues from the chamber network for contributing to the realisation of the EES2025. Please find a full list of the EES2025 national coordinators in the annex.

Eurochambres would also like to extend its gratitude to the 41.941 entrepreneurs who responded to the EES2025 questionnaire. By operating at every level, be it local, regional, national, or international, European businesses ensure the resilience of the overall European economy and its positioning in an increasingly competitive landscape.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite improving macroeconomic policy conditions including lower inflation, growing consumer confidence, and a certain level of progress in securing supply chains in strategic sectors, the fallout from the war in Ukraine still dampens Europe's economic performance. Indeed, although our analysis points to less negative expectations for the year ahead compared to the previous EES edition, Europe's growth potential is hindered by various factors that need to be addressed by policy-makers at EU and national level.

While expectations on export sales and business confidence are projected to see slight, marginal improvements over the next twelve months, they remain negative overall. The weak performance observed in other EES indicators, such as employment and investment levels, can be partially attributed to tight labour market conditions and rising employment-related costs, such as those associated with the social security system. Finally, even though national sales projections for the coming year remain positive, they are not anticipated to significantly exceed levels registered in previous years, contributing to the overall cautiously restrained outlook.

A similar picture is also reflected among the main challenges that entrepreneurs will face in 2025, with labour costs and the lack of skilled workforce on the higher steps of the podium. The third main challenge – regulatory burden – reflects entrepreneurs' awareness of new regulatory requirements that will directly or indirectly affect their business or sector in the coming months and years. As Europe struggles to become a front-runner in the digital and green transition, our findings point to a lack of appetite from the business owner's perspective for investments in technology and energy efficiency. Mandatory compliance with new regulations further erodes the profitability of smaller businesses, which are often confronted with the interpretation of new laws, before even starting to comply with it.

ABOUT THE EES2025

The Eurochambres Economic Survey 2025 represents the thirty-second consecutive edition of an annual assessment coordinated by Eurochambres with the support of its European network of chambers of commerce and industry. The new EES edition is based on the cooperation of 27 national chambers of commerce and industry and almost 42.000 European businesses, a large majority of which are SMEs. Responses from entrepreneurs were collected and aggregated using random and representative sampling techniques, that account for the size, sector, and region.

European entrepreneurs were asked to answer a harmonised and concise questionnaire during the autumn of 2024. The survey included six questions in the form of multiple choice. Questions 1 to 5 relate to key business indicators (domestic sales, exports, employment, investment, and business confidence level). Respondents were asked to indicate if an “increase”, “decrease” or “constant” level is expected for 2025 with respect to the five indicators. Question 6 investigates the main challenges for businesses, with respondents asked to provide a maximum of three answers among the six options.

Box 1. Interpretation of the EES Index

The initial national index is calculated for each country as the percentage of “increase” minus the percentage of “decrease”, all divided by the percentage of “constant”. Afterwards, the EES Index is computed by weighing the results according to the country’s economic dimension measured by its nominal GDP, its share of the total GDP of all selected economies participating in the survey, and the number of businesses surveyed. The EES Index is interpreted as follows:

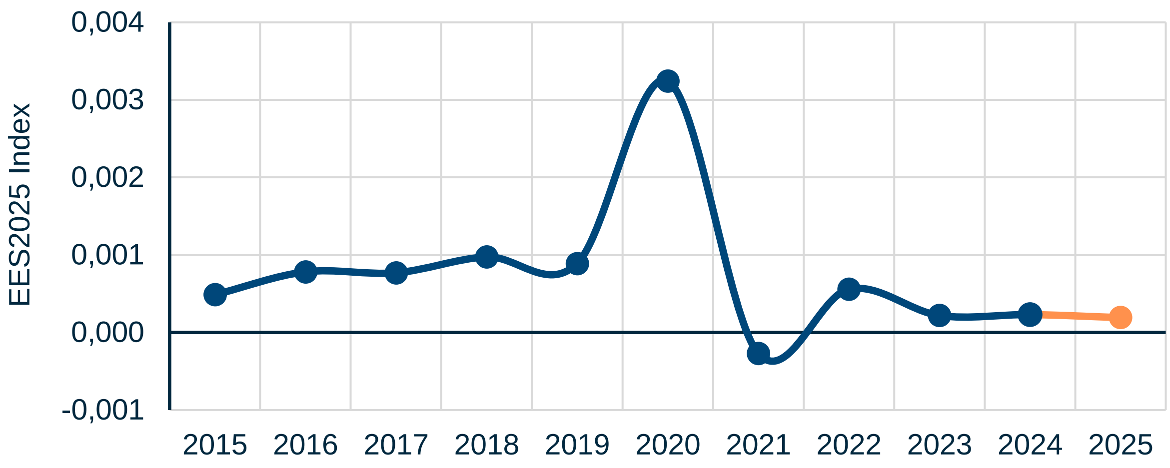
- **EES Index 2025 > EES Index 2024** – Participants expect the trend to increase in comparison to the current year
- **EES Index 2025 = EES Index 2024** – Participants expect the trend to be the same as in the current year
- **EES Index 2025 < EES Index 2024** – Participants expect the trend to decrease in comparison to the current year

The zero on the horizontal axis provides an indication of the long-term average of expectations. The EES Index, as a pure value, does not represent a percentage of respondents. Instead, it is interpreted as the following: if the score is higher than a given year, it means that more people believe that results for next year will increase and vice-versa. The variation of the index across the years therefore provides a clearer understanding of the businesses’ sentiment for 2025. Further information can be found in the “Methodology” section at the end of the report.

1. National sales

National sales are expected to remain broadly stable in 2025, continuing on a positive, although not increasing, trend. The lack of significant improvement is a consequence of weak domestic demand, motivated by high consumer savings intentions. While inflation is slowly easing and consumer prices are gradually falling, they are still at an all-time high, justifying households' preference for savings over consumption. Indeed, despite rising disposable incomes, EU savings rates have notably exceeded pre-pandemic levels[1]. Overall, while consumer confidence appears to be ameliorating as a result of lowering inflation rates, it may take longer than anticipated for the economy to reach the demand levels necessary to sustain a consumption-led recovery and the consequent increase in national sales.

Figure 1. Trend of expected revenue from National Sales Index



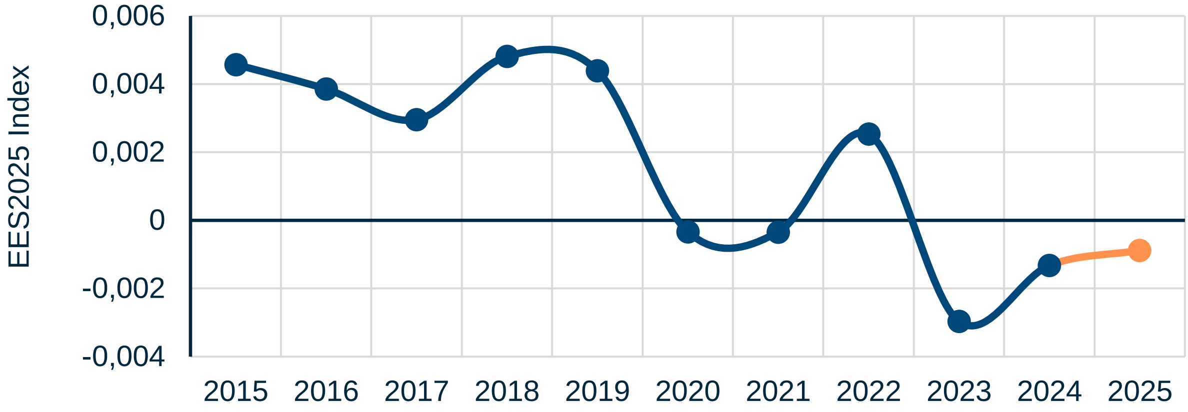
2. Export sales

While expectations for export sales in Europe remain below their long-term average, they are less negative compared to last year, indicating a tentative recovery in international as well as intra-European trade. The trend aligns with higher-than-expected net exports recorded in the first half of 2024, which have strengthened future projections of EU foreign demand[2]. On the one hand, this is due to the slow re-adjustment of global trade. Declining savings rates in key EU trade partners such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland also contribute to increasing foreign demand for European goods and services. On the other hand, trade within the EU is a further considerable driver of demand and impacts expectations of future exports. In 2023, intra-EU trade of goods was higher than extra-EU trade for all but two EU countries, underscoring the role of the single market as a source of economic growth and prosperity in the EU[3]. Nevertheless, ongoing geopolitical tensions and widespread uncertainty continue to weigh on the expected export levels, keeping them significantly below pre-2019 levels.

---

[1] Eurostat recorded EU household savings rate at 15.7% in Q2 2024 - an increase from the previous quarter (15.2%) as well from pre-pandemic levels, where it stood at around 12%.
[2] Compared to June 2024 forecasts, the ECB's September 2024 projections for net exports in the Euro area have been revised by a +0.3%.
[3] According to Eurostat data, Ireland (42%) and Cyprus (22%) are the only countries whose intra-EU trade of goods in 2023 was below 50% of their total trade level.

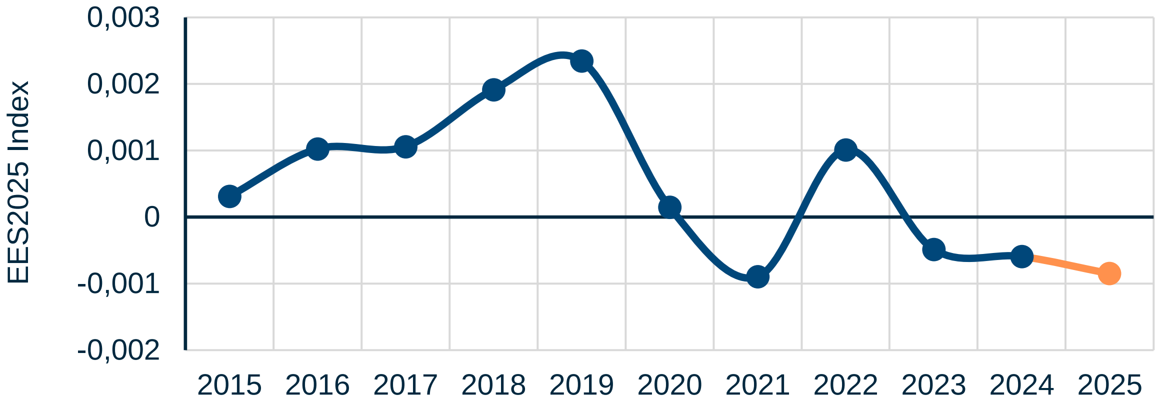
Figure 2. Trend of expected revenue from Export Sales Index



3. Employment

Expectations for employment in 2025 remain rather grim, with a further slight decrease in the EES Employment Index, compared to last year. This result can be ascribed to challenges faced by specific sectors such as transport, agriculture, and manufacturing[4]. More broadly speaking, energy-intensive industries have been significantly affected by supply chain disruptions and rising energy costs in recent years, resulting in continued financial burdens and employment stagnation, negatively impacting future expectations. Additionally, structural challenges related to a lack of skilled workforce complicate the employment outlook for EU businesses, while rising labour costs further limit companies' willingness to hire. Under current conditions, European businesses are expected to be less inclined to bear the costs of labour in the upcoming year.

Figure 3. Trend of expected Employment Index



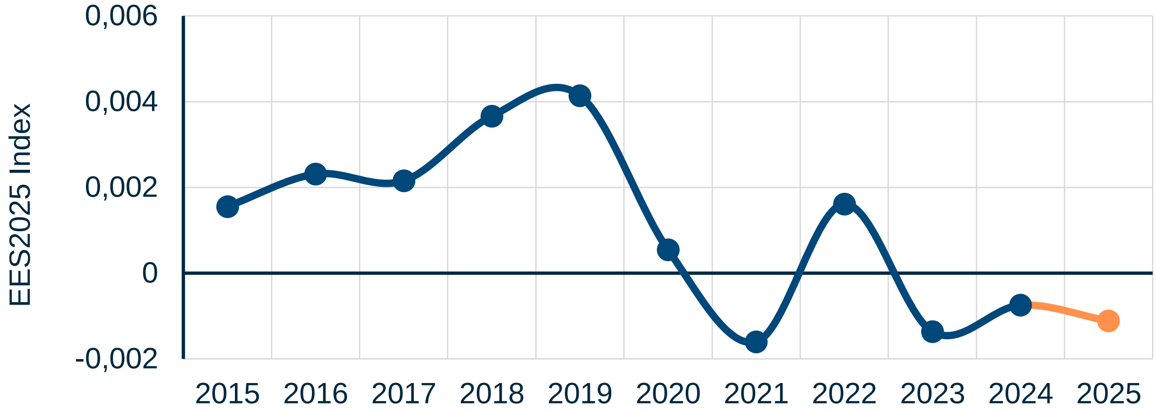
4. Investment

Investment expectations for 2025 remain overall weak, despite their potential relevance in driving the EU's economic recovery. Political instability and ongoing financial volatility partly explain this finding. At the same time, tight monetary policy increases businesses' cost of finance, hindering their willingness to invest. This is especially true for SMEs, who repeatedly experience difficulties in accessing finance. Results from the European Central Bank 2023 Survey on Access to Finance of Enterprises (SAFE) corroborate this

[4] The European Commission's "Labour market and wage developments in Europe 2023" report shows that the high-energy category registered the worst performance, with 2023 levels of employment being 3% lower than their pre-pandemic counterparts.

interpretation by identifying high prices and interest rates as the number one barrier to medium-term investment and growth for 34% of surveyed SMEs – a stark increase from the 10% registered in 2021. Furthermore, high administrative costs coming from increased regulations represent an additional barrier to investment. Lastly, lower firm profits and liquidity, usually critical drivers of private business investment, were reportedly low in recent quarters, contributing to the weak expectations for investments in 2025[5].

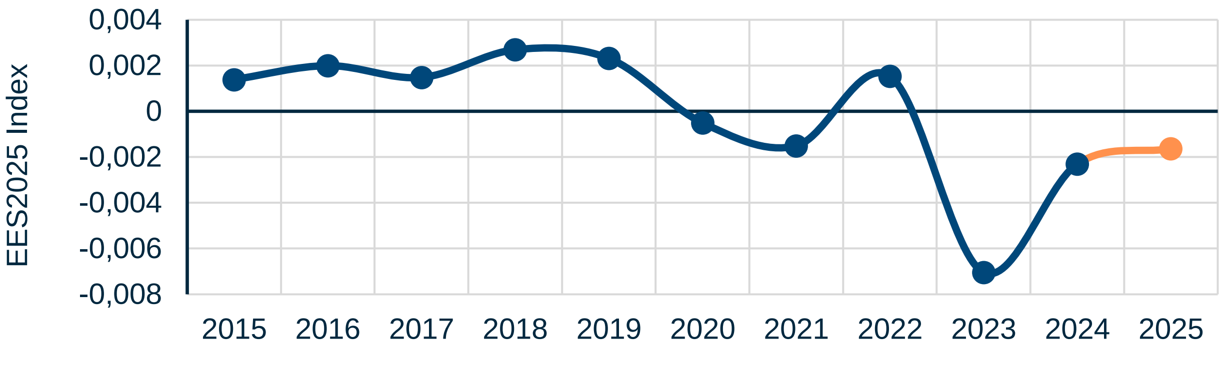
Figure 4. Trend of expected Investments Index



5. Business confidence

Business confidence expectations for 2025 have marginally improved compared to the previous year, yet are still negative. The result reflects the generally turbulent economic outlook and the cautious response of European businesses. In such nebulous circumstances, where domestic and foreign demand is marginally improving, but employment and investments are still constrained, it is imperative to boost entrepreneurs' confidence if we are to keep Europe's competitiveness on track. Looser monetary policies and easing financing conditions hold the potential to restore confidence and revive private investments. In addition, capitalising on the advantages offered by the single market can stimulate public-private partnerships and the commercialization of projects of common European interest. Such actions have a tremendous multiplier effect and benefit the economy at large. Lastly, entrepreneurs' confidence is heavily impacted by the cumulative burden of legislation. The regulatory framework hinders entrepreneurship, rather than enabling economies of scale, and the exploration of untapped markets or innovative projects.

Figure 5. Trend of expected Business Confidence Index



[5] As noted at the meeting of the ECB Governing Council on 11-12 September, annual growth in unit profits had been declining from +2.5% in Q4 2023, to -0.2% in Q1 2024, down to -0.6% in Q2 2024.

6. Challenges

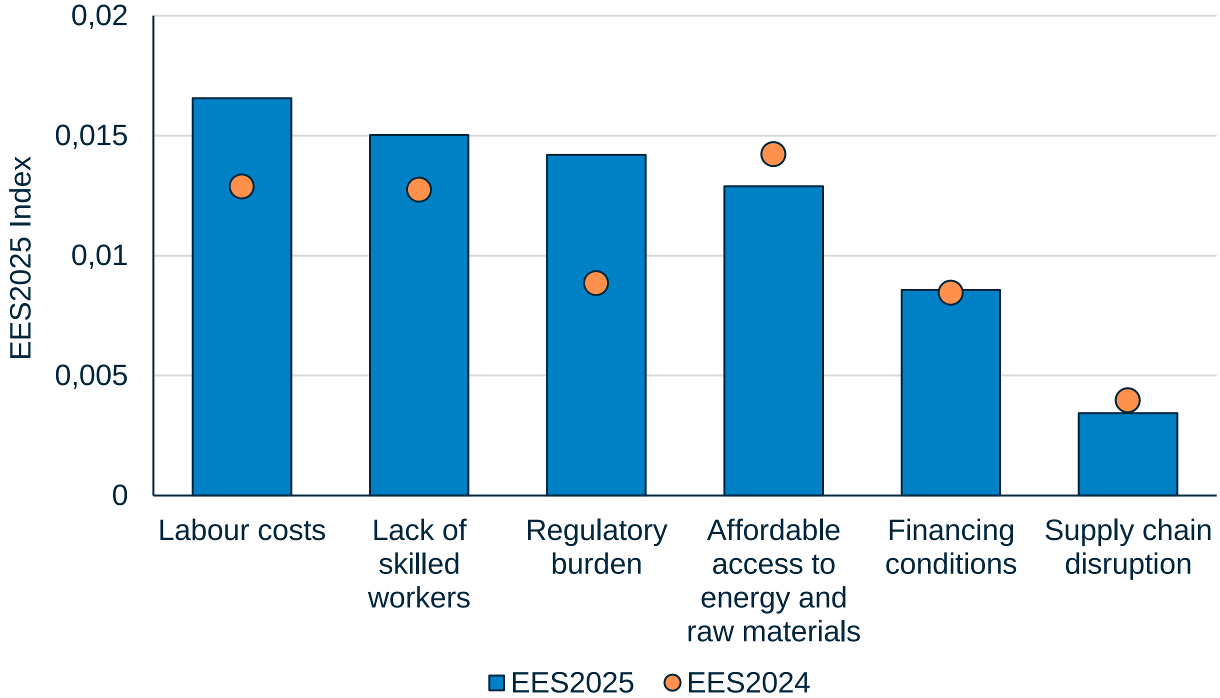
The top three business challenges for next year identified by EES2025 respondents are:

1. labour costs
2. lack of skilled workers, and
3. regulatory burden.

The latter has markedly increased compared to last year, corroborating increasing concerns conveyed by national chambers about the negative impact of mounting regulatory requirements on European businesses.

In contrast, “Access to affordable energy and raw materials”, the top concern for the past three consecutive years, moved to fourth place, suggesting improvements in strategies for energy procurement, but also a more reliable supply of raw materials. “Financing conditions” (fifth) and “Supply chain disruptions” (sixth) remain consistent with last year's findings, with supply chain disruptions declining slightly compared to the previous year.

Figure 6. Challenges – EES2025



Source: Eurochambres calculation, based on data from the EES2025, Question 6. **Note:** Financing conditions include factors such as high interest rates and access to finance.

In 2025, the primary challenge for EU businesses is projected to be high **labour costs**. This finding is consistent across the main economic sectors (industry, services, construction), as suggested by recent Eurostat data[6]. This is partially attributed to a combination of rising wages and non-wage employment costs. On the one hand, salaries are increasing as a result of inflation adjustments. Nominal wages are anticipated to increase at a 3% annual growth rate in the coming quarters, surpassing pre-pandemic rates, before stabilising in 2026[7].On the other hand, higher non-wage employment costs (i.e., employer's social

[6] Labour costs in the EU have registered a yearly increase of +5.3% in Industry, +4.9% in Services and +5.8% in Construction in 2024.

[7] According to a recent EY study, declining inflation is contributing to a gradual slowdown in nominal wage growth, which

security contributions, taxes, and subsidies) have increased labour costs considerably. In Europe, employers' social contributions have been rising, impacting employers' cost of hiring new workers[8]. Simultaneously, reduced subsidies following the phase-out of COVID-19 relief programmes are further contributing to rising labour costs for employers. These trends do not seem to be slowing down, contributing to entrepreneurs' concerns about future labour costs. Moreover, as the EU population ages, the availability of skilled workers declines, making them more expensive and ultimately increasing overall labour costs. Despite the significant challenges they pose to European businesses, growing wages have, on the other hand, the potential to increase consumers' disposable income and boost demand.

Just as with the previous challenge, the **lack of skilled workers** is another prominent obstacle identified by our respondents. This shortage is especially critical in sectors such as construction, healthcare, and ICT[9]. European businesses therefore require highly skilled workers, especially for new disruptive technologies. SMEs often encounter difficulties in recruiting specialised profiles across various areas, including those crucial for supporting their transition towards greener and more digital business practices mandated by ESG standards and other regulatory requirements. In terms of digital skills, the share of European businesses providing ICT training to their employees was 21% in SMEs, compared to 70% in large businesses. This suggests that upskilling programmes require substantial resources that SMEs often lack. The green transition, instead, will lead to significant developments in solar and wind power manufacturing with approximately 30,000 to 100,000 new occupations expected by 2030, according to a Commission's estimate[10]. As mentioned by Mario Draghi in his report on the future of European competitiveness, European companies, and especially SMEs, also lack managerial skills, which are necessary to manage human capital and allocate resources effectively. However, alongside highly skilled workers, considerable labour shortages are also expected in low-skilled occupations, due to the need to replace an increasingly retiring workforce. In both cases, significant investments will be needed to overcome this challenge, which will, in turn, require substantial EU-level support.

The rise in significance of **regulatory burden** for businesses is striking**.** This challenge has not only increased relative to other obstacles (ranking third in EES2025 compared to fourth in EES2024), but it also increased significantly in absolute terms. This reflects growing concerns within the business community for increasing regulatory requirements and their associated costs. Most new administrative costs can be traced to environmental, social and governance (ESG) regulations under the European Green Deal, which will impose nearly EUR 2 billion in additional burdens on both businesses and citizens. Moreover, reporting requirements under the EU's sustainability reporting and due diligence framework seem to be a particularly significant source of administrative burden for businesses. Lacking the resources to cost-effectively address regulatory compliance, SMEs are often the most affected by reporting requirements. The high complexity and volume of administrative burden also hamper investment. 61% of surveyed businesses in the EIB Investment Survey 2023 indicated regulatory constraints as a major barrier to long-term investment. Overall, the excessive regulatory burden can seriously dampen the European market attractiveness, as well as its general business sentiment, contributing to the perception of an overly bureaucratic ecosystem that is unfavourable to business growth. Although the European

fell in the euro area from close to 6% in early 2023 to 4.4% in 2024 Q2. Wage growth continues to diverge across countries, depending on labour market conditions, inflation, and productivity growth.

[8] According to OECD data, for instance, employer's social contributions in 2023 accounted for more than 20% of labour costs in 9 EU countries. For comparison, this figure is around 6-7% in the US.

[9] For instance, 63% of companies who took part in the Commission's "Community survey on ICT usage in enterprises" experienced difficulties in hiring ICT specialists in 2021.

[10] The data comes from the European Commission's Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) 2024.

Commission is seeking to reduce regulatory burdens, progress remains limited. Renewed efforts are urgently needed to guarantee regulation that supports the business environment.

For the first time in three years, **affordable access to energy and raw materials** is not on the top of the podium for the challenges faced by surveyed companies. This suggests a movement towards normality in the energy and raw materials markets. Although the costs associated with energy and raw materials remain significant compared to pre-pandemic levels, their impact is milder. European companies appear to have adapted to new energy prices which, while still high, have now been normalised at more elevated levels. Despite existing sectoral differences – with industry being more exposed than services – high energy prices are now generally perceived more as a calculable risk than a business impediment. The renewal of EU emergency measures such as the Market Correction Mechanism (MCM) and gas solidarity initiatives for the 2023 period has also contributed to reducing wholesale gas and electricity prices to more manageable levels.

While investment levels are expected to decrease in 2025, **financing conditions** do not appear to be among the main concerns for European firms in the coming year. Although high interest rates negatively impact investments and economic growth, SMEs surveyed by the Commission in the 2024 SAFE report highlighted slight increases in loan availability and banks' willingness to lend, while the proportion of firms applying for bank loans has also stabilized at a relatively low level. However, while not a major obstacle, financing conditions for European businesses could still be improved to facilitate business investments.

Finally, despite continued geopolitical tensions, EU companies report increasingly lower impacts of **supply chain disruptions** on their business activities. More specifically, European businesses have managed to overcome the risks and costs related to this challenge, demonstrating noticeable agility and resilience. Increasing inventories, investments in digital tracking, and trade partner diversification have proved effective strategies to provide a buffer for potential future disruptions. Overall, while supply chain risk remains a critical concern, European firms seem noticeably better prepared to navigate these challenges.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#EntrepreneursSay they need…

Improved financing and regulatory frameworks to sustain investments

The EU needs to be more attentive to the needs of businesses and aim at creating the right environment for them, raising their productivity and contributing to lower pressure from high labour costs. With investment levels expected to remain low in 2025, the EU should also accelerate developments of the Banking and Capital Markets Union by reducing fragmentation and lowering existing regulatory compliance costs. Fostering coordination across member states on initiatives of common European interest would strongly contribute to generating positive externalities in the economy.

- Labour costs in the motor vehicles industry are up to 40% higher in nominal terms in the EU compared to China. To maintain our competitive edge in strategic sectors, the EU should put in place coordinated market policies to lower labour costs and related social security taxes.
- Access to finance is often perceived as excessively complex with EU businesses moving to non-EU markets for growth financing. The EU should ensure a more streamlined and accessible financing ecosystem for SMEs to encourage the scaling up of European tech start-ups and the commercialization of innovative products.
- Strengthen the participation of SMEs in relevant EU funding programmes such as Horizon Europe and R&I projects and size the potential of public-private partnerships.
- Move from the political commitment to reduce reporting obligations by 35% for SMEs to a concrete strategy, measurable targets, and tangible actions.
- Focus on the quality of legislation – rather than quantity – by ensuring the correct transposition, provide clear guidance to comply with national laws, and a "regulatory pause", especially on new ESG-related legislation, to achieve a stable and predictable regulatory framework.
- Ensure full impact assessments on new EU legislation, a solid SME Test, and include proportionate mitigating measures to avoid "trickle-down effects".

Less obstacles and barriers to operate in the single market, Europe's main strength

While the EES results show that business confidence is less negative compared to last year, it remains below the long-term average, limiting its potential to stimulate private consumption. Harmonising and simplifying regulations could foster a more predictable environment, encouraging business investments in cross-border trade.

- Address remaining barriers, such as different contractual and legal practices and diverging rules on the provision of services, to foster competition and efficiency.
- Build on the single market strengths to create economies of scale, compete globally, and foster new market opportunities.
- Guarantee better rulemaking and effective enforcement of existing legislation. Member states must avoid adding unnecessary burden beyond what is already required by EU law.
- Member states should strengthen their compliance efforts while the European Commission, as guardian of the treaties, should actively monitor and resolve breaches of EU legislation to ensure fair and consistent application of laws across the Union.

Attract and retain talented skills and promote lifelong learning

As the lack of skilled workers remains a crucial challenge for European entrepreneurs, the EU should, first of all, improve its skills forecasts and skills intelligence to be able to better identify and respond to the labour market needs. This is urgently needed to improve Europe's competitiveness.

- Promote adult learning and Vocational Education and Training (VET), especially in strategic sectors and occupations and involve chambers of commerce and industry in education and training programmes.
- Support companies to invest more effectively in skills development and training by providing subsidy and financing schemes at the EU level to partially cover the employer's expenses for training.
- The STEM Education Strategic Plan, announced in the new Commission political guidelines, should be supported to improve the quality, uptake, and gender balance in STEM education.
- Facilitate the mobility and migration of skilled workers to support effective job matching. This dynamic helps employers meet their skills requirements more efficiently across regions and countries.
- Establish concrete incentives for businesses for the digital reskilling and upskilling of their workforce and promote school and university programs aligned with industry needs to address digital skills shortages.

Digitalisation as a driver of competitiveness

Increased digitalisation and implementation of AI in work streams represent a distinctive instrument that can significantly enhance business productivity, thereby reinforcing Europe's competitive edge across all sectors.

- Ensure that the implementation of existing regulations foster a competitive, coherent Digital Single Market and remove barriers to cross-border digital trade.
- Improve coherence of legislation by introducing principles such as digital by default and single submissions of information to reduce administrative costs (once-only principle).
- Support the development of European vertical AI foundation models that offer domain-specific solutions to challenges and requirements of particular industries or sectors.
- Expand access to high-quality datasets and regulatory sandboxes for all businesses, particularly SMEs, to encourage broad participation and innovation.
- Increase investment in applied research and in the establishment of centres of excellence for digital technologies and data usage.

Affordable access to clean energy and streamlined regulations for a successful green transition

While regulatory burdens have surpassed affordable access to energy and raw materials as challenges for 2025, both remain critical concerns for European businesses. These findings align with the Draghi report's emphasis on reducing energy costs and simplifying regulations – particularly those linked to the European Green Deal – to bolster EU competitiveness.

- Ensure energy security at competitive prices by expanding renewable energy generation and infrastructure as well as by diversifying supply sources

- Simplify and streamline permitting and administrative processes to accelerate renewables, energy storage, and grid deployment.
- Enhance access to finance by simplifying the EU sustainable finance framework and developing effective support measures for SMEs.
- Align the European Green Deal with our competitiveness goals to drive innovation and economic growth while advancing climate objectives.
- Strengthen global collaboration to harmonize climate policies, ensuring a fair international level playing field.

Free, fair, and reciprocal trade relations with our global partners

With 90% of global growth emanating from outside the EU in the coming years, foreign markets will remain an extremely important source of growth and innovation for European companies and SMEs in particular. Therefore, helping our companies access third markets, ensuring a level playing field, and increasing the internationalization of SMEs is essential for Europe’s long-term inclusive growth.

- International Trade must therefore continue to play its vital role in contributing to the resilience of EU supply chains and providing enhanced market access, including better access to critical raw materials.
- The European trade agenda must focus on ratifying and delivering new trade agreements with the world’s growth centres and resource-rich countries, especially in Latin America, India, or the ASEAN.
- EU trade policy must equally focus on the consequent removal of the growing number of trade barriers for companies that are hindering the export potential of European companies of all sizes.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Draghi, M. (2024). The future of European competitiveness. September 2024. Available at: EU competitiveness: Looking ahead - European Commission

ECB (2024). Account of the monetary policy meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank held in Frankfurt am Main on Wednesday and Thursday, 11-12 September 2024. European Central Bank, 10 October 2024. Available at: Meeting of 11-12 September 2024

ECB (2024). ECB staff macroeconomic projections for the euro area. European Central Bank, September 2024. Available at: ECB staff macroeconomic projections for the euro area, September 2024

European Commission, European Central Bank (2023). Survey on the access to finance of enterprises (SAFE): Analytical Report 2023. Publications Office of the European Union, December 2023. Available at: Data and surveys - SAFE - European Commission

European Commission (2023). Labour Market and Wage Developments in Europe. Publications Office of the European Union, October 2023. Available at: Labour market and wage developments in Europe 2023 - Publications Office of the EU

European Commission (2024). Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) 2024 – Upward social convergence and the role of social investment. Publications Office of the EU, October 2024. Available at: Publications catalogue - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission

European Investment Bank (2023). EIB Investment Survey – European Union Overview. European Investment Bank, 19 October 2023. Available at: EIB Investment Survey - European Union Overview

European Investment Bank (2024). Navigating supply chain disruptions. New insights into the resilience and transformation of EU firms. European Investment Bank, 3 October 2024. Available at: Navigating supply chain disruptions: New insights into the resilience and transformation of EU firms

Eurostat (2024). ICT specialists – statistics on hard-to-fill vacancies in enterprises. Eurostat, 30 September 2024. Available at: ICT specialists - statistics on hard-to-fill vacancies in enterprises - Statistics Explained

Eurostat (2024). Household saving rate up to 15.7% in the euro area. Eurostat, 4 October 2024. Available at: Household saving rate up to 15.7% in the euro area - Eurostat

Eurostat (2024). Intra-EU trade in goods – main features. Eurostat, June 2024. Available at: Intra-EU trade in goods - main features - Statistics Explained

Eurostat (2024). Labour cost index – recent trends. Eurostat, 16 September 2024. Available at: Labour cost index - recent trends - Statistics Explained

EY (2024). EY European Economic Outlook. E, October 2024. Available at: EY European Economic Outlook – October 2024 | EY - Global

IMF (2024). World Economic Outlook Update: The Global Economy in a Sticky Spot. International Monetary Fund, July 2024. Available at: World Economic Outlook Update, July 2024: The Global Economy in a Sticky Spot

Letta, E. (2024). Much more than a market – Empowering the Single Market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU citizens. April 2024. Available at: Enrico Letta - Much more than a market (April 2024)

OECD (2024). Taxing Wages – Tax and Gender through the Lens of the Second Earner. OECD Publishing, 25 April 2024. Available at: Taxing Wages 2024 | OECD

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Participating Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Austria: Austrian Federal Economic Chamber
Stephan Henseler

Belgium: Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce
Wouter Van Gulck

Bulgaria: Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Gabriela Dimitrova and Boryana Abadzhieva

Croatia: Croatian Chamber of Economy
Dubravka Zubak and Hrvoje Mirošević

Czech Republic: The Czech Chamber of Commerce
Renée Smyčková

Estonia: Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Marko Udras

Finland: Finland Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Jukka Appelqvist

France: CCI France
Patrick Brière

Germany: German Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Sebastian Titze and Jupp Zenzen

Greece: Union of Hellenic Chambers of Commerce
Vassilis Apostolopoulos and George Assonitis

Hungary: Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Ágoston Horváth

Ireland: Chambers Ireland
Shane Hughes

Italy: Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Handicrafts and Agriculture
Debora Giannini

Latvia: Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Krišs Zvirbulis

Lithuania: Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts Gediminas Rainys

Luxembourg: Chamber of Commerce Luxembourg
Sidonie Paris

Malta: The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry
Michele Agius

Montenegro: Chamber of Economy of Montenegro
Miljan Šestović

Poland: Polish Chamber of Commerce
Marzena Kuczynska-Pyczot

Portugal: Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
João Paes Cabral

Romania: The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania
Diana Popescu

Serbia: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia
Tatjana Maksimovic Vujisic

Slovakia: Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Daniela Širáňová

Slovenia: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia
Bojan Ivanc

Spain: Chamber of Commerce of Spain
Manuel Valero

Sweden: Sweden's Chambers of Commerce
Per Tryding and Tarek Zaza

Türkiye: Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
Çağri Gürgür

Annex 2 – EES2025 Questionnaire

<table>
<tr><th>NATIONAL SALES</th><th>EXPORT SALES</th></tr>
<tr><td><u>Q.1 We expect that our revenue from national sales in 2025 will:</u>

Increase ( )
Remain constant ( )
Decrease ( )</td><td><u>Q.2 We expect that our revenue from export sales in 2025 will:</u>

Increase ( )
Remain constant ( )
Decrease ( )</td></tr>
<tr><th>LABOUR</th><th>INVESTMENTS</th></tr>
<tr><td><u>Q.3 We expect that during 2025 the size of our workforce will</u>:
Increase ( )
Remain constant ( )
Decrease ( )</td><td><u>Q.4 We expect that during 2025 our level of investments will</u>:
Increase ( )
Remain constant ( )
Decrease ( )</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">BUSINESS CONFIDENCE</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"><u>Q.5 We expect that during 2025, overall developments for our business will be</u>:

Favourable ( )
Remain constant ( )
Unfavourable ( )</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">CHALLENGES</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Q.6 <u>We expect that the biggest challenge(s) for the economic development of our company in 2025 will be (max. 3 answers possible):</u>

Affordable access to energy and raw materials ( )
Financing conditions (e.g. interest rates, access to finance, late payments, etc.) ( )
Labour costs ( )
Lack of skilled workers ( )
Regulatory burden ( )
Supply chain disruptions ( )</td></tr>
</table>

Annex 3 – Complementary tables and graphs

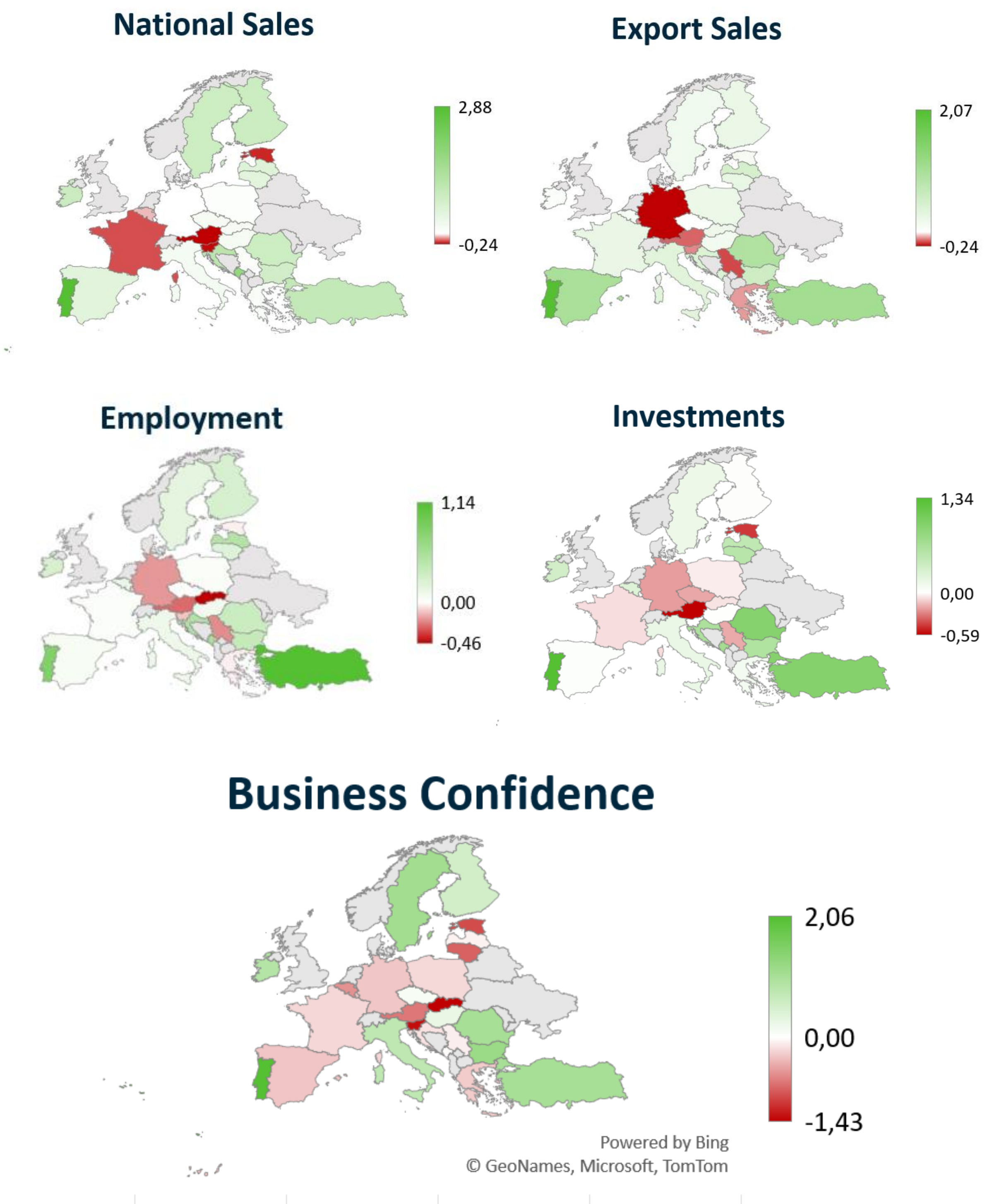
Table 1. Raw results and EES2025 Indexes

	National Sales				Export Sales				Employment				Investments				Business Confidence			
	Increase	Constant	Decrease	Index	Increase	Constant	Decrease	Index	Increase	Constant	Decrease	Index	Increase	Constant	Decrease	Index	Increase	Constant	Decrease	Index
Austria	24,35	41,45	34,20	-0,24	21,77	49,35	28,87	-0,14	12,20	59,65	28,15	-0,27	11,61	48,24	40,15	-0,59	13,11	42,03	44,87	-0,76
Belgium	23,90	49,10	27,00	-0,06					31,40	43,00	25,60	0,13	35,00	41,20	23,90	0,27	17,40	40,30	42,30	-0,62
Bulgaria	45,20	41,65	13,15	0,77	41,03	43,07	15,90	0,58	32,35	57,16	10,49	0,38	41,07	46,58	12,35	0,62	53,32	32,20	14,48	1,21
Croatia	52,41	36,14	11,45	1,13	34,36	55,83	9,82	0,44	35,50	59,17	5,33	0,51	42,94	40,00	17,06	0,65	24,71	43,53	31,76	-0,16
Czech Rep.	16,84	78,37	4,79	0,15	21,11	58,23	20,66	0,01	12,45	76,37	11,18	0,02	16,57	55,51	27,92	-0,20	25,32	54,88	19,80	0,10
Estonia	22,00	46,60	31,40	-0,20	29,00	47,30	23,70	0,11	19,00	60,50	20,50	-0,02	20,90	39,80	39,30	-0,46	14,10	35,90	50,00	-1,00
Finland	47,40	38,20	14,40	0,86	24,70	66,70	8,60	0,24	28,10	59,70	12,20	0,27	22,30	56,50	21,20	0,02	40,22	42,84	16,94	0,54
France	17,00	55,00	26,00	-0,16	2,00	4,00	1,00	0,25	6,00	91,00	3,00	0,03	8,00	77,00	14,00	-0,08	17,00	53,00	29,00	-0,23
Germany					19,00	50,00	31,00	-0,24	12,00	64,00	24,00	-0,19	23,00	44,00	33,00	-0,23	13,00	56,00	31,00	-0,32
Greece	22,65	61,45	15,90	0,11	17,03	60,34	22,63	-0,09	18,98	60,34	20,68	-0,03	20,19	65,94	13,87	0,10	24,82	38,93	36,25	-0,29
Hungary	28,30	51,00	20,70	0,15	28,30	51,00	20,70	0,15	20,10	64,80	15,10	0,08	27,30	45,90	26,80	0,01	28,90	56,70	14,40	0,26
Ireland	48,00	32,00	20,00	0,88	19,00	66,00	15,00	0,06	29,00	57,00	14,00	0,26	32,00	56,00	12,00	0,36	48,00	35,00	17,00	0,89
Italy	29,80	49,80	20,40	0,19	34,30	48,60	17,10	0,35	17,90	72,20	9,90	0,11	23,20	64,30	12,60	0,16	44,80	46,40	8,80	0,78
Latvia	43,10	31,70	25,20	0,56	37,20	50,80	12,00	0,50	35,20	58,10	6,70	0,49	38,50	45,30	16,20	0,49	28,20	40,70	31,10	-0,07
Lithuania	40,30	37,30	22,40	0,48	33,30	45,50	21,20	0,27	30,80	49,20	20,00	0,22	40,60	42,20	17,20	0,55	23,50	28,10	48,40	-0,89
Luxembourg	25,28	51,05	23,66	0,03	20,00	54,20	25,80	-0,11	14,26	65,96	19,77	-0,08	19,45	61,91	18,64	0,01	6,32	66,94	26,74	-0,31
Malta	37,30	45,70	17,00	0,44	39,70	51,30	9,00	0,60	43,20	47,30	9,50	0,71	44,20	45,30	10,50	0,74	43,20	36,80	20,00	0,63
Montenegro	62,59	31,47	5,94	1,80	32,17	61,89	5,94	0,42	37,06	60,14	2,80	0,57	43,01	48,95	8,04	0,71	32,87	33,57	33,57	-0,02
Poland	34,40	33,10	32,50	0,06	34,20	41,10	24,70	0,23	26,30	49,20	24,50	0,04	30,60	37,20	32,20	-0,04	33,10	27,80	39,10	-0,22
Portugal	71,86	23,20	4,94	2,88	58,28	15,52	26,20	2,07	45,97	48,82	5,21	0,83	56,22	37,04	6,75	1,34	63,71	25,97	10,32	2,06
Romania	47,00	39,00	14,00	0,85	49,00	39,00	12,00	0,95	32,00	55,00	13,00	0,35	49,00	36,00	15,00	0,94	51,00	40,00	9,00	1,05
Serbia	22,31	60,00	17,69	0,08	13,07	63,08	23,85	-0,17	6,15	72,70	21,15	-0,21	6,92	71,93	21,15	-0,20	16,15	61,92	21,93	-0,09
Slovakia	26,50	55,90	17,60	0,16	32,40	44,10	23,50	0,20	17,70	44,10	38,20	-0,46	26,50	44,10	29,40	-0,07	0,00	41,20	58,80	-1,43
Slovenia	23,00	44,00	33,00	-0,23	25,00	45,00	30,00	-0,11	18,00	58,00	24,00	-0,10	30,00	40,00	30,00	0,00	10,00	34,00	56,00	-1,35
Spain	39,36	41,42	19,22	0,49	50,36	36,05	13,60	1,02	22,23	58,73	19,05	0,05	25,24	50,93	23,83	0,03	23,89	39,41	36,71	-0,33
Sweden	47,00	39,00	14,00	0,85	21,00	70,00	9,00	0,17	24,00	63,00	13,00	0,17	26,00	56,00	18,00	0,14	52,00	36,00	12,00	1,11
Türkiye	50,00	43,00	7,00	1,00	52,00	42,00	6,00	1,10	53,00	42,00	5,00	1,14	49,00	45,00	6,00	0,96	51,00	43,00	6,00	1,05

Note: The table includes the raw data as received from the national chambers of commerce. In addition, the national EES Indexes are reported. The EES Indexes are computed as the percentage of “Increase” minus the percentage of “Decrease”, all divided by the percentage of “Constant”. A positive/negative EES Index implies that participants expect the trend to increase/decrease in comparison to the current year. German companies did not reply to the Question 1 on National Sales. Belgian companies did not reply to Question 2 on Exports.

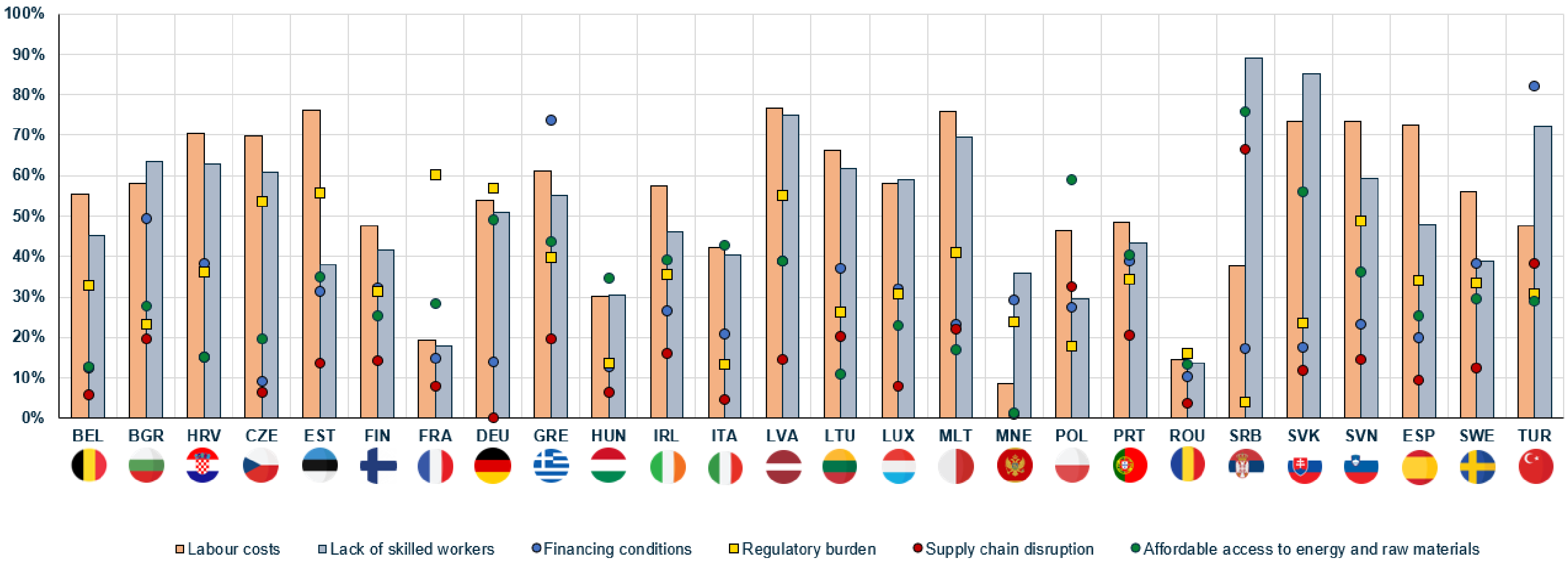
Annex 3 – Complementary tables and graphs

Figure 7. Country-level Expectations – EES2025 Indexes



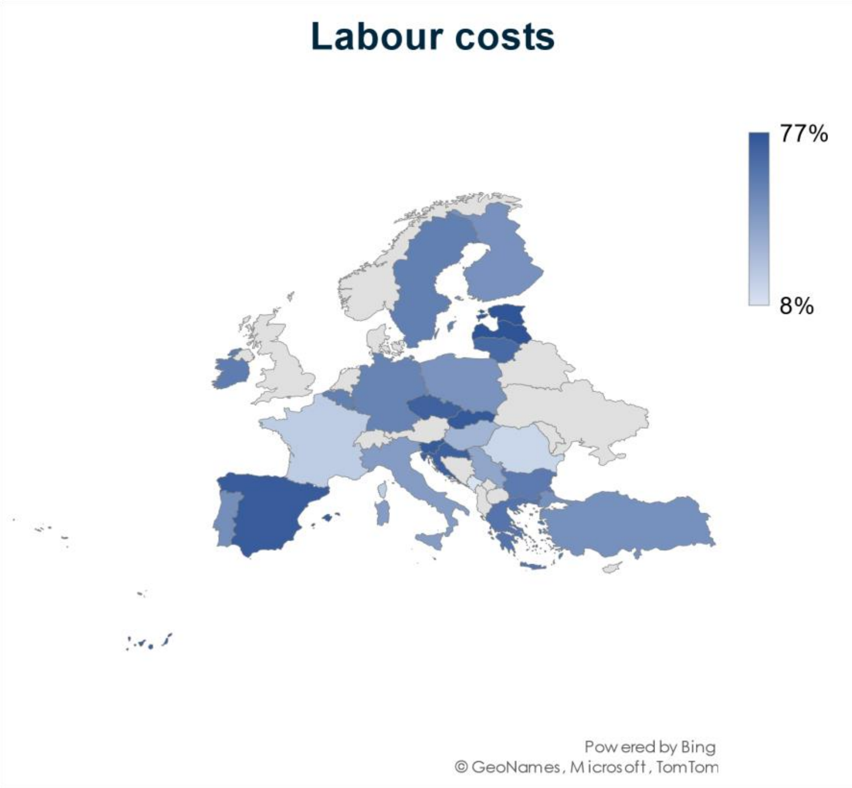
Note: According to the legend, green corresponds to a positive national expectation, while the red colour signals an expected decrease in the 2025 levels with respect to 2024 ones.

Figure 8. Main Challenges by country – EES2025



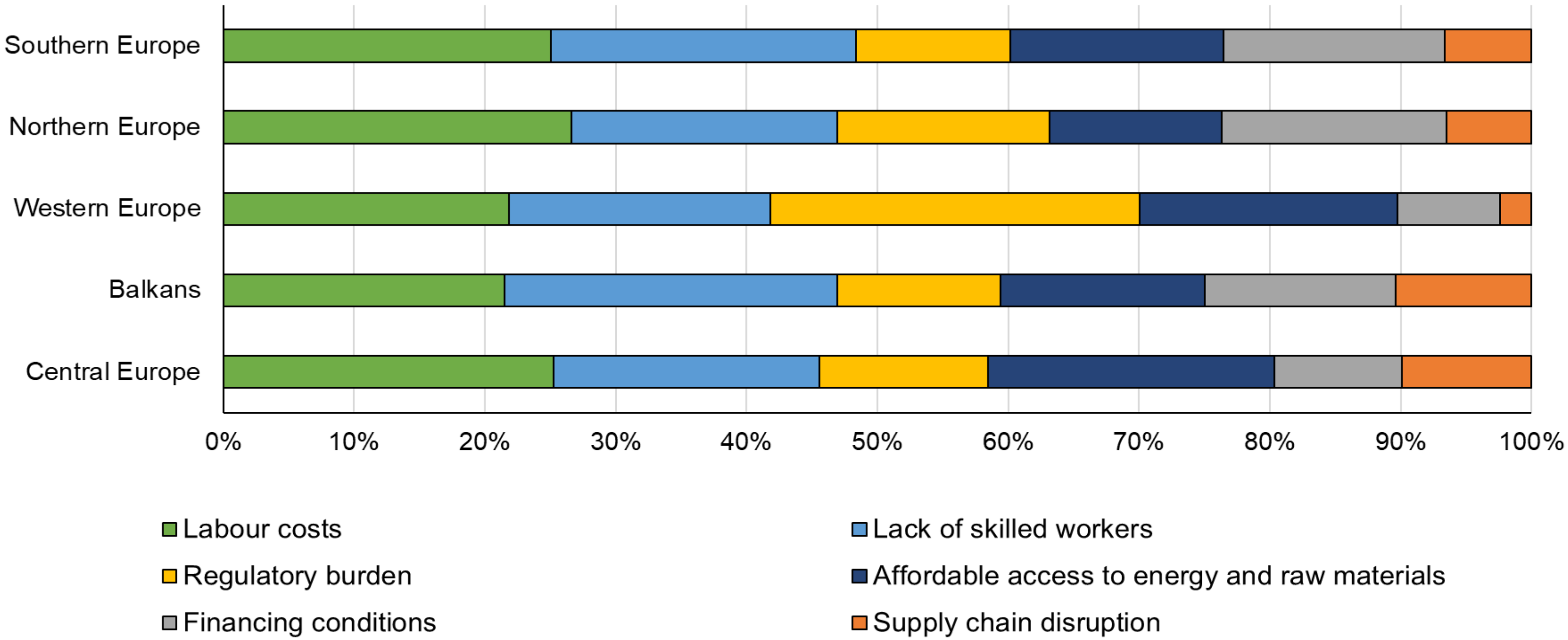
Note: Companies were asked – in Question 6 – to select up to three challenges that they expect to face in 2025. The percentage of companies – at the national level – selecting one of the six challenges is presented. Austrian companies did not reply to Question 6 on Main Challengess

Figure 9. Top 2 Challenges by country – EES2025



Note: Map of the two main challenges for companies in 2025 by country. The national mapping allows to visualize the countries with a higher degree of exposure (dark) to the expected challenge and the ones relatively less affected (light).

Figure 10. Challenges by region – EES2025



Note: Distribution of challenges by geographical region. The graph allows for the identification of regional trends with respect to the challenges identified in the EES2025 questionnaire

Annex 4 – Methodology

EES2025 is the result of a collaborative effort involving Eurochambres and 27 national chambers of commerce and industry. As a preliminary step, a standardised questionnaire is elaborated by Eurochambres, and sent to the national coordinators representing chambers, who select a representative sample of enterprises within the national territory according to criteria such as the geographic location, company size, and sector.

The answers are aggregated at the national level by each chamber and then sent to Eurochambres for processing. Eurochambres collates the percentages of responses per option for each question, that is the percentage of businesses answering "*Increase*", "*Decrease*" or "*Constant*".

The measure used to control for the country economic dimension is the Real GDP per capita, as provided by Eurostat. A parallel analysis, performed by considering the geographic position of the surveyed businesses, provides a closer look to common regional trends.

More on the Survey

For Questions 1 to 5, Eurochambres collected the percentages of companies expecting an increase, decrease, or constant levels on five key economic factors. The percentages are then aggregated and converted into the EES Index, as explained in Box 1.

Question 6 aims to investigate the challenges European businesses will face next year from a broad perspective and according to the latest economic developments and changes in structural economic variables. Companies were asked to provide a maximum of three answers in order to create a consistent rank of the challenges. The procedure followed in the analysis of the national results ensures that the final interpretation of the EES Indexes reflects Europe's business structure and dimension by outlying the percentage of times each factor or challenge was selected by respondents. Hence, the EES Index is used as a measure to take into account the economic dimension of the countries and the number of businesses taking part in the survey.

Eurochambres – the association of European chambers of commerce and industry – represents over 20 million businesses via its network of national chambers across Europe. Eurochambres is the leading voice for the broad business community at EU level, building on chambers' strong connections with the grass roots economy and their hands-on support to entrepreneurs. Chambers' member businesses – of which around 93% are SMEs - collectively employ over 120 million people.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Chief Executive Officer | **Ben BUTTERS**
Tel +32 (0)2 282 08 71
eurochambres@eurochambres.eu

Senior Policy Advisor | **Giacomo FERSINI**
Tel +32 (0)2 282 08 89
fersini@eurochambres.eu

Policy Intern | **Ilaria COLAJANNI**
Tel +32 (0)2 282 08 68
colajanni@eurochambres.eu

Press and Communications Manager | **Karen ALBUQUERQUE**
Tel +32 (0)2 282 08 72
albuquerque@eurochambres.eu

Communications Officer | **Agatha LATORRE**
Tel +32 (0)2 282 08 62
latorre@eurochambres.eu