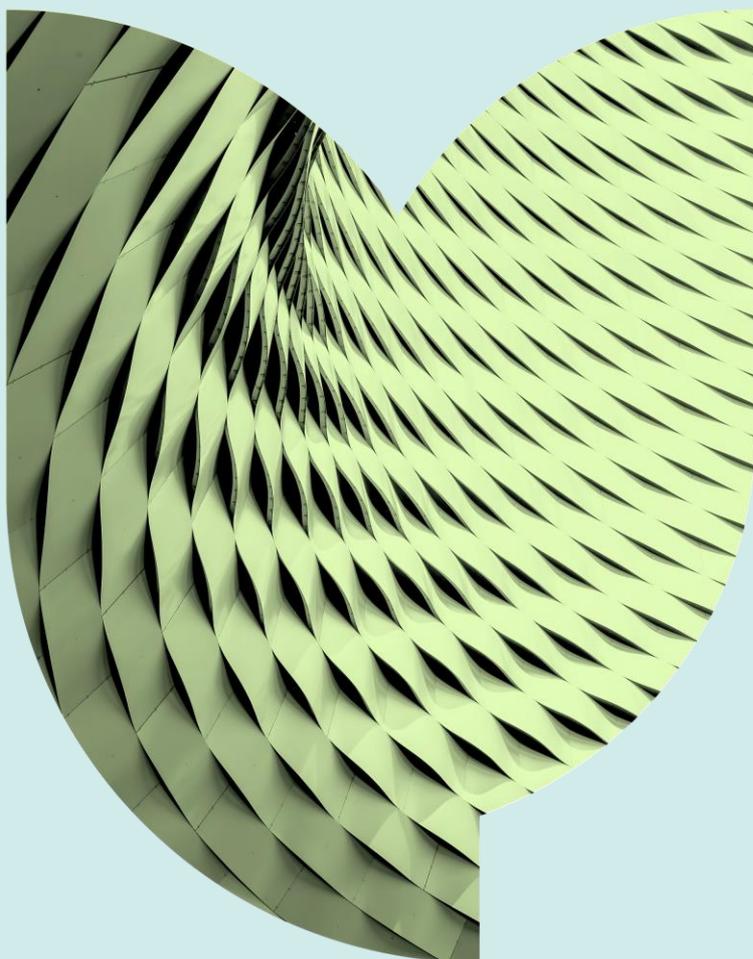




NATIONAL REPORT IRELAND

May 2022



Co-funded by
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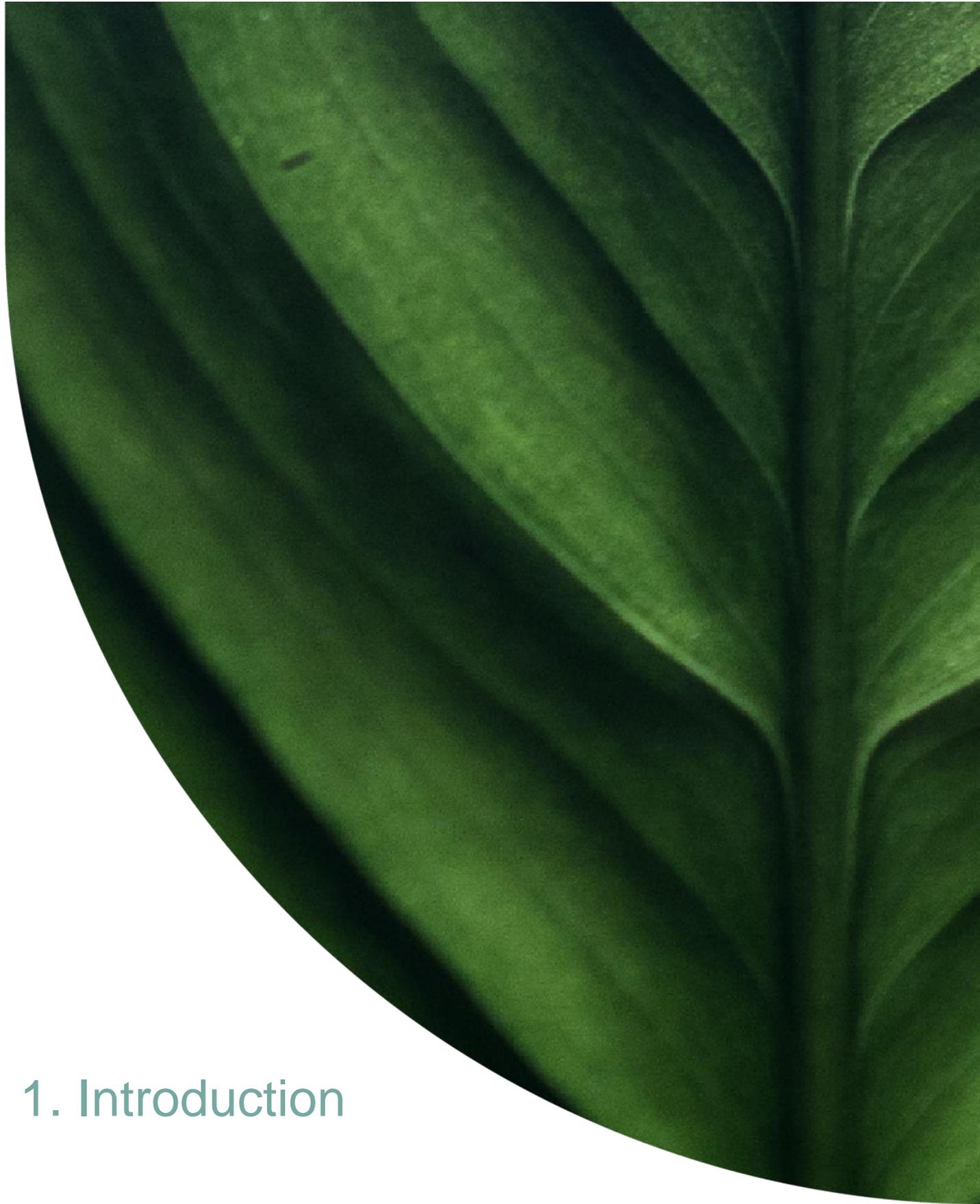


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1. Introduction

1.1 EcoSME Project

The EcoSME project aims to support hospitality SME's on their sustainability journey, through the provision of flexible open source multilingual training tools informed by stakeholder research. The project partners recognise the global post-covid challenges being experienced within the hospitality sector but equally recognises the importance for development of sustainable futures within the sector.

This project aims to:

- Raise awareness of the advantages of sustainable business management;
- Raise awareness of the advantages of developing green skills for business, society, community and the environment;
- Support SME's through their "green transition" with relevant training tools;
- Encourage sustainable entrepreneurship;
- Enhance employability skills for individuals wishing to upskill or reskill in areas of sustainability;
- Expand the educational offering to academics/educational providers to support an industry needs;

1.2 Introduction to the National Report

Hospitality and tourism schools and SMEs have confirmed a lack of availability of training for SMEs, in particular in the area of sustainability and that knowledge about the topic and its scope and impact on their work is very limited and patchy. The materials and training to be produced by the project offer elements tailored to its target audience and new developments in the industry that are currently not available on the market and can make an important contribution to sustainable business development in helping SMEs prepare for a greener future, upskill staff and develop business opportunities

The country reports and comparative analytical report does not only serve as a basis for all subsequent project results but also has the aim to support local, regional, national policy makers, vocational education and higher education providers in order to highlight the importance to

invest in CVET and particularly in the area of sustainability to strengthen the sector.

EURAKOM carried out an analysis, which confirms the need for more in depth knowledge about sustainability. However, more details about the current sustainability challenges and skills needs of SMEs and microbusinesses in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic were needed to design a highly relevant and adequate training programme to successfully support the sector. Carrying out the consultation has ensured that the training programme is based on real challenges, concrete examples and tailored to participants' needs in the best possible way. The consultation has for example asked questions to find out in which areas SMEs have already made or envisaged to make changes and why; to give details about the challenges they are facing with the implementation of sustainability as a result of the pandemic; gained an understanding

about how the pandemic has shifted the mindset of hospitality workers with regard to working in the industry; gained an understanding about the desire and willingness to implement sustainable practices; gained knowledge about their current level of understanding of sustainability and which areas they consider to be a priority to build and develop resilience or relaunch a more sustainable business after the pandemic. Overall, the consultation has been able to provide new evidence and information

about which challenges persist as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and inform subsequent project results to better serve the sector and build resilience of SMEs in the hospitality sector.

The partnership is open to collaborate with any additional region or country that wishes to carry out a survey or exchange about how the work was carried out.



1.3 State of Play in Ireland

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the Irish economy. Pre-Covid, the industry employed close to 10% of the work force and generated a revenue in excess of 9 billion € annually. Most of the sector is made up by SMEs with moderate margins, but provide valuable employment opportunities in rural areas which otherwise offer little employment opportunities. A disproportionate number of the younger population (< 35 years of age) is employed in tourism, providing a career stepping stone for many. In addition, infrastructure and amenities set up by the hospitality and wider tourism industry are important for the rural communities, increasing their standard of living.

Due to the large number of companies in the sector, it is difficult to assess the overall understanding and importance of sustainability in all its facets and definitions in the hospitality industry.

Fáilte Ireland has established that measures to manage business' waste sustainably are commonplace across all aspects of the tourism sector and energy consumption and water usage are also each managed sustainably by well over half of businesses.

With water and energy, hotels and attractions stand out ahead of other sectors:

- 84% of hotels and 74% of attractions have water management systems in place;
- 82% of hotels and 73% of attractions have energy management systems in place.

78% of businesses have measures in place to manage their waste sustainably, 65% have measures to manage energy consumption sustainably, and 61% for water usage. For each of the three types of measure, roughly a third of those with no current plan intend to introduce measures in the next 12 months. The two most common reasons for not intending to introduce plans to manage one or more area sustainably are the small size of the respective business, and a lack of knowledge on how to start this initiative.

There appears to be only a single organization certifying sustainability based on the criteria set by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, and only a small fraction of restaurateurs and accommodation providers are certified by them.

However, industry groups and government agencies have been highlighting the importance of sustainability for several years. Sustainability in this context, according to UNWTO, refers to environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. The Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG) was established in 2019 under governance of the Tourism Leadership Group and chaired by the Department of Tourism, which included senior representatives of the key tourism agencies and industry confederations.

STWG highlighted the need to look to both short term and long term actions and set a framework within which all stakeholders could align their work in sustainability to deliver. A report issued in 2019 was endorsed by the then Tourism Ministers and the Tourism Leadership Group and published on 19 December 2019 confirming the following ambition:

“Ireland will seek to be amongst the world leaders in sustainable tourism practices.”

A number of government policies and laws are supporting this aim, including in 2018 the national adaption of UNs Sustainable Development Goals (published 2015), and the commitment to reduce carbon emissions by more than 50% by 2030, and have a carbon neutral economy by 2050, as laid out in the Climate Action Plan 2021. Also, Food Vision 2030 (gov.ie - [Food Vision 2030 – A World Leader in Sustainable Food Systems \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie)), the Irish governments policy on sustainable food systems, will have an effect on the environmental impact of the hospitality sector.

With all these policies and plans in place, so far there seems to be a lack of regulations and tangible guidelines to encourage the sector to implement them, and to monitor the progress.

The Corona pandemic in 2020 devastated the Irish tourism sector. By August 2020, 70% of workers in the tourism sector were receiving financial support from the state. Many businesses were closed for over a year during lockdowns, and others, specifically restaurants with delivery or takeaway services, operated at minimal capacity. With many businesses having no or severely reduced income, the focus shifted away from the environmental factors towards economic survival.

The Tourism Recovery Plan (see [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Recovery Oversight Group \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)) published in October 2020 mentions sustainability, but with only very limited reference to environmental factors.

To date, in 2022, the effects of Corona are still felt by the tourism sector. Many former employees have left the sector to pursue a career in other industries which were less affected by the pandemic, and which offer a better work-life-balance. As a consequence, in October 2022 up to 16% of companies stated in a survey that they might face closure, if recruitment issues were not resolved (<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/2022/06/10/hospitality-and-tourism-sector-still-struggling-to-recruit-staff-research-shows/>). According to an FI

Businesses understand that they need to become more sustainable in the future but due to the uncertainty caused by all these external environmental factors, they are unable to see a way forward.

Nevertheless, the industry confederations and authorities involved are actively promoting sustainability. As an example, the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) have published online material on the topics: reducing plastic and packaging, energy saving opportunities, sustainable food practices and effective water management ([IHF | Green](#)). In addition, an online tool is

provided to assess the resource efficiency for members.

Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, have named climate action as strategic priority, and offer resources online on energy management and minimizing food waste ([Climate action \(failteireland.ie\)](http://failteireland.ie)).

The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC), in a policy document from 2022, [Delivering a Sustainable Tourism Industry – ITIC – Industry Recovery Roadmap](#), heavily expanded on the potential of sustainable tourism for Ireland, including ecotourism and environmental challenges. While there is good progress in some areas, the need for investment support by the government for a sector with many small players, was mentioned, but also other points, amongst them a requirement for better monitoring, online tools, and the simplification of planning processes for retrofitting and green energy installations.

For an industry still recovering from the impact of the pandemic, the current energy crisis has provided a further problem. Again, the profitability and survival of many players in the hospitality is threatened. In spite of substantial government aid to reduce the impact of the increased energy costs to businesses ([Budget 2023 | Business Supports | Business Supports Hub | Fáilte Ireland \(failteireland.ie\)](#)), there is still an economic necessity for businesses to reduce their energy use, and some funding could be provided from sources set up to implement the Climate Action Plan.

In early 2023, the Irish government aim to publish a new tourism policy, with sustainability as the main focus. We see great awareness of sustainability in its multiple aspects by industry groups and government agencies, and the willingness to promote and support it wherever possible. However, it remains unclear to which level the individual businesses are aware of the potential of sustainability practices, where the main barriers are for them to implement them, and what the best way is to support them on this journey.



2. Methodology

2.1 EcoSME Consultation

The consultation in the different partner countries (Ireland, Slovenia, France, Spain and Portugal) have been targeted at owners of SMEs and microbusinesses as well as their staff who are in a managerial position. As mentioned previously, the target group of the consultation report are primarily local and national public authorities, governments, policy makers and sector representatives as well as networks and policy makers at EU level.

Since the hospitality and tourism sector has been impacted considerably by the Covid-19 pandemic, the questions have been tailored in a way to find out more about the current needs and skills gaps of SMEs and microbusinesses and their interest in developing more sustainable business management practices and overall operations.

The consultation was developed by EURAKOM with the support of all partners who have supported the development of the questionnaire and have led on the data collection in their respective countries. The partners used Survey Monkey for the questionnaire, which was disseminated in English, Spanish, French, Slovenian and Portuguese. Data was collected in various ways, namely through partner social media

channels (LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook), newsletters and mailing lists, by visiting hospitality businesses and by phone. Partners reached out to their networks and sector representatives as well as various relevant associations in order to increase the number of respondents.

Respondents had the option to share their personal data in order to stay in touch with the project team and be informed about survey and project results in general but also in order to be able to benefit from the EcoSME training programme and the EcoSME Network to be set up during the course of the project. However, respondents also had the option to remain anonymous. Data will be kept for a maximum of 5 years in accordance with Regulation 2016/679/EU known as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

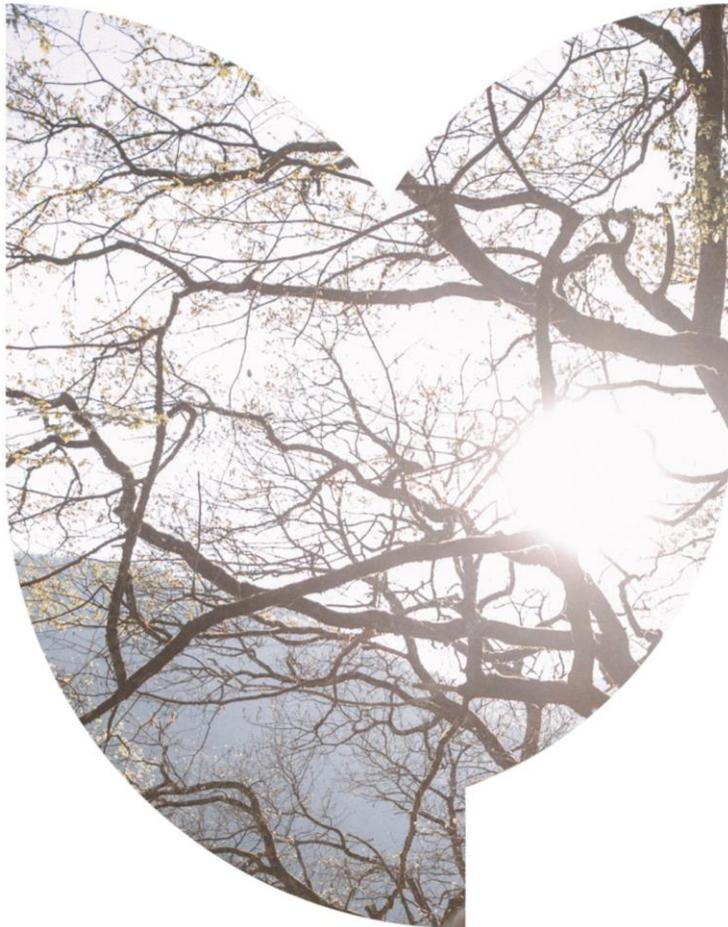
All data linked to the individual respondents is handled by EURAKOM for the duration of the project and exclusively in the context of EcoSME. For the purpose of writing the national reports and for the purpose of local and regional stakeholder engagement in the context of EcoSME, partners are in possession of their respective national data sets.

2.2 Analysis

Each partner analysed their national data and prepared the national reports for the different countries in English.

The presentation and analyses of both qualitative and quantitative data, based on

the data collected and reported in five national reports (i.e., one national report in each of the 5 EU countries), will be presented in a Comparative Report.





3. Consultation Results

3.1 Overview and Main Trends

Bia innovator campus & Atlantic Technical University (ATU) administered the survey between 20th February, 2022 and the 15th June, 2022 obtaining 162 answers and response rate of 78%.

The efforts to collect the data were initially done through all online avenues (email, social media, online networks and direct messaging) using each of our organisations' list of stakeholders to connect with. After a low performance of the consultation, further actions were initiated to reach the desired targets. Phone calls were made directly to relevant stakeholders asking for participation in the

consultation. This was more effective than an open call out online, but we still had hesitation in receiving the survey backs.

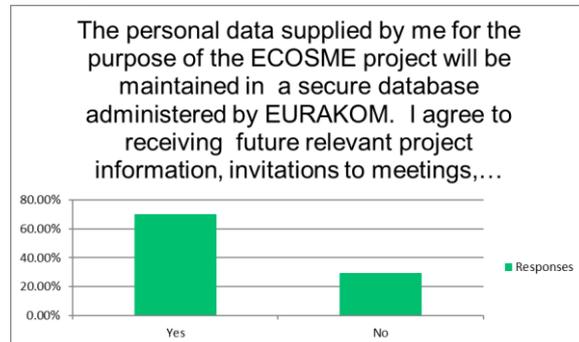
Our last approach required a team of 3-5 people to go "door-to-door" asking for participation in person and filling out the consultation in real time. This was more successful, as people were more willing to commit their feedback in the moment, instead of relying on them to fill it out independently and send it back to us.



3.2 Consultation Questions and Answers

Introduction Questions

Question 1 “The personal data supplied by me...”



On this question 162 were answered, and 0 were skipped.

70.4% of respondents agreed to provide their personal data to receive project related information regarding invitations to events/meetings, invitations to participate in surveys, and other communications relevant to the EcoSME project.

However, at the end of the project only 67.3% filled in the necessary information to receive future communications from the EcoSME project.

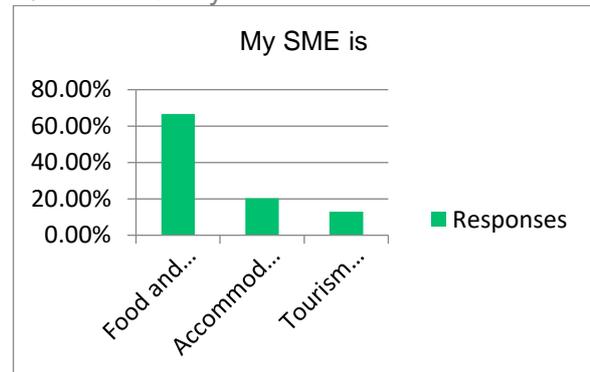
Question 2 “I am responding to this consultation as a...”



On this question 162 were answered, and 0 were skipped.

Out of the 162 participants of the survey 64.2% held a managerial role, and 35.8% held the role of owner/operator.

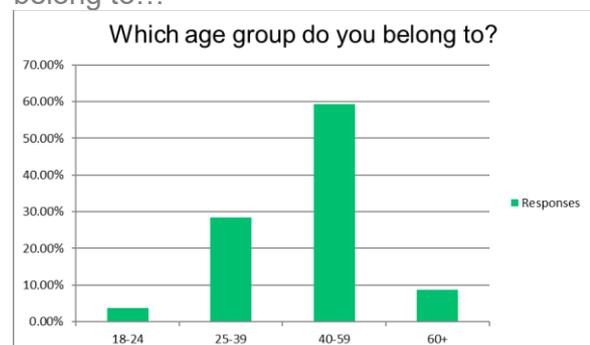
Question 3 “My SME is...”



On this question 162 were answered, and 0 were skipped.

Each participant was asked what sector their SME would be classified as to get a greater idea of scope of participants we had 66.7% classify their SME as Food & Beverage/Restaurant holding the majority position. Accommodation represented 20.4% of the participants of the survey, with only 13.0% classifying themselves as a Tourism Provider. Participants were asked to specify what type of Tourism provider they were and in this we saw a mix of accommodation, hotels, cafes & multidimensional experiences which include elements of all the suggested sectors.

Question 4 “Which age group do you belong to...”

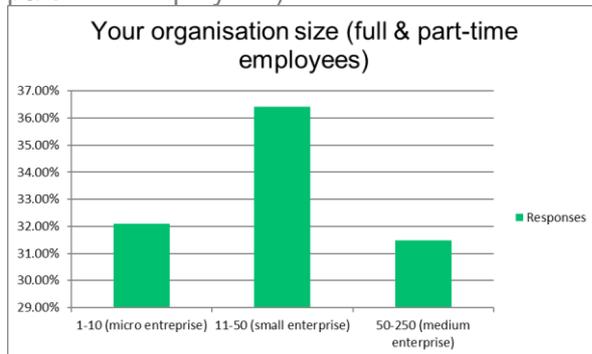


On this question 162 were answered, and 0 were skipped.

The majority of participants were in the age group 40-59years old with 59.3%. 18-24 years of age were only 3.7%, 25-39 years

of age were 28.4% and lastly 60+ years of age were 8.6%.

Question 5 “Your organisation size (full & part-time employees)...”

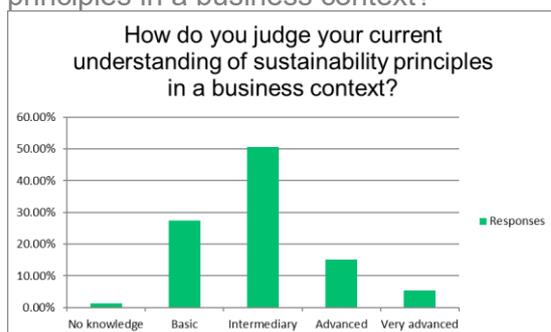


On this question 162 were answered, and 0 were skipped.

To get a scope of the organisation sizes we broke them down into three enterprises; micro (1-10 employees), small (11-50 employees), and medium (50-250 employees). The majority of participants held 11-50 employees with 36.4%. 32.1% were micro enterprises, and 31.5% were medium enterprises.

Sustainable Business Concepts

Question 6 “How do you judge your current understanding of sustainability principles in a business context?”

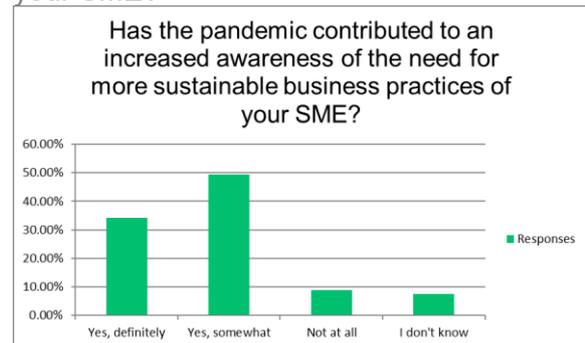


On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

We asked each participant how much they would judge their current understanding of sustainability on the principles of business context. The majority of participants felt they had an Intermediary understanding of sustainable business principles with

50.7%. 27.4% felt they had a basic understanding, and 15.1% felt they were advanced in their understanding. There was only 5.5% who felt they had an advanced understanding, and 1.4% who felt they had no knowledge.

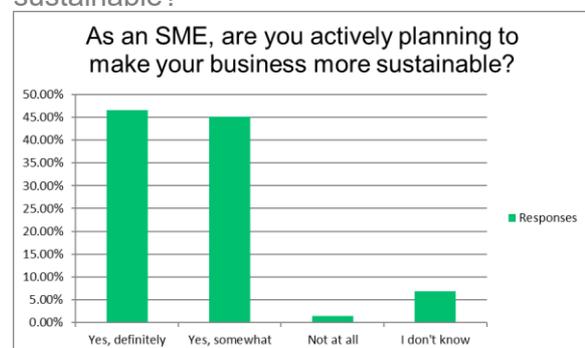
Question 7 “Has the pandemic contributed to an increased awareness of the need for more sustainable business practices of your SME?”



On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

Four options were given; Yes definitely, Yes somewhat, Not at all, and I don't know. Most participants felt that the pandemic had contributed to an increased awareness and need for sustainable practices with 34.3% saying “Yes definitely” and the majority 49.3% saying “Yes somewhat”. Only a few felt otherwise with 8.9% feeling “not at all” and 7.5% not knowing all together.

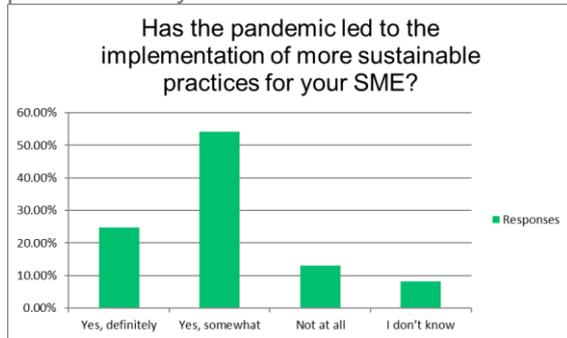
Question 8 “As a SME, are you actively planning to make your business more sustainable?”



On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

The majority of participants answered “yes, definitely” at 46.6% and “yes, somewhat” at 45.2%. While 6.9% didn’t know, and 1.4% felt that they were not actively planning at all.

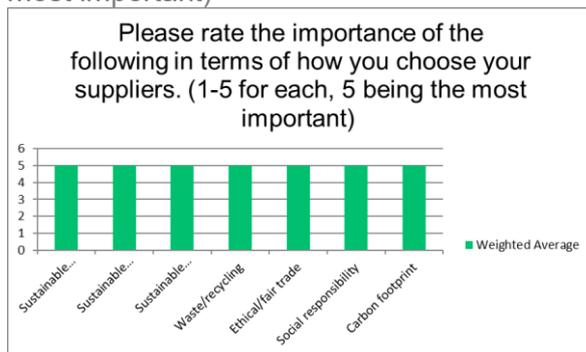
Question 9 “Has the pandemic led to the implementation of more sustainable practices for your SME?”



On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

Here we see that most people at 54.1% felt that the pandemic led them to somewhat implement sustainable practices. We saw 24.7% feeling that “yes, definitely” more practices were implemented, and 13% saying “not at all” and 8.2% not knowing.

Question 10 “Please rate the importance of the following in terms of how you choose your suppliers. (1-5 for each, 5 being the most important)”



On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

When asked to rate the most important terms when choosing a supplier participants rated sustainable packaging as most important, waste management and

recycling as 2nd, and ethical/fair trade and social responsibility as 3rd most important.

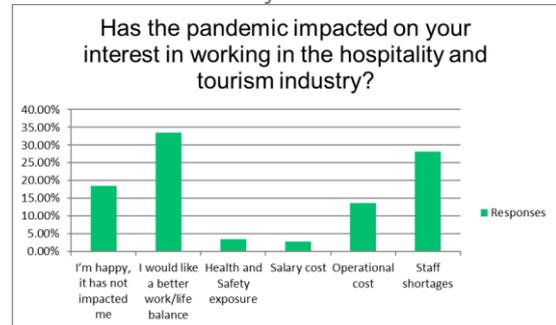
Question 11 “Are you interested in upskilling/training staff to improve and develop sustainable practices?”



On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

69.2% of participants are interested in training and upskilling their staff to develop their knowledge and skill in sustainable practices, while only 2% said no.

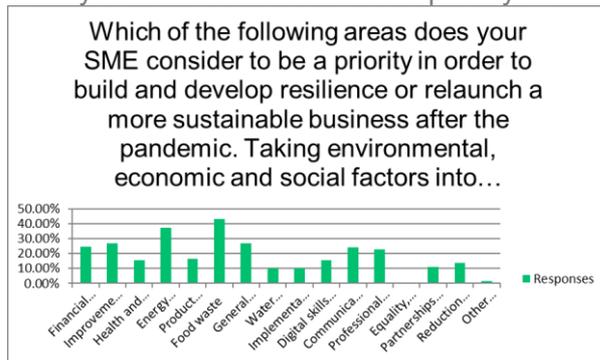
Question 12 “Has the pandemic impacted on your interest in working in the hospitality and tourism industry?”



On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

When looking at the impact of the pandemic we saw the majority of participants feel it has increased their need for a better work/life balance with 33.6% rating that as the most important answer. Secondly we saw staff shortages coming in next at 28.1% and 18.5% feeling like “it has not impacted me”.

Question 13 “Which of the following areas does your SME consider to be a priority...”

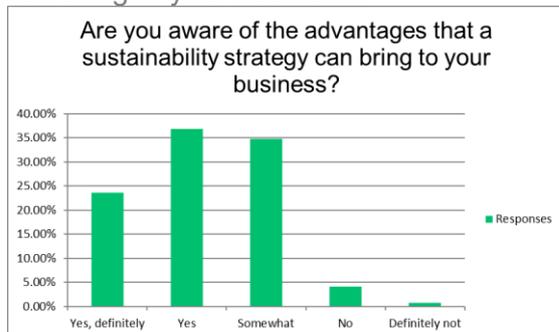


On this question 146 were answered, and 16 were skipped.

Most respondents said their priority areas for building and developing resilience, or relaunch a more sustainable business after the pandemic in their business are food waste (43.15%); energy efficiency, consumption and management (36.99%); and improvement or change of business strategy/business models (26.71%).

Challenges and Opportunity

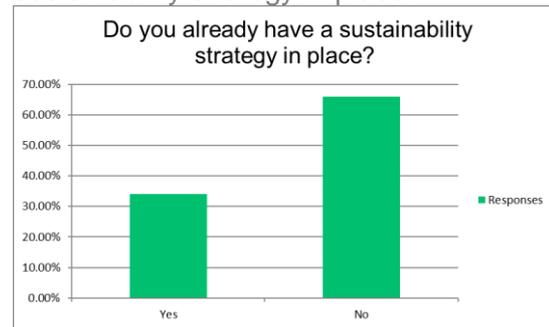
Question 14 “Are you aware of the advantages that a sustainability strategy can bring to your business?”



On this question 144 were answered, and 18 were skipped.

The majority of participants felt that they were aware of the advantages a sustainability strategy could bring to their business. Feeling that “yes, definitely” (23.6%), “Yes” (36.8%), and “Somewhat” (34.7%).

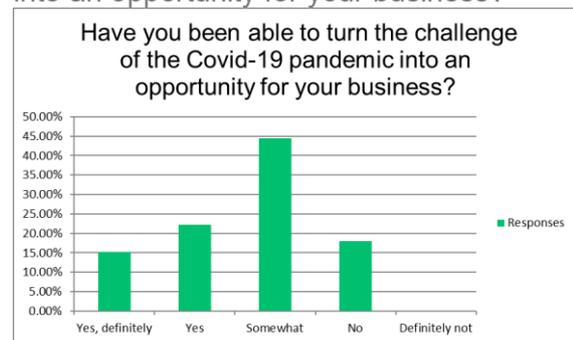
Question 15 “ Do you already have a sustainability strategy in place?”



On this question 144 were answered, and 18 were skipped.

We see that 65% of participants have not implemented a sustainability strategy for their business.

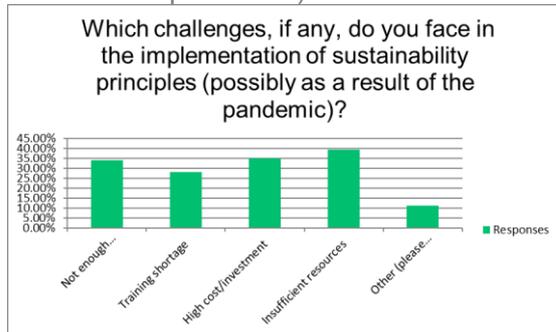
Question 16 “Have you been able to turn the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic into an opportunity for your business?”



On this question 144 were answered, and 18 were skipped.

Most (44.4%) people felt that they were “somewhat” able to turn challenges into opportunity through the COVID-19 pandemic as only 18.1% answered “No”. We asked for an elaboration on “if yes, how” and received 62 responses. 21 of these responses referred to the creation of new takeaway services, with 16 noting a pivot to a new opportunity and/or market. The remainder of respondents talk about creating opportunity to train and upskill staff, develop new packaging solutions, adjust distribution methods, and incorporate digital tools and experiences for staff and customers.

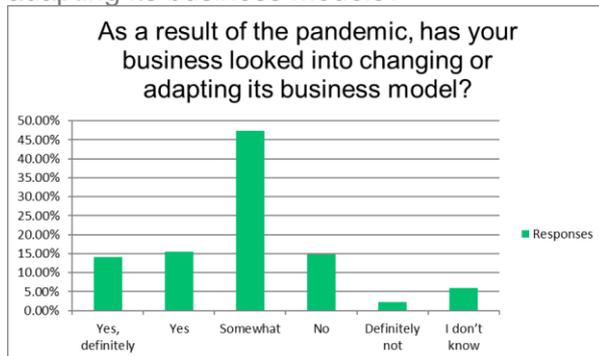
Question 18 “Which challenges, if any, do you face in the implementation of sustainability principles (possible as a result of the pandemic)?



On this question 135 were answered, and 27 were skipped.

The results were relatively consistent with the majority of participants (39.26%) saying “insufficient resources” as a challenge for the implementation of sustainable practices. While 34.8% refer to “high cost/investment”, 34.1% refer to “not enough knowledge”, and 28.2% refer to the “training shortages” as their main challenge. 11.1% selected “other” which resulted in 15 responses. 5 talk about the interest of staff as being their main challenge. While others touch on the general shortage of staff and the lack of accessibility in the supply chain.

Question 19 “As a result of the pandemic, has your business looked into changing or adapting its business models?”



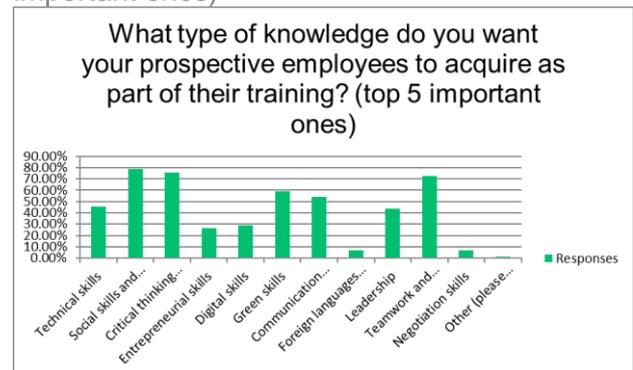
On this question 135 were answered, and 27 were skipped.

Out of the 135 responses (27 skipped) we saw the majority (47.4%) of participants answer “Somewhat”. We saw 14.1%

choose “Yes, definitely” and 15.6% choose “Yes”. While a similar figure was chosen for “No” at 14.8%. We asked “if you have a new business model please give details” and had 12 participants provide insight into what these changes were with the incorporation of a retail model, a change in opening hours, minimising capacity to suit health regulations, new outdoor dining facilities, reduced staff, smaller offerings (reduced menus), and new investments in digital transformations.

The Role of Innovation, Technology and Strategy For Sustainability

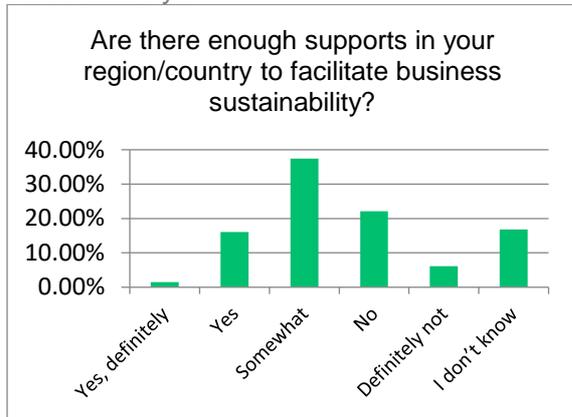
Question 20 “What type of knowledge do you want your prospective employees to acquire as part of their training? (top 5 most important ones)



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

Most of the participants mentioned that the five most important types of knowledge desired that prospective employees acquire as part of their training are: Social skills and customer services, critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork and collaboration, green skills, communication and marketing.

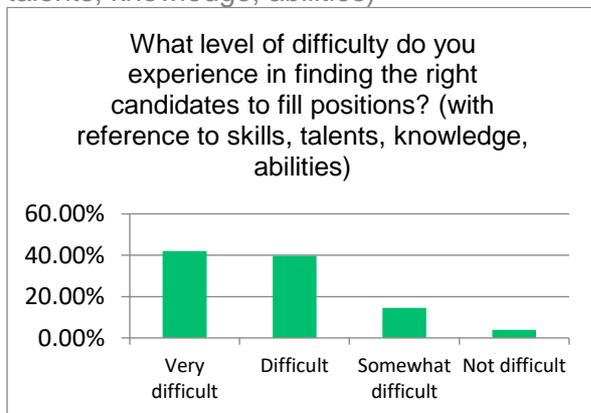
Question 21 “Are there enough supports in your region/country to facilitate business sustainability?”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

Most participants are “somewhat” aware (37.4%) of the supports in their region while the other majority (22.1%) felt that there were not enough.

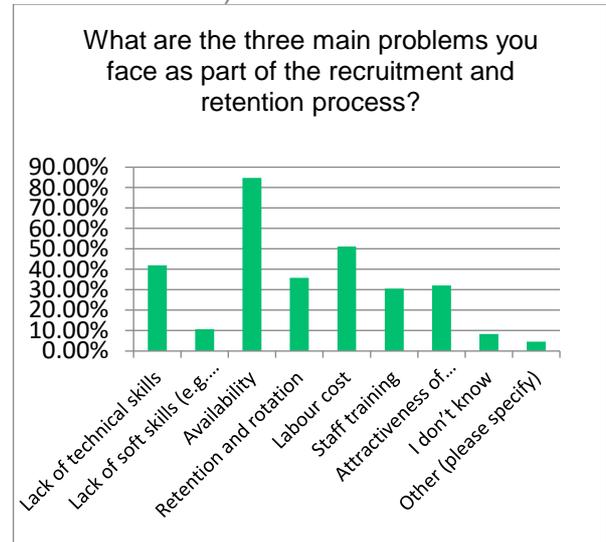
Question 22 “What level of difficulty do you experience in finding the right candidates to fill positions? (with reference to skills, talents, knowledge, abilities)”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

3.8% of respondents felt that it was not difficult to find the right candidate to fill positions relating to skills, talent, knowledge and abilities, but the majority of 81.7% felt it was difficult and very difficult. Aligning with the previous questions relating to challenges with staff shortages.

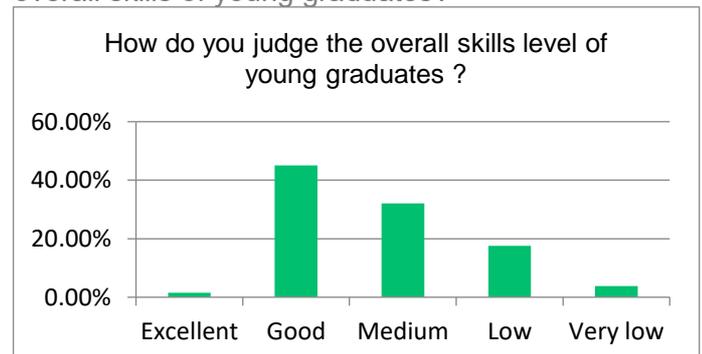
Question 23 “What are the three main problems you face as part of the recruitment and retention process? (select the 3 main ones)”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

When asked to select three main problems that are faced with recruitment and retention the participants prioritised the following: availability (84.7%), labour costs (51.2%), and retention and rotation (35.9%) as the biggest issues faced. 4.6% selected “other” and identified the cost of accommodation being their biggest problem with recruitment.

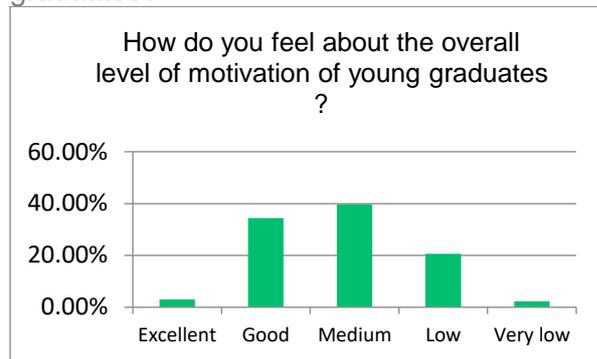
Questions 24 “ How do you judge the overall skills of young graduates?”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

The majority of participants felt the overall skills are good (45%) while only 21.4% felt that they were low and very low.

Question 25 “How do you feel about the overall level of motivation of young graduates?”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

74% of participants felt that the overall motivation of young graduates was good and medium. While only 22.9% felt they were low and very low.

Partnerships and collaborations

Question 26 “Do you have connections (at any level) with the education sector (for recruitment, training, knowledge exchange, educational programmes etc.)?”



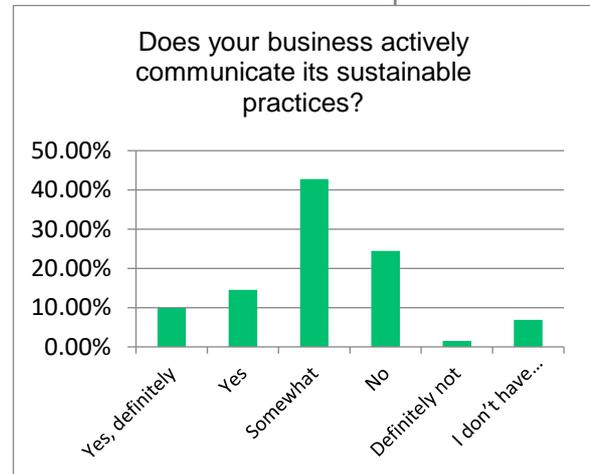
On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

The majority of participants (30.5%) selected “limited connections” in relation to their involvement with the education sector. Which suggests there is room to develop

this connection through the EcoSME network.

Communication and marketing

Question 27 “Does your business actively communicate its sustainable practices?”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

42.8% felt that they “somewhat” communicated their sustainable business practices while 24.4% felt that they did, and 26% felt that they didn’t. This left 6.9% suggesting that they didn’t feel they had anything to communicate at all.

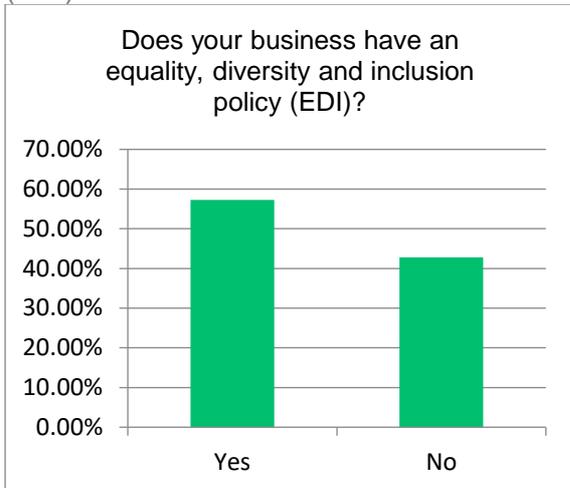
Question 28 “Are you interested in certification of your business in order to demonstrate your sustainability efforts?”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

We saw a large response to the idea of gaining a certification for a business sustainable efforts with 71% answering “yes”. Only 6.1% said “no” and 22.9% not having any knowledge of a certification.

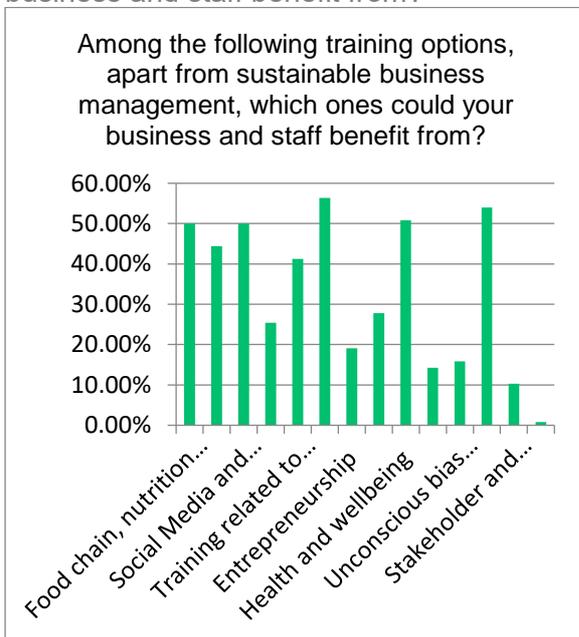
Question 29 “Does your business have an equality, diversity and inclusion policy (EDI)?”



On this question 131 were answered, and 31 were skipped.

52.3% said that “yes” they do have an EDI policy, and 42.7% said that they did not.

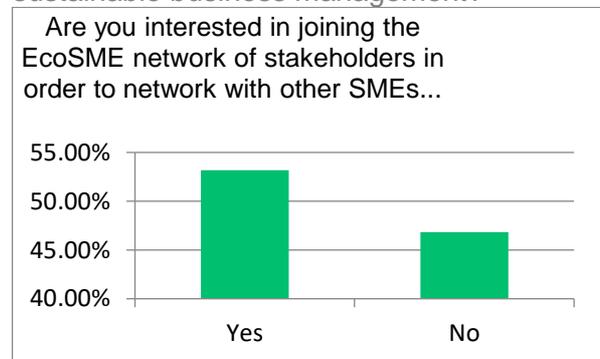
Question 30 “Among the following training options, apart from sustainable business management, which ones could your business and staff benefit from?”



On this question 126 were answered, and 36 were skipped.

Among the 14 choices given the top 5 were as follows: customer service and communication skills (56.4%), sustainable (Green) procurement training (54%), health and wellbeing (50.8%), social media and communication channels training (50%), food chain, nutrition and dietary training (50%), and lastly marketing and sales training (44.4%).

Question 31 “Are you interested in joining the EcoSME network of stakeholders in order to network with other SME’s across Europe and exchange best practices about sustainable business management?”



On this question 126 were answered, and 36 were skipped.

53.2% of respondents answered “yes” and would like to join the EcoSME network for future exchanges of best practices about sustainable business management, while 46.8% opted out and might need more convincing.





4. Conclusions

The survey consists of 31 questions with a decrease in participation as the survey progressed from 100% participation to 77.78%.

The main themes from the participants answers are:

- The participants understanding of sustainable practices and impacts
- The post-pandemic impacts and challenges faced by the participants such as staff shortages, lack of available resources, changing business models.
- The areas where industry and training/upskilling can be linked and strengthened and what material can be used in this training.

We see an overall understanding and comprehension of sustainable practices, with only a small majority of participants rating themselves as having an intermediate understanding. Most participants are aware of advantages a sustainable business model can bring to their enterprise, and nearly all respondents stated that they are actively making their business more sustainable today. However, only 30% had a sustainability plan in place. The awareness significantly increased throughout the pandemic. However, it appears that only a minority of participants are certified for their sustainable practices, although a majority would like to gain a certification. Few participants appear to actively promote their sustainability efforts to the wider public.

The implementation of sustainable practices seems to be a significant challenge to SME. The main reasons impeding progress in this are lack of available resources, staff and support, and rising costs in the overall operation. There is a perceived lack of support for implementation.

For the staffing situation, the overall lack of manpower more than lack of skill was the worst. While there is always some training required for new staff, lack of motivation seems to be a major issue with new staff.

Based on the findings of the survey, we have identified some key areas which should be taken into account when creating the training module.

- staff shortages: we could support SMEs in creating a strategy to make the positions to be filled more attractive, e.g., an improved work/life balance
- support with customer service training and online communication
- Food waste and energy consumption were seen as main areas to improve sustainability: make the SME aware of the existing online material and support them in implementing
- Support the SMEs in using their existing sustainability efforts to advertise their businesses
- Coaching and providing tools to create to sustainability plans for individual businesses





5. ANNEX

5.1 Consultation Questions

(1) The personal data supplied by me for the purpose of the ECOSME project will be maintained in a secure database administered by EURAKOM. I agree to receiving future relevant project information, invitations to meetings, invitations to participate in surveys and other communications related exclusively to the EcoSME project and the EcoSME Network. The personal data supplied by me for the purpose of the ECOSME project will be maintained in a secure database administered by EURAKOM. I agree to receiving future relevant project information, invitations to meetings, invitations to participate in surveys and other communications related exclusively to the EcoSME project and the EcoSME Network.

(2) I am:

- Manager
- Owner
- Supervisor

(3) My SME is

- Food and beverage/restaurant
- Accommodation
- Tourism

(4) What age group?

- 18-24
- 25-39
- 40-59
- 60+

(5) Size of organisation

- 1-10
- 11-50
- 50-250

Understanding Sustainable business practices

(6) How do you judge your current understanding of sustainable principles in a business context?

- No knowledge
- Basic
- Intermediary
- Advanced

- Very advanced

(7) Has the pandemic contributed to an increased awareness of the need for more sustainable business practices of your SME?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, somewhat
- No
- I don't know

(8) As an SME, are you actively planning to make your business more sustainable?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, somewhat
- No
- I don't know

(9) Has the pandemic led to implementation of more sustainable business practices?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, somewhat
- No
- I don't know

(10) Please rate the importance of the following in terms of how you choose your suppliers:

- Sustainable production
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Sustainable transportation
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Sustainable packaging
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Waste/recycling
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Ethical/fair trade
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Socially responsible
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Carbon footprint
- 1 2 3 4 5

(11) Are you interested in upskilling/training staff to improve and develop sustainable practices?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, somewhat
- No
- I don't know

(12) Has the pandemic impacted on your interest in working in the hospitality and tourism industry?

(13) Which of the following areas does your SME consider to be a priority in order to build and develop resilience or relaunch a more sustainable business after the pandemic. Taking environmental, economic and social factors into account? (Select the 3 most relevant answers for your business)

- Financial management
- Improvement or change of business strategy/business models
- Health and safety/hygiene
- Energy efficiency, consumption and management
- Product sourcing and sustainable value chain
- Food waste
- General waste management and recycling
- Water management and consumption
- Implementation of circular economy principles
- Digital skills including the increased use of tools and platforms
- Communication and marketing
- Professional development and skills of staff
- Equality, Inclusion and Diversity (EDI)
- Partnerships and community engagement
- Reduction of overall carbon footprint

(14) Are you aware of the advantages that a sustainability strategy can bring to your business?

(yes definitely, yes, somewhat, no, definitely not, don't know)

(15) Do you already have a sustainability strategy in place?
(yes, no)

Challenges and opportunity

(16) Have you been able to turn challenges from COVID into opportunities?

(yes, somewhat, no)

(17) If yes, how?

(18) What challenges do you face in implementing these strategies?

- Not enough knowledge
- Training shortage
- High cost/investment
- Insufficient resources
- Other (please specify)

(19) As a result of the pandemic, has your business looked into changing or adapting its business model?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- Definitely not
- I don't know

The role of innovation, technology and strategy for sustainability

(20) What type of knowledge do you want your prospective employees to acquire as part of their training? (top 5 important ones)

- Technical skills
- Social skills and customer service
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Digital skills
- Green skills
- Communication and marketing
- Foreign languages skills
- Leadership
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Negotiation skills
- Other (please specify)

(21) Are there enough supports in your area to facilitate business sustainability?

(yes definitely, yes, somewhat, no, definitely not, don't know)

(22) What level of difficulty do you experience in finding the right candidates to fill positions (with reference to skill, talents, knowledge, abilities)

(very difficult, difficult, somewhat difficult, not difficult)

(23) What are the three main problems you face as part of the

**recruitment and retention process?
(select the 3 main ones)**

- Lack of technical skills
- Lack of soft skills
- Availability
- Retention and Rotation
- Labour cost
- Staff training
- Attractiveness of conditions for the employee
- I don't know
- Other (please specify)

(24) How do you judge the overall skills levels of young graduates?
(Excellent, Good, Medium, Low, Very Low)

(25) How do you feel about the overall level of motivation of young graduates?
(Excellent, Good, Medium, Low, Very Low)

Partnership and collaboration

(26) Do you have connections with the education sector? (through training, recruitment etc)
(yes, somewhat, no)

Communication and Marketing

(27) Does your business actively communicate sustainable practices?
(yes definitely, yes, somewhat, no, definitely not, I don't have anything to communicate)

(28) Are you interested in a "green certificate" to demonstrate your efforts?
(yes, no, I don't have knowledge of certification)

(29) Does your business have equality, diversity and inclusion policy (EOI)?
(yes, somewhat, no)

Conclusion

(30) Among the following training options, apart from sustainable business management, which ones could your business and staff benefit from? (multiple answers possible)

- Food chain, nutrition and dietary training
- Marketing and sales training
- Social media and communication channels training
- Human resources management training
- Training related to product innovation and / or tourism and hospitality
- Customer service and communication skills
- Entrepreneurship
- Digital skills, tools and platforms
- Health and wellbeing
- EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) training
- Unconscious bias training
- Sustainable (Green) procurement training
- Stakeholder and community engagement training
- Other (please specify)

(31) Are you interested in joining the EcoSME network for stakeholders?
YES or NO



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