



Foundation for  
Family Businesses

# **A Call for Smarter Integration:**

What Family Businesses Expect from the EU





# Publication details

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# Summary of Key Findings

## About family businesses in Europe:

### 1. Family businesses are an economic powerhouse for production and employment in European markets – yet many feel they are under-recognised.

Defined by their long-term outlook and distinctive ownership structures, family businesses play a unique role in the EU economy. Their governance often shapes how they operate, invest, and plan across generations, with a single family typically holding significant ownership or strategic control. Yet, overall 70% of business leaders say their contribution to European competitiveness is under-recognised – particularly in Germany where this sentiment rises to 75%.

### 2. Family businesses are resilient.

Despite ongoing volatility, family businesses are less likely to have postponed investment due to market or policy unpredictability – 60% compared to 67% of non-family firms. This resilience may stem from their longer planning horizon and lower exposure to external pressures (e.g. their strength due to typically higher equity ratios than non-family businesses), making family businesses less exposed to economic and policy uncertainty.

### 3. For family businesses, succession is one of the challenges expected to intensify.

Most family firms plan to stay family-run, with strong governance already in place – 66% have identified a successor for executive leadership. But 32% expect generational transitions to become a challenge within the next five years – one of the issues projected to grow rather than ease over time. This highlights the importance of simpler, more accessible frameworks to enable continuity, leadership readiness, and long-term planning.



*Please refer to “Die TOP 500 Familienunternehmen in Deutschland: Nach Umsatz und Beschäftigung” which showed that the TOP 500 family businesses in Germany outperformed the average equity ratio of all companies by around 15 percentage points in 2020.*

## What can the EU do for businesses, especially family firms:

### 1. Listen to the voice of businesses: The EU, i.e. its Single Market and initiatives, is seen as a positive influence on competitiveness – though recent initiative implementation leaves many businesses unconvinced.

Business leaders largely agree that the EU strengthens their ability to compete: 77% say it helps in other EU markets, and 74% say it improves their competitiveness globally. Among family businesses, perceptions are similar: 75% say the EU boosts their competitiveness at home, 78% in other EU markets, and 75% globally. But for both audiences, only 46% rate the EU institutions' work on economic policy positively, with a quarter saying their performance has been unsatisfactory. This reinforces the view that while EU frameworks are valued by family businesses, their delivery still falls short of expectations.

**2. Reduce bureaucracy: Administrative complexity is holding businesses back – particularly over recent years.**

Nearly four in five business leaders (79%) say that compliance demands linked to EU-wide regulation have increased significantly, while 76% report that administrative obligations – related to reporting and certification – are now consuming time and resources that could be spent on innovation and business growth. While they do not agree as strongly as their non-family counterparts, many family business leaders say they have noticed a similar increase in compliance demands (78%) and administrative obligations (75%). In this context, 66% (overall and family business only) believe reducing these burdens would enhance their competitiveness.

**3. Businesses are open to more EU – but only if it works better in practice.**

Business leaders say they plan to engage with EU initiatives in the future – e.g. 36% plan to start using the Single Market, in addition to the 24% that already do – a clear shift toward broader participation, this is particularly notable in Italy. Family businesses mirror this trend, with 37% planning to engage with the Single Market, 31% with EU trade agreements, and 29% with EU-funded grant schemes. But, intent alone is not enough: engagement depends on frameworks that are streamlined, predictable and easy to navigate.

**4. A more integrated Single Market is central to this vision, viewed as a key element in future competitiveness.**

64% of business leaders say that a deeper Single Market holds economic potential for their company, rising to 67% in Italy and 66% in Germany. Family businesses are aligned with 63% agreement. This expectation is about more than growth: 32% say improved access to cross-border trade and export markets would also make their business more resilient, family businesses are aligned with this figure. Delivering on this vision means delivering on the Four Freedoms, in terms of complete mobility of goods, services, capital and people, which is the foundation of the Single Market and a key enabler of competitiveness across the EU.

**5. Trade agreements are a growing area of interest.**

While current use of EU-negotiated trade agreements remains moderate, momentum is building. With 24% currently utilising these agreements, and an additional 30% planning to do so, 54% could take advantage of these trade agreements in the near future. Similarly, 23% of family businesses already engage with these agreements, and a further 31% plan to in the future, meaning up to 54% could be using them in the coming years. Amongst the largest family businesses, 30% make use of trade agreements already now. These firms represent a substantial share of Europe's private sector employment, representing at least 250 employees each, and a significant proportion of potential economic output. Therefore, it is particularly important to get trade agreements right for these businesses – the impact could be substantially beneficial.



**6. Businesses are calling on the EU to make skilled labour more accessible.**

Across all markets, business leaders identify the shortage of skilled workers as the greatest threat to competitiveness over the next five years, this is reflected within family business, too. More than a third (36%) of business leaders say improved access to skilled labour would make their company more resilient, with family businesses mirroring this sentiment (36%), making it one of their top expectations for future EU action. As with other areas, the message is clear: The EU must do its part to ease access to talent across borders.

**Sentiments on the current state and future challenges of businesses, and how family businesses align:**

**1. Through turbulent times, confidence in the future is returning, though with a measure of caution.**

56% of business leaders expect conditions to get better over the next 12 months, rising to 60% in Germany and Spain, family business leaders specifically are aligned at 55%. This comes after a prolonged period of economic uncertainty, marked by inflation, energy price shocks, and geopolitical instability. While expectations remain measured – only 17% (overall and within family businesses) foresee significant improvement – the data suggests that many businesses are beginning to look ahead with fresh determination. Recovery may be uneven, but the underlying sentiment is one of readiness to move forward.

**2. For many, home remains a good place to invest, while neighbouring EU markets are seen as the next step for future growth.**

60% of business leaders rate the market they are headquartered in positively for investment, with confidence strongest in Germany (68%) and Spain (63%). This reflects a broader preference among firms – including many family-owned businesses – for building from a local base. Family businesses are in line with this sentiment (60% rate their home markets positively). When asked to think outside of their home market, many business leaders choose neighbouring EU countries as their top choice for future expansion, followed by major global economies like the US and China.



# I. Introduction

This report explores the views of business leaders across Germany, France, Italy and Spain, with a focus on family-owned firms. Commissioned by the Foundation for Family Businesses, it aims to understand how European Union policymakers can strengthen business competitiveness and improve the operating environment. By gathering insights from owners and senior decision-makers in firms with 10+ employees, the study offers clear policy recommendations that reflect the views of family businesses and contribute to a more effective EU framework setting. The study was led by Edelman Data & Intelligence from 28 May to 7 July 2025, and included 2,401 online interviews completed in the respondents' native languages. Participants were verified senior leaders: owners, founders, executives, or C-suite. The sample includes companies of varying sizes, sectors, and revenues, with family businesses representing 83% of the total. Germany (n=600), France (n=600), Italy (n=601), and Spain (n=600) were equally represented. It was ensured that the sample had a 80-90% family business representation by market; soft quotas maintained proportionality by size. This methodology allowed for comparative analysis across countries, as well as between family and non-family firms, uncovering structural and strategic differences.

The research covered:

- Competitiveness and economic confidence
- Investment and regulatory pressure
- EU integration, Single Market access, and trade
- Labour mobility, innovation, and succession

Company classifications:

- Small: 10-49 employees
- Medium: 50-249 employees
- Large: 250+ employees
- Revenue under €100 million annually
- Revenue over €100 million annually

These definitions enabled more targeted analysis of how size and financial scale shape business outlook and policy needs.

An appendix includes detailed methodology, sample breakdown by demographics, and the full questionnaire.



## II. A Note on “Family Businesses”

### Understanding the term “Family Business”

While there is not yet a universally recognised definition of the term “Family Businesses”, there is broad consensus around their key characteristics and function.





Family businesses are an important group of companies that differ from other types of business, as their ownership structure and governance dynamics influence how they operate, invest, and plan for the long term. Family businesses can be defined as: companies in which one family holds significant ownership and/or voting rights, enabling them to either manage the business directly or exert strategic control over its management – regardless of size, legal form, or market listing.

In this research, respondents self-declared their family ownership. They were also asked follow-up questions capturing the extent of family involvement in executive leadership, governance boards, and succession planning. This allowed for a nuanced view of how family ownership manifests in practice across the surveyed EU markets.



*Find extensive reasoning in “Family businesses and the EU – a shared responsibility for Europe’s future” published in “Beyond bureaucracy: A new vision for Europe” (Annual bulletin of the Advisory Board of the Foundation for Family Businesses, p. 65 et seq.; 2025).*

Figure 1: Breakdown of proportion of family businesses within the sample

Market	Sample	Family businesses	Non-family businesses	Proportion of family businesses
Total	n=2,401	n=1,992	n=409	83%
	n=600	n=527	n=73	88%
	n=600	n=480	n=120	80%
	n=601	n=475	n=126	79%
	n=600	n=510	n=90	85%

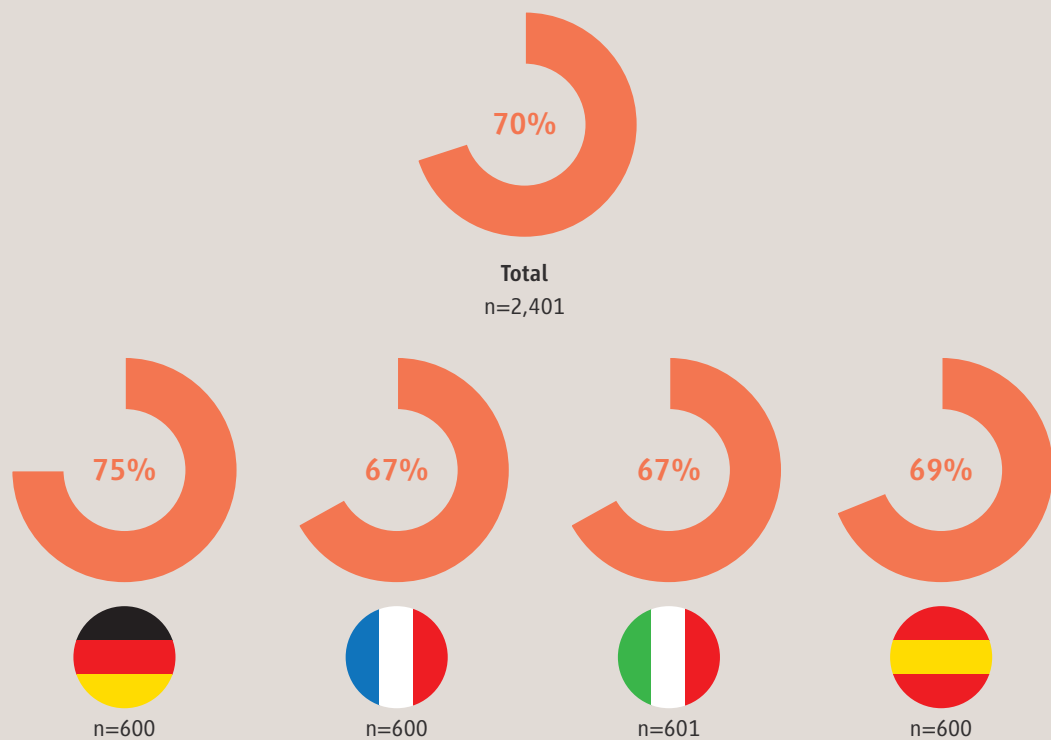
Family businesses constituted a significant share of the research sample across all four surveyed markets, with a smaller proportion of non-family businesses included to allow for comparative analysis.

It is worth noting that across this report, family businesses are therefore largely in line with the overall sample due to its composition, but notable differences between family businesses and non-family businesses will be highlighted where distinct and relevant.

## An overview of Family Businesses in this study

**70%** of respondents believe that family businesses are under-recognised as drivers of European competitiveness – particularly those in Germany.

*Figure 2: Those who agree that family businesses are under-recognised as drivers of European competitiveness*



Furthermore, as the data from this study suggests, governance structures within businesses are strong and closely tied to family leadership (see figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1: Percentage of business leaders who say the following statements apply to their organisation

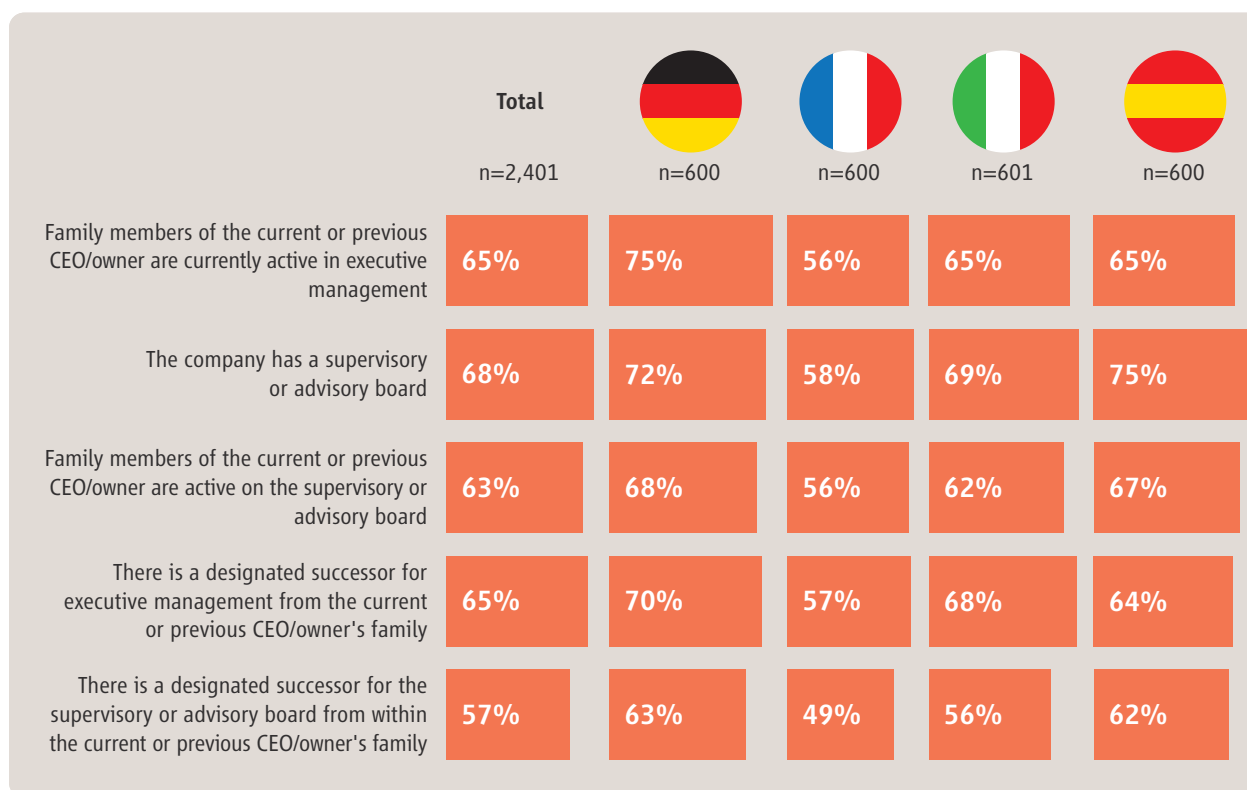
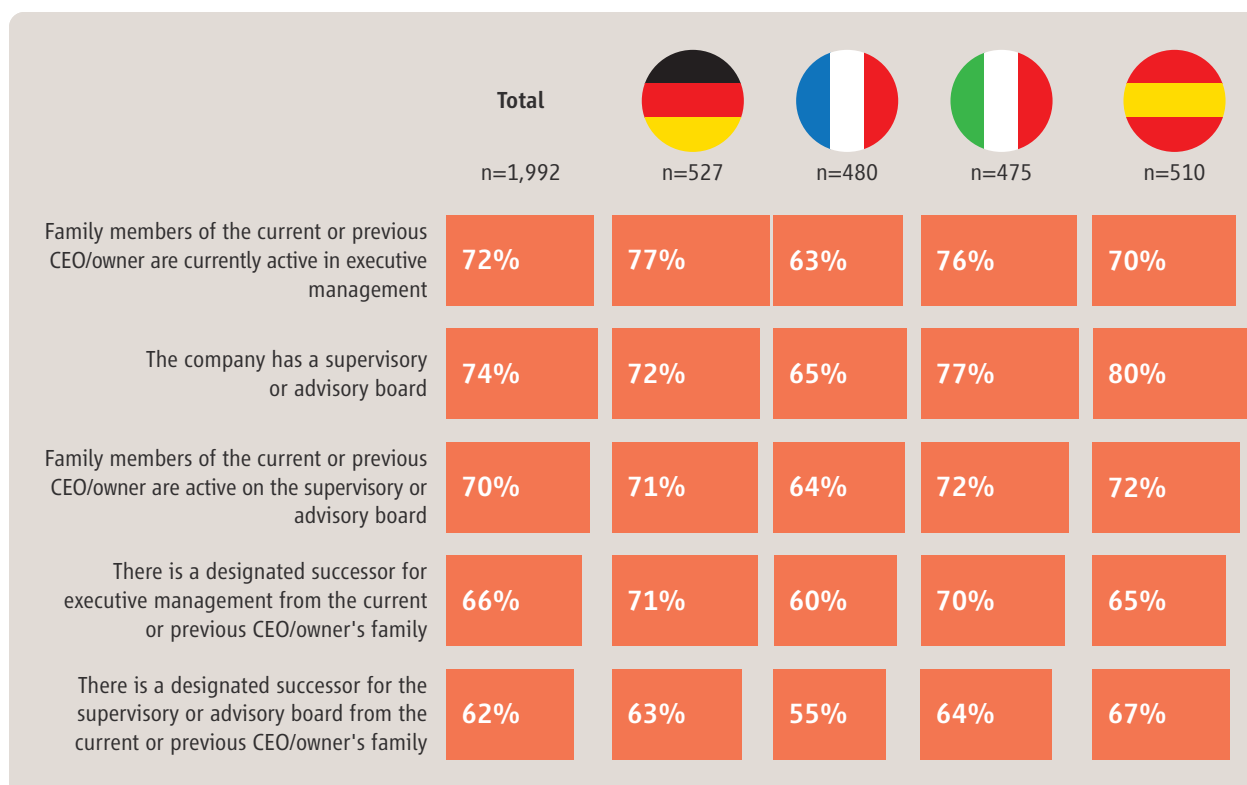


Figure 3.2: Percentage of family business leaders who say the following statements apply to their organisation (amongst family businesses only)



This is particularly true for family businesses, in total, 72% of respondents report that family members of the current or previous CEO are active in executive management, and 70% say family members are represented on supervisory or advisory boards. Similarly, 66% report having a designated family successor for executive leadership, while 62% have identified a successor for supervisory or advisory roles. These figures reflect an overall intention to maintain continuity of ownership and leadership within the family (see figure 3.2).

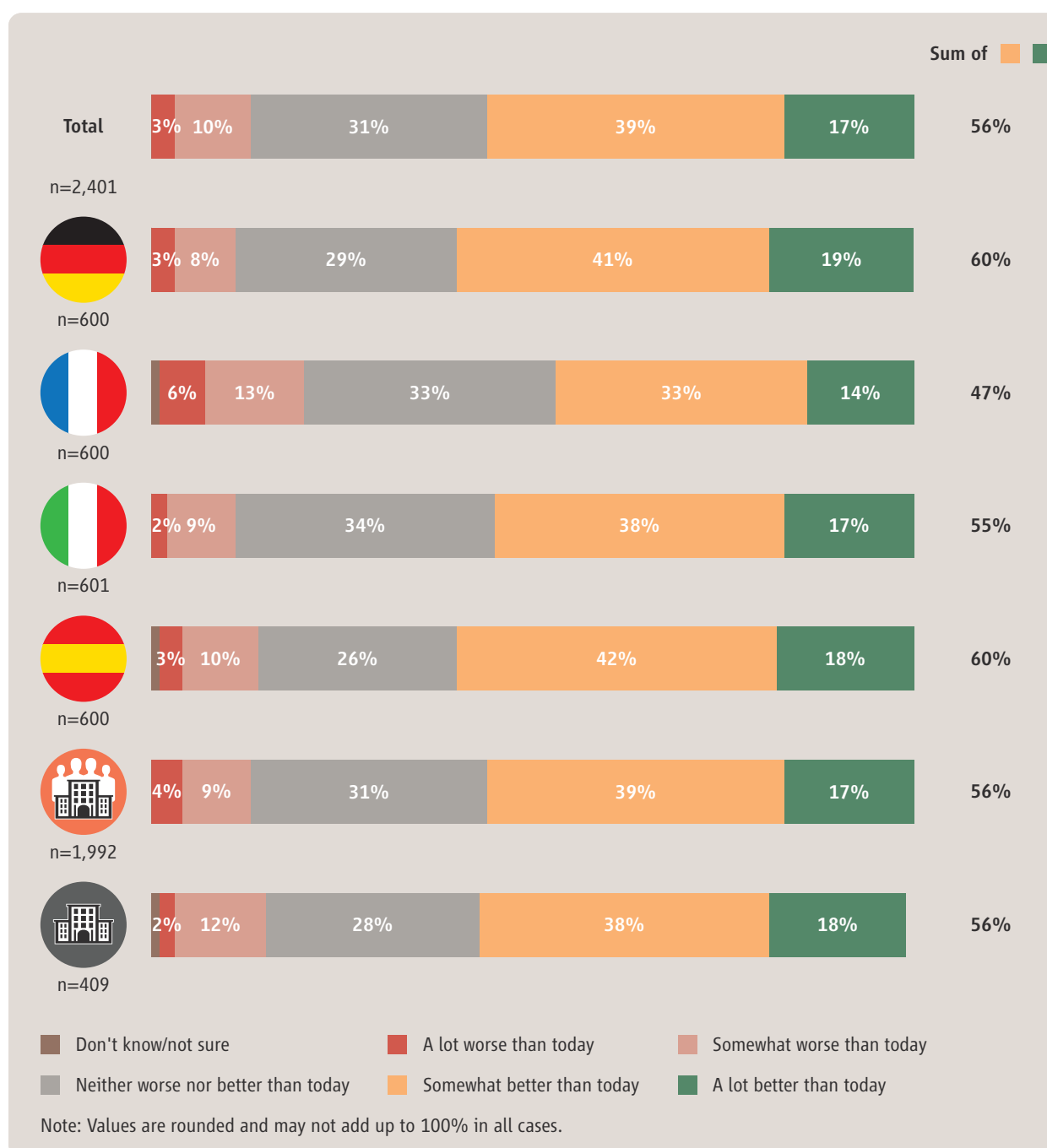
By centering this study on their perspectives, the research aims to better understand the challenges that family businesses face, what family businesses think of the EU and what they expect from the EU going forward.

### III. Current State of Business

**Business leaders are generally confident about the year ahead, but caution remains.**

Despite global economic uncertainty, businesses across Europe report a mildly positive view of the future. Over half (56%) believe that, for their company, things will get at least somewhat better than today over the next 12 months.

*Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who say the general state of their company will get better or worse in the next 12 months*



On a market level, short-term confidence is stronger for businesses headquartered in Spain and Germany, where 60% of respondents expect business conditions to improve over the next year. Italy follows at 55%, while France reflects a more cautious mood at 47% (see figure 4).

Leaders may be hopeful, but they are also measured. Overall, only 17% think improvement over the next 12 months will make things a lot better than today. This illustrates a mindset shaped by current geopolitical tensions, inflationary pressures, and regulatory uncertainty, factors that temper confidence even as many leaders remain forward-looking. Results indicate a readiness to move forward soon, provided the correct conditions are in place.

### Business leaders see a number of threats to their company's competitiveness over the next five years.

The degree of caution demonstrated above reflects a range of potential roadblocks that business leaders see in their future. While these threats cover a range of challenge areas, there is agreement across markets that the most outstanding are skilled worker shortages and the rising, unpredictable cost of energy.

Figure 5: Ranking of top threats to competitiveness over the next 5 years

Total n=2,401	 n=600	 n=600	 n=601	 n=600
<b>1 Shortage of skilled workers</b>	<b>1 Shortage of skilled workers</b>	<b>1 Rising/volatile energy prices</b>	<b>1 Shortage of skilled workers</b>	<b>1 Shortage of skilled workers</b>
<b>2 Rising/volatile energy prices</b>	<b>2 Tariffs and trade barriers (e.g. import/export duties, quotas etc.)</b>	<b>2 Shortage of skilled workers</b>	<b>2 Rising/volatile energy prices</b>	<b>2 Rising/volatile energy prices</b>
<b>3 Tariffs and trade barriers (e.g. import/export duties, quotas etc.)</b>	<b>3 Rising/volatile energy prices</b>	<b>3 Cost of administrative and compliance burdens</b>	<b>3 Geopolitical risks (e.g. war, sanctions, supply chain shocks etc.)</b>	<b>3 Tariffs and trade barriers (e.g. import/export duties, quotas etc.)</b>
<b>4 Competition from outside the EU</b>	<b>4 Competition from outside the EU</b>	<b>4 Competition from outside the EU</b>	<b>4 Tariffs and trade barriers (e.g. import/export duties, quotas etc.)</b>	<b>4 Competition from outside the EU</b>
<b>5 Cost of administrative and compliance burdens</b>	<b>5 Pressure from changing or unpredictable regulations</b>	<b>5 Cybersecurity threats</b>	<b>5 Cybersecurity threats</b>	<b>5 Cost of administrative and compliance burdens</b>

Other concerns – such as tariffs and trade barriers, administrative burden, regulatory unpredictability, and cybersecurity – also feature prominently, but vary more in their perceived severity across countries.



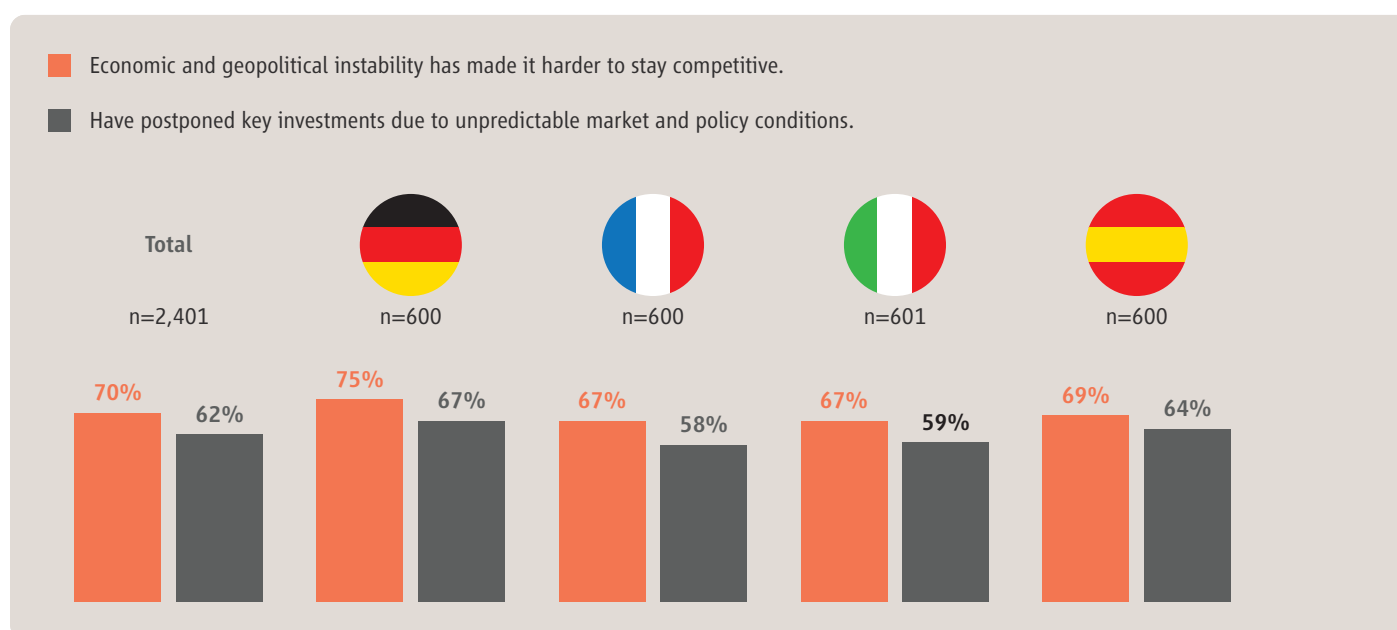
Find scenario analyses on the impact of various tariff levels on EU imports imposed by the US in "Transatlantische Kooperation statt Zollkrieg: Szenarien, Optionen, Lösungsansätze" (2025).

Market volatility has added to the array of external pressures, prompting many businesses to take compensatory action. With ongoing uncertainty around tariffs and trade agreements, it is likely they anticipate this challenging environment to persist.

**70%** of business leaders say economic and geopolitical instability has made it harder to stay competitive. Concern is especially high in Germany (75%), where sentiment is significantly above that of other markets, potentially due to Germany's heightened exposure as an export-driven economy to trade and tariff uncertainties. This reflects broader national trends, with German firms facing ongoing pressures from energy volatility, trade exposure, and structural economic challenges. The findings align with wider data showing that economic uncertainty has been more acute in Germany than in other major EU markets in recent years (see figure 6.1).

62% have postponed key investments due to market and policy unpredictability, reflecting a hesitancy to commit resources without greater clarity or stability, a sentiment shared across markets (see figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements

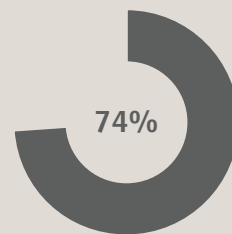


## Nonetheless, family businesses continue to demonstrate greater resilience in the face of uncertainty.

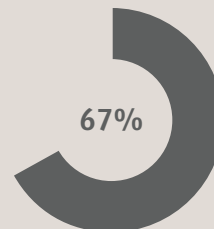
While 60% of family firms have postponed investment decisions due to market and policy conditions, this is significantly lower than the 67% reported by non-family businesses (see figure 6.2). This suggests that family-owned firms may be less reactive to short-term volatility, possibly due to a longer planning horizon aiming at intergenerational sustainability, reduced exposure to external pressures such as shareholder demands and financial strength due to typically higher equity ratios than non-family businesses.

Figure 6.2: Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements

**Economic and geopolitical instability has made it harder to stay competitive.**



**Have postponed key investments due to unpredictable market and policy conditions.**



n=1,992



n=409

Looking ahead, businesses express confidence in their long-term outlook with a strong majority expecting improvement over the next five years (see figure 7.1) family businesses are mostly in line with their non-family counterparts, reinforcing the importance of creating a policy environment that enables their sustained, long-term investment and growth (see figure 7.2).



Figure 7.1: Percentage of respondents who say the general state of their company will get better or worse in the next 5 years

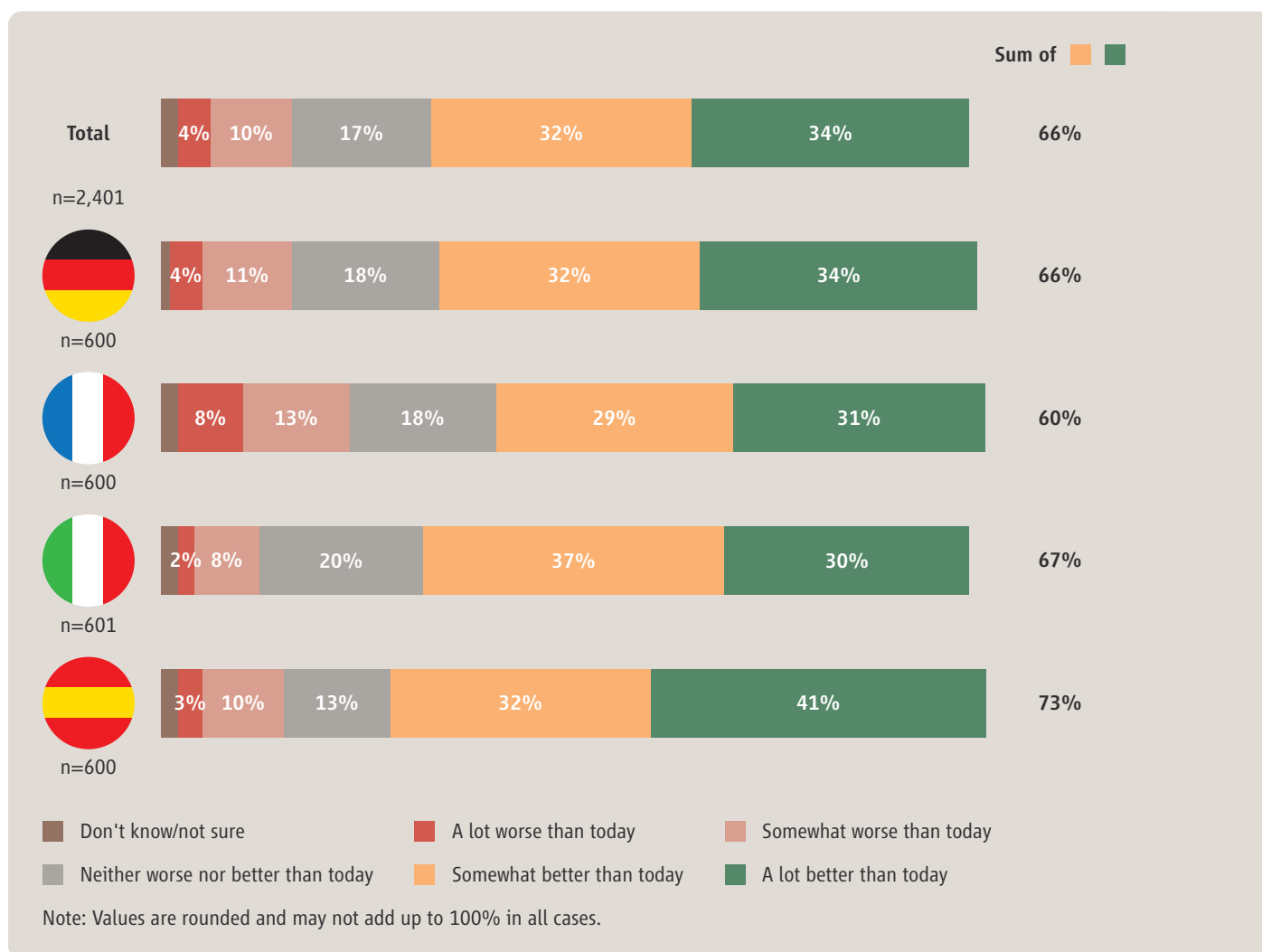
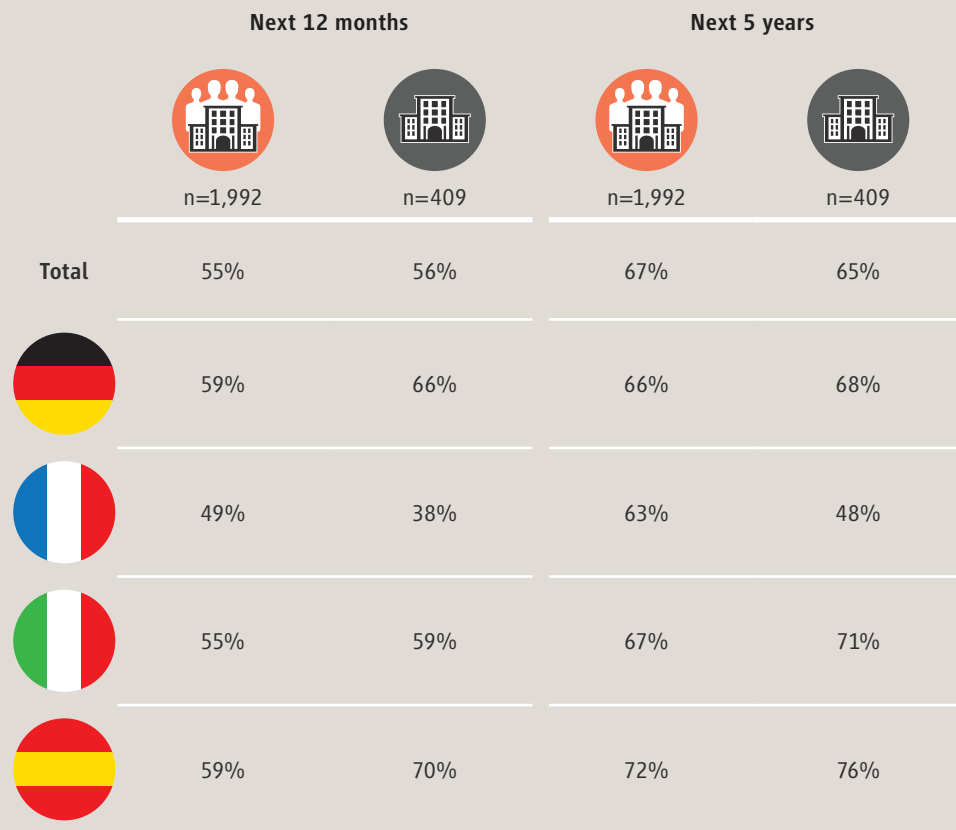


Figure 7.2: Percentage of respondents who say the general state of their company will get better in the next 12 months and the next 5 years (Family businesses vs. Non-family businesses)



### While uncertainty remains a factor in investment planning, many businesses continue to see value in their domestic markets.

6 in 10 business leaders (60%) consider the market they are headquartered in to be a good place to invest in. Confidence is especially strong among larger firms, with 63% expressing a positive view, and is highest in Germany (68%) and Spain (63%), compared to a more cautious outlook in France and Italy (both 54%) (see figure 8).

Family businesses are broadly aligned with non-family firms in their home-market investment sentiment. So, despite broader uncertainty, many businesses, including family businesses continue to see value in investing locally (see figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage of business leaders who agree that the market their business is headquartered in is a good location to invest in

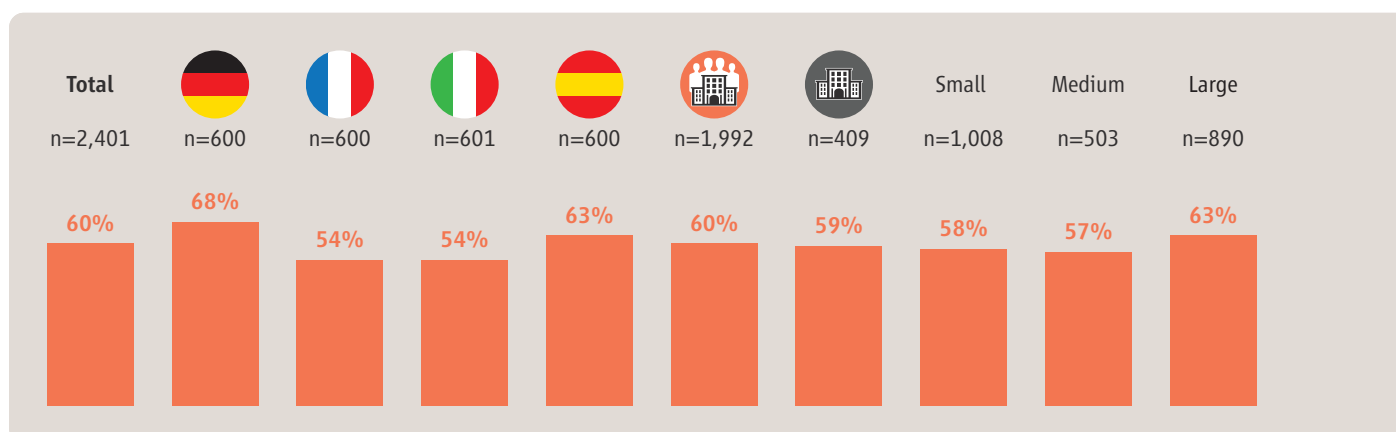






Figure 9: Top countries business leaders in each market say they would be primarily investing in within the next 12 months (outside of market in which they are headquartered)





	Total				
Next 12 months	#1 EU countries (NET)* ~ 47%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 37%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 54%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 49%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 48%
	#2 USA ~ 10%	USA ~ 16%	USA ~ 9%	USA ~ 8%	China ~ 8%
	#3 China ~ 7%	China ~ 11%	China ~ 6%	Switzerland ~ 5%	USA ~ 7%
	#4 Switzerland ~ 5%	UK ~ 4%	UK ~ 5%	China ~ 5%	UK ~ 3%
	#5 UK ~ 4%	Japan ~ 2%	Switzerland ~ 4%	UK ~ 4%	Switzerland ~ 3%

\*EU countries NET= total percentage who choose one of the 27 EU markets, with the exception of the market they are headquartered in.

However, such sentiment is not just inward looking. EU-based business leaders identify neighbouring EU countries as key investment destinations in both the short- and medium-term (see figure 9 & 10). The United States follows as the next most frequently cited destination across all four markets, with 10% of respondents naming it a top target for the next year (see figure 9)

and 11% of respondents naming it a top target for the next five years (see figure 10). China and Switzerland also appear regularly among the top five choices. This blend of regional focus and global reach underscores the importance of maintaining open, frictionless trade and investment channels within the EU – while also engaging strategically with major global economies (see figure 9 & 10).

*Figure 10: Top countries business leaders in each market say they would be primarily investing in within the next 5 years (outside of market in which they are headquartered)*

Next 5 years		Total				
	#1	EU countries (NET)* ~ 43%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 36%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 49%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 44%	EU countries (NET)* ~ 44%
	#2	USA ~ 11%	USA ~ 16%	USA ~ 9%	USA ~ 10%	USA ~ 8%
	#3	China ~ 7%	China ~ 10%	China ~ 7%	Switzerland ~ 6%	China ~ 7%
	#4	Switzerland ~ 5%	Switzerland ~ 8%	UK ~ 4%	China ~ 6%	UK ~ 4%
	#5	UK ~ 4%	UK ~ 4%	Switzerland ~ 4%	UK ~ 4%	UAE ~ 3%
		*EU countries NET= total percentage who choose one of the 27 EU markets, with the exception of the market they are headquartered in.				

## The EU's impact on competitiveness is valued – at home and across borders.

Business leaders across Europe see the European Union as having a positive impact on competitiveness, both domestically and internationally. Nearly three in four (74%) say that the EU positively influences their company's ability to compete in their home market (positive= fairly positive + very positive). The same proportion (74%) also report that the EU positively affects their competitiveness in non-EU markets. This figure rises slightly when looking at competition within the EU, with 77% stating the EU boosts their ability to compete in other member states (see figure 11.1).

This sentiment is particularly strong in Italy and Spain, where business leaders are more likely to rate the EU's impact as beneficial compared to their counterparts in Germany and France, who tend to be more reserved in their assessments (see figure 11.1).

Figure 11.1: Percentage of respondents who say the EU has a positive impact on their company's ability to compete in the following places against other businesses in their sector

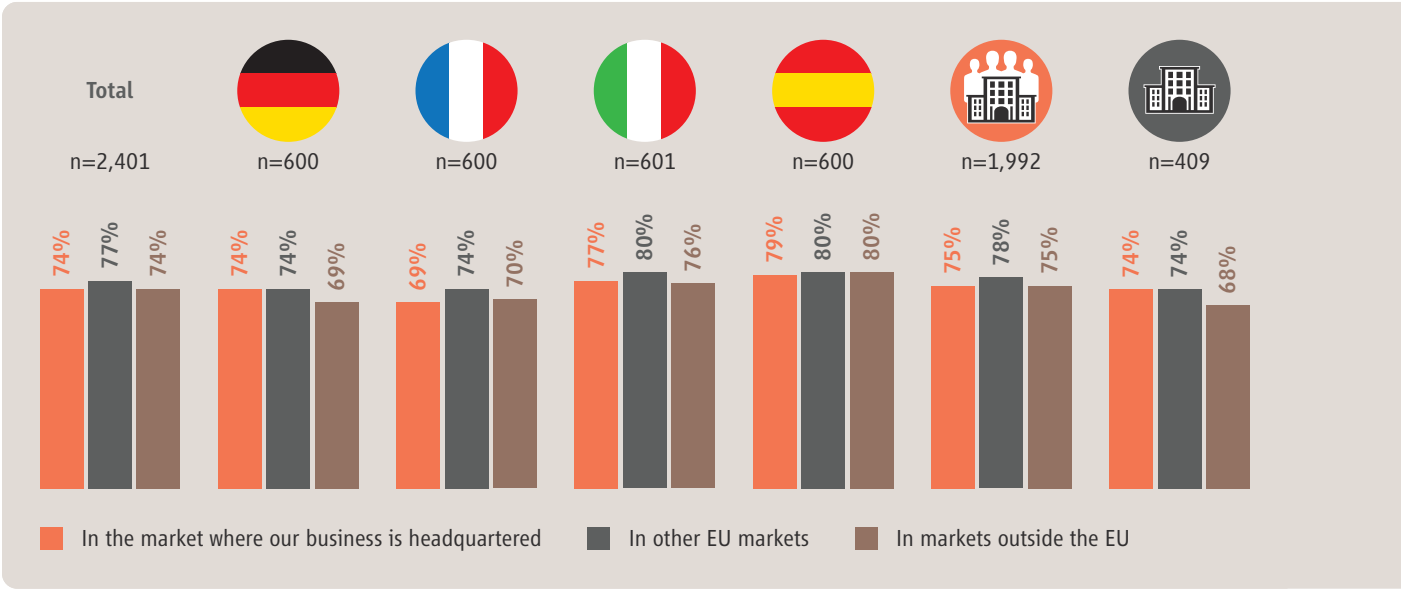
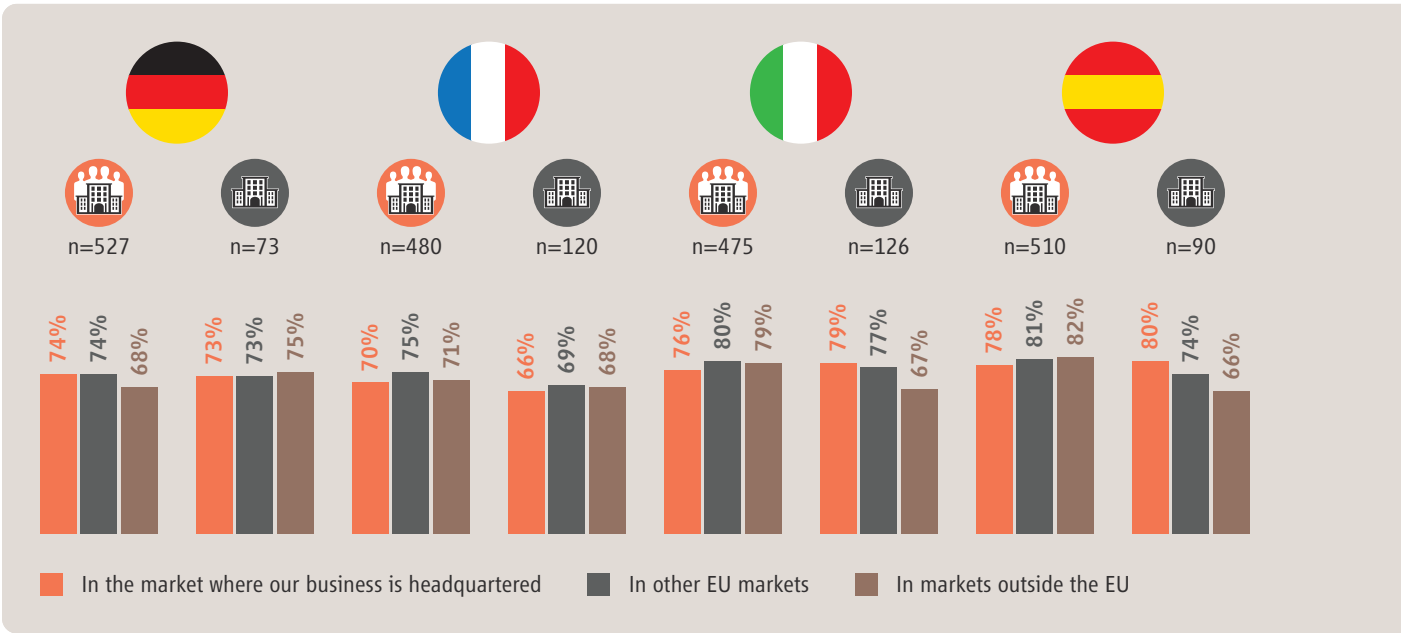


Figure 11.2: Percentage of respondents who say the EU has a positive impact on their company's ability to compete in the following places against other businesses in their sector (Family businesses vs. Non-family businesses)

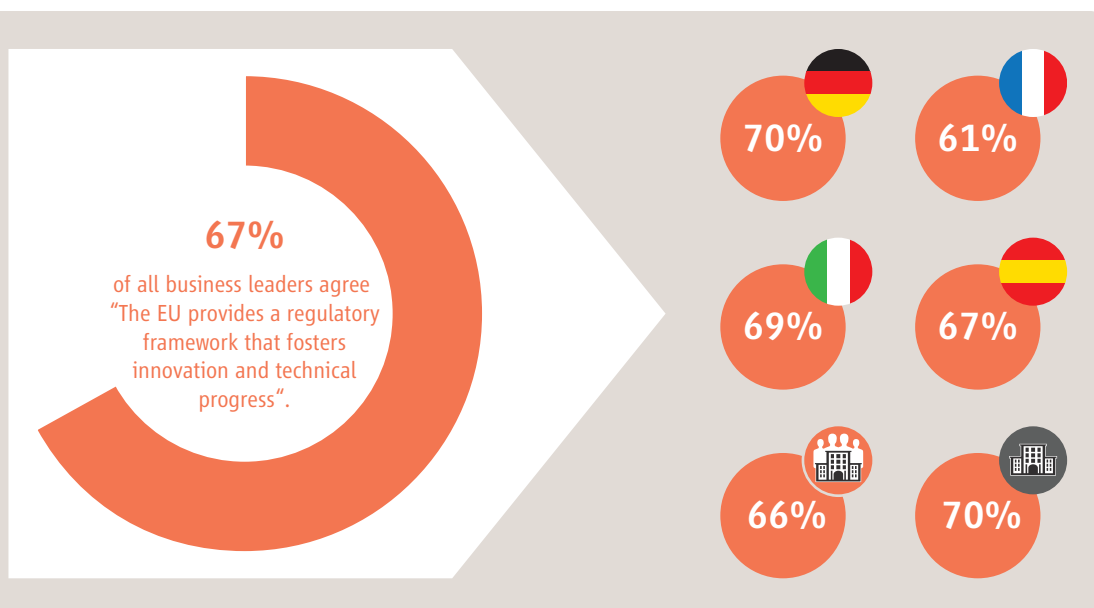


The data becomes even more compelling when viewed through the lens of family businesses. Family-owned firms headquartered in Spain (82%) and Italy (79%) are significantly more likely than non-family businesses in the same markets (66% and 67%, respectively) to see the EU as a positive influence on competitiveness in markets outside of the Union (see figure 11.2).

### EU is recognised as a facilitator of innovation, although French leaders are more reserved.

A clear majority of business leaders (67%) agree that “The EU provides a regulatory framework that fosters innovation and technical progress.” This helps explain why most report that the EU has a positive impact on their competitiveness – whether at home, across the EU, or globally (see figure 12).

*Figure 12: Percentage of respondents who agree the EU provides a regulatory framework that fosters innovation and technical progress*



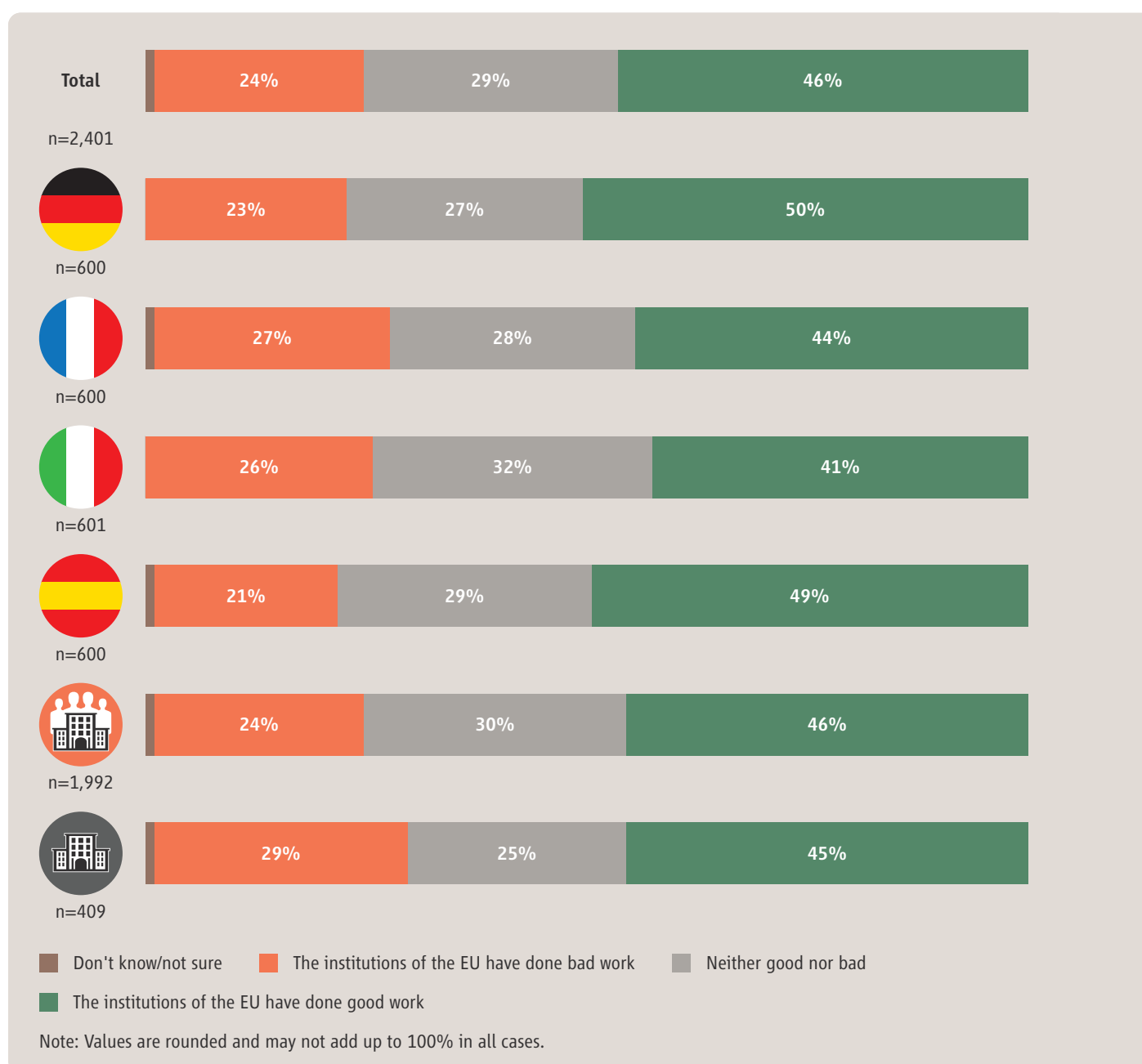
However, this perception is not evenly shared. Business leaders in France are notably less likely to view the EU as an enabler of innovation – only 61% agree with the statement, compared to 70% in Germany, 69% in Italy, and 67% in Spain (see figure 12). This marked divergence suggests that business leaders whose business is headquartered in France remain more cautious or sceptical about the EU's role in assisting innovation and technical advancement.



## Mixed reviews: Under half of business leaders rate the EU's recent performance positively.

When asked to assess how EU institutions have performed over the past five years in shaping economic policy and boosting competitiveness, fewer than half of all business leaders (46%) say the EU has done a good job. Meanwhile, nearly one in four (24%) believe the EU has done a poor job – highlighting a significant undercurrent of dissatisfaction (see figure 13).

*Figure 13: Percentage of respondents who say the institutions of the EU such as the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Council, have done good or bad work over the past 5 years in shaping economic policy and enhancing the competitiveness of Europe*



This pattern is remarkably consistent across markets. Roughly one in five business leaders in Spain (21%) and Germany (23%) are critical of the EU's performance, rising to around one in four in Italy (26%) and France (27%).

A further 29% of respondents say they neither agree nor disagree – indicating a large share of business leaders expect more from the EU. This uncertainty suggests that the EU has significant work to do to improve framework conditions for business leaders across the Union.

Perceptions vary notably by business type. Leaders of non-family businesses are more likely to view the EU's recent performance negatively than those from family businesses (29% vs. 24%). Still, nearly a quarter of family business leaders also express dissatisfaction. This underlines the importance of rebuilding confidence across all business segments and addressing concerns around how EU policymaking translates into tangible business benefits.

## IV. Expectations towards the EU

### Administration processes are draining growth potential and EU-wide regulation burdens are worsening.

Business leaders across all four markets are unified in their assessment: The burden of administrative processes and regulatory compliance is not only growing, but actively stalling competitiveness.

Nearly 4 in 5 of all business leaders (79%) report that compliance demands such as: ESG and labour regulations have increased significantly. Just over 3 in 4 (76%) agree that administrative processes related to tax and reporting requirements are consuming time and resources that could otherwise fuel growth. These pressures are especially acute in Germany, where 81% cite increased compliance demands and 79% report time lost to tax-related administrative work (see figure 14).

Furthermore, almost 3 in 4 business leaders (73%) say they require dedicated compliance resources that were not needed in the past. Business leaders whose business is headquartered in Italy are most likely to agree with this, with 77% reporting that dedicated compliance expertise and/or resources is now necessary – when it was not required in the past – more than any other market (see figure 14).

Fairness is also a concern: With 72% of leaders agreeing that incentives such as grants or tax breaks tend to favour newer or fast-growing firms over long-established or family-owned businesses. This sentiment is especially pronounced in Germany (76%), while fewer leaders in France (69%) agree. Notably, business leaders from non-family businesses are significantly more likely to hold this view than those from family businesses (78% vs. 71%), suggesting a broader perception of systemic imbalance that affects both groups, albeit in different ways (see figure 14).

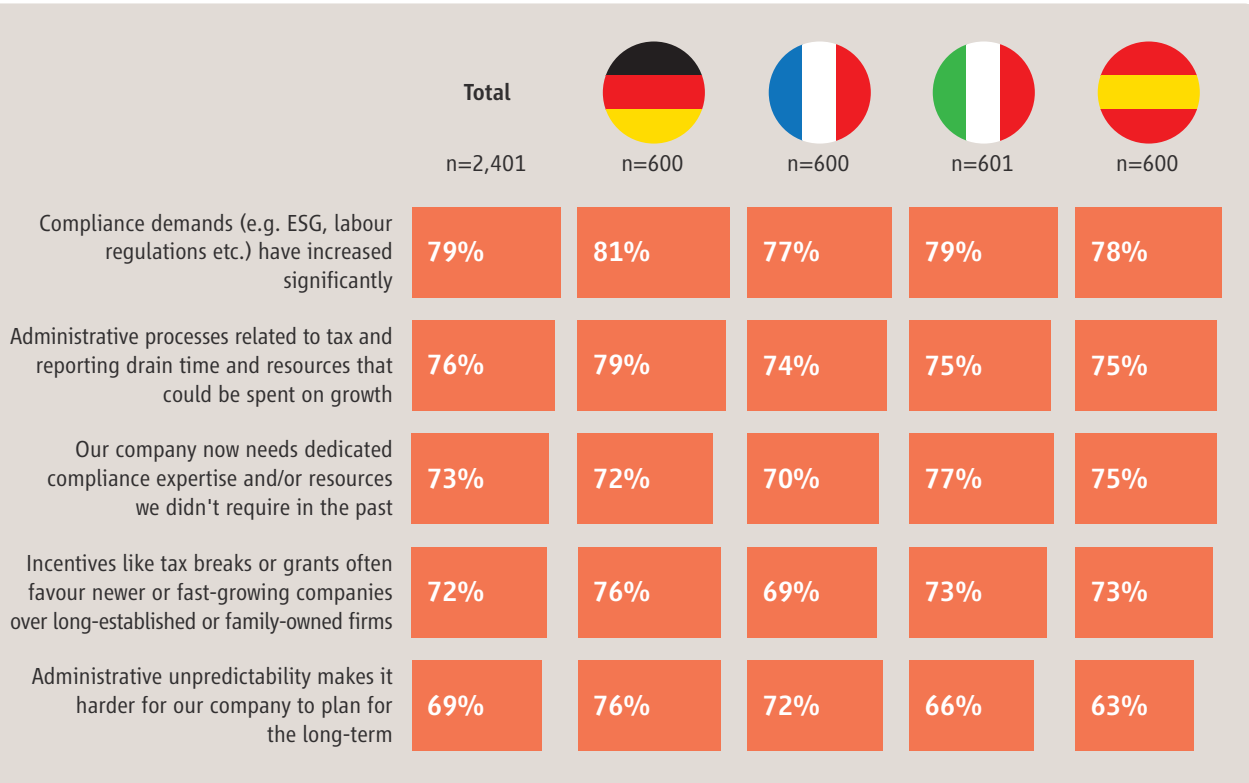
Finally, administrative unpredictability is making long-term planning more difficult. 69% say shifting rules hinder their ability to strategise – rising to 76% in Germany, but notably lower in Spain (63%) (see figure 14).

Together, these findings underscore a critical message: European businesses demand smarter and simpler rules. The growing compliance load must be addressed if the EU is to strengthen resilience and unlock growth.



*Further information on bureaucracy as a barrier to growth from a German perspective can be found in the publication "Bürokratie als Wachstumsbremse: Bestandsaufnahme und Reformansätze" (Jahresmonitor der Stiftung Familienunternehmen, 2024).*

Figure 14: Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements



## Bureaucratic complexity is deepening.

Amidst concerns about regulatory overload, the data also reveals that businesses are nearly unanimous in their frustration with EU-wide rules. 77% of business leaders say that EU regulations today impose a heavier bureaucratic burden on their company than they did a decade ago. This view holds consistently across all four major markets – ranging from 75% of business leaders whose company is headquartered in France to 78% in both Germany and Spain (see figure 15).

The sense that the EU has added to a company's administrative burden is something that both family and non-family businesses agree on. In Germany, 78% of family businesses and 77% of non-family businesses say the burden has increased. In France, the figures are 76% and 73%, respectively. In Italy, 75% of family businesses agree, while the figure rises slightly to 79% among non-family firms. In Spain, 77% of family businesses, compared to 84% of non-family businesses who report feeling greater pressure (see figure 16).

Figure 15: Percentage of business leaders who agree with the following statement, EU-wide regulations put a heavier bureaucratic burden on their company than 10 years ago

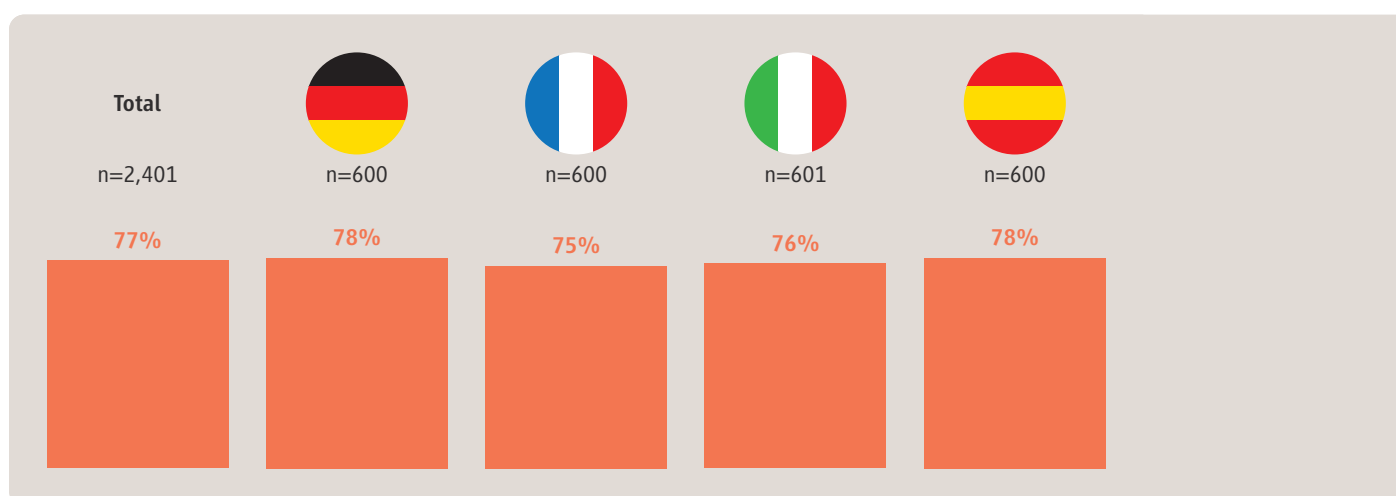
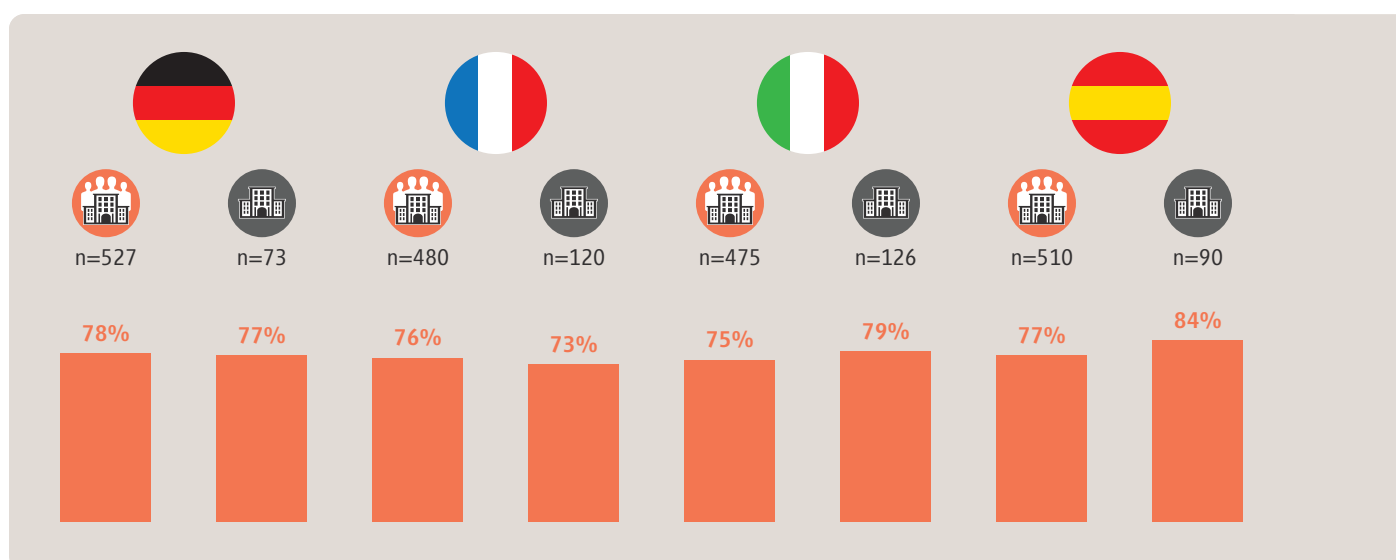


Figure 16: Percentage of business leaders from family businesses/non-family businesses who agree with the following statement, EU-wide regulations put a heavier bureaucratic burden on their company than 10 years ago



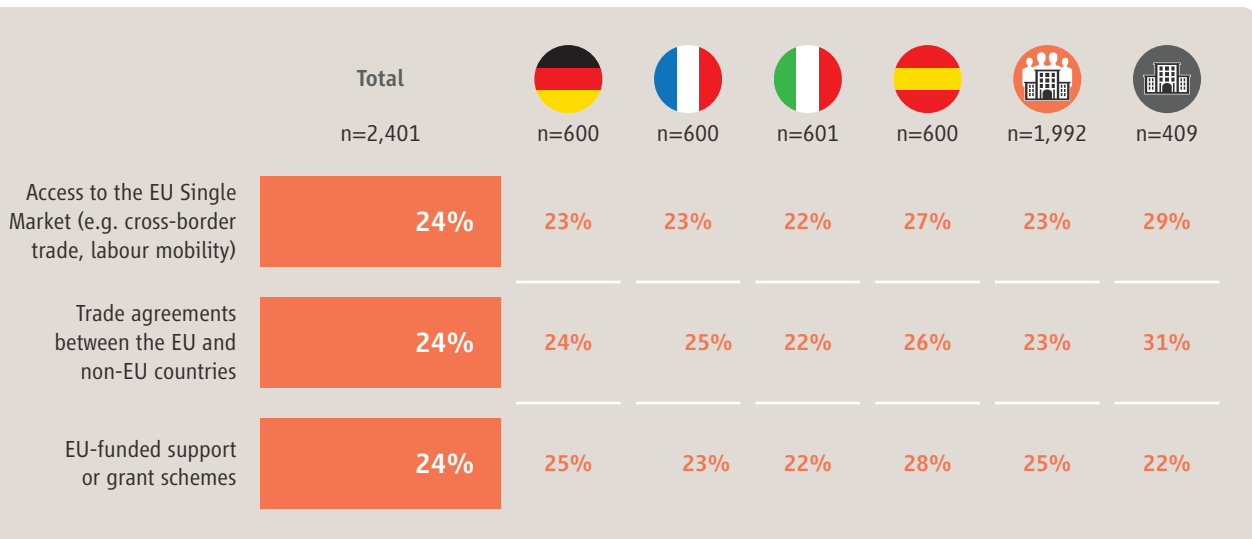
These findings underscore a common truth: Regardless of company structure, the regulatory environment is becoming harder to navigate. Family businesses – despite their long-term orientation and embedded governance – are just as exposed to mounting compliance demands as other firms. Crucially, while businesses do not reject regulation in general, these findings add weight to a broader call: Regulation must be better designed. For both family and non-family companies to thrive, EU policy must shift toward frameworks that reduce administrative drag and enable long-term resilience (for detail refer to section V; see figure 21).

## More EU is welcome to businesses – if it works better in practice.

There is strong intent to engage with EU led initiatives and frameworks. While current uptake remains limited and consistent across markets, many businesses plan to engage more.

Business leaders want to engage with EU-lead initiatives and frameworks. Today, around a quarter of firms report using frameworks such as the Single Market, EU-negotiated trade agreements, or EU-funded grant mechanisms (24%) (see figure 17).

Figure 17: Percentage of business leaders who say their company currently uses the following EU initiatives/frameworks to enhance growth/competitiveness

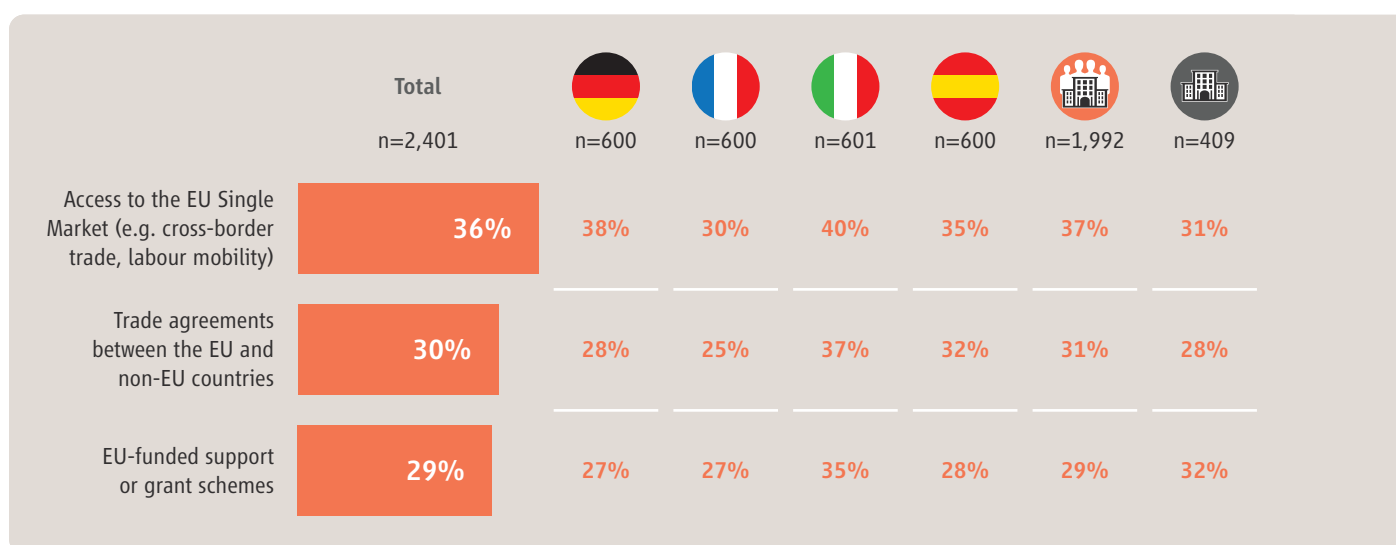


However, in all three areas, the share of businesses intending to engage in the future, exceeds the share currently doing so. Of the options included in the survey, access to the EU Single Market is the most widely used element of the EU today and is also seen as the most attractive going forward, with 36% of firms planning to engage. Interest in EU trade agreements is similarly strong, with 30% planning to use them, and 29% of businesses say they intend to explore EU funding opportunities in the future, rising to 35% among businesses headquartered in Italy (see figure 18).

The findings suggest that Italian businesses in particular see EU-level initiatives as an important lever for growth and are particularly open to deeper engagement in the years ahead.



Figure 18: Percentage of respondents who say their company currently does not use the following EU initiatives/frameworks, but plan to in the future to enhance growth/competitiveness



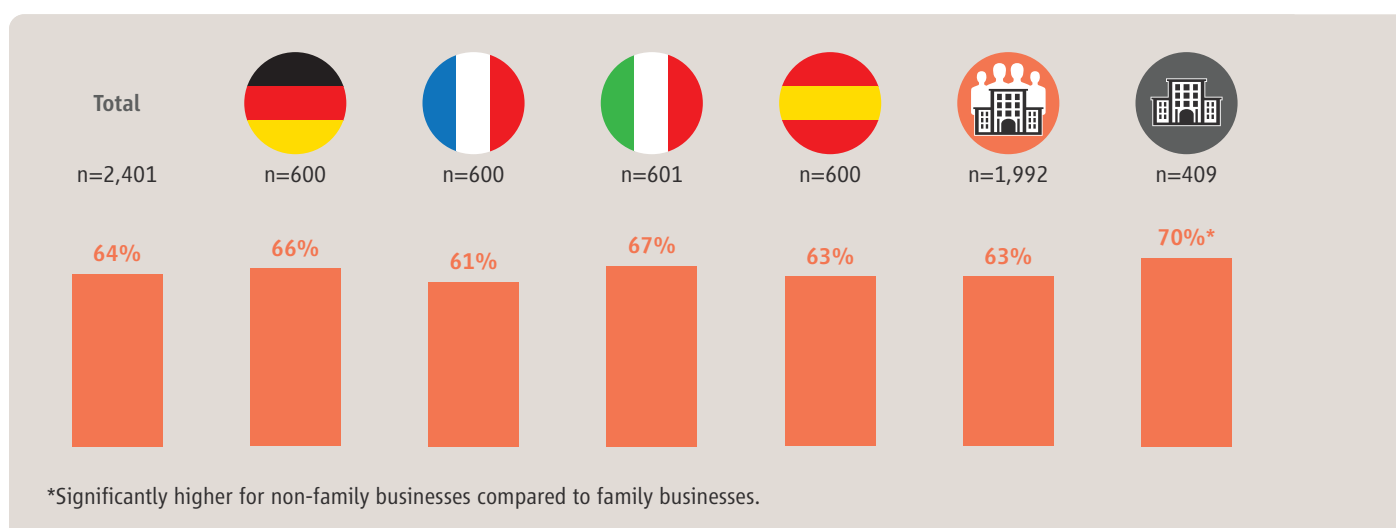
## The Single Market remains a key lever for competitiveness and resilience.

It is not surprising that businesses are looking at increasing their exposure to the EU Single Market when a strong majority recognise the economic value a more integrated Single Market holds. Nearly two-thirds (64%) agree that further deepening the Single Market holds economic potential for their business rising to 67% in Italy and 66% in Germany. This reinforces the need for the EU to deliver fully on its Four Freedoms, which are the foundation of the Single Market and essential to cross-border trade, investment, and mobility (e.g. of goods, services, capital, and people).



A critical analysis of the state of the Single Market and the fundamental freedoms can be found in the essay "Single market of freedom: Legal basis and new perspectives" published in "Beyond bureaucracy: A new vision for Europe" (Annual bulletin of the Advisory Board of the Foundation for Family Businesses, p. 29 et seq.; 2025).

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents who agree a deepening of the EU Single Market holds economic potential for their business

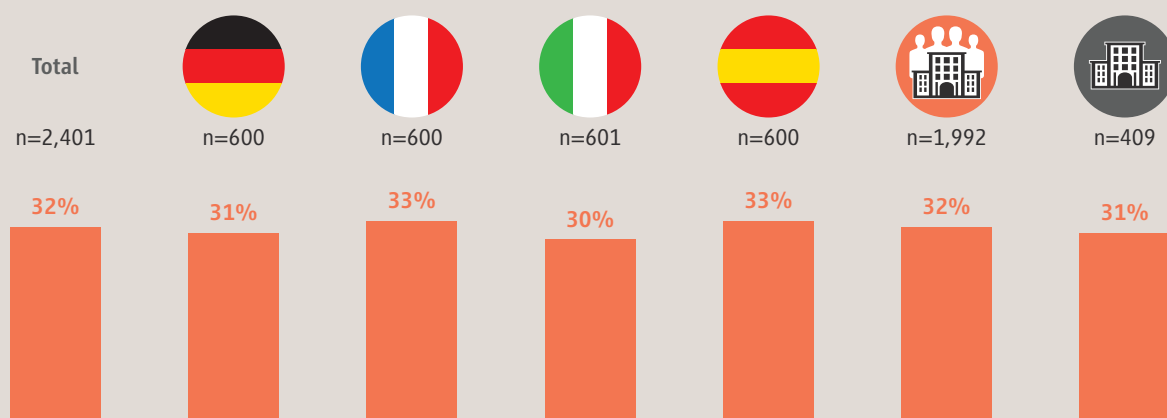


A caveat within this is that this view is more strongly held among non-family businesses (70%), compared to 63% of family-owned firms. This difference may relate in part to ongoing concerns about administrative burden and regulatory complexity, which continue to shape how businesses experience the Single Market in practice (see figure 19).

This sense of potential extends beyond growth. Nearly a third (32%) of business leaders say that improved access to cross-border trade and export markets would also strengthen their company's resilience in the years ahead – a view shared consistently across all four markets, including Germany (31%), France (33%), Italy (30%) and Spain (33%) (see figure 20).

The findings point to a strong appetite for deeper EU-level integration, with businesses expecting broader market access something that could be strengthened by delivering on the full promise of the Single Market.

*Figure 20: Percentage of respondents who say improved access to cross-border trade and export markets would help their company to be more resilient in the future*



## But this interest comes with a clear condition: It must be simpler.

Business leaders want more EU, but only if it is easier to work with.

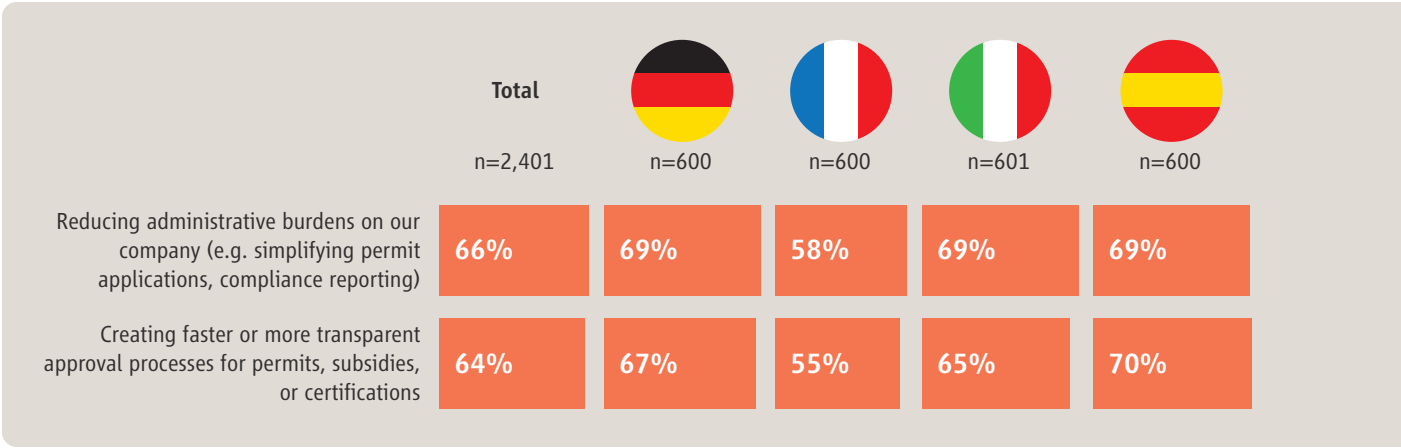
Two-thirds (66%) of respondents agree that EU reforms reducing administrative burdens on their company would facilitate their competitiveness. 64% agree a faster and more transparent approval process for permits, subsidies or certifications would be beneficial.



For a critical reflection on EU Single Market integration refer to "Helping the EU's crown jewel – the single market regain its sparkle" published in "Beyond bureaucracy: A new vision for Europe" (Annual bulletin of the Advisory Board of the Foundation for Family Businesses, p. 1 et seq.; 2025).

The data points to a clear demand for simplification across the board. Even in more cautious markets like France, at least half of respondents agree that reducing complexity would have a positive impact (see figure 21).

Figure 21: Percentage of business leaders who think the following EU reforms would make their company more competitive



**To stay competitive, businesses look to the EU to facilitate better skilled labour access.**

**Skills access highlights another call to action for the EU. Business leaders want better access to skilled labour, which is one of their top concerns.**

Access to skilled workers is a priority across all markets. When asked what would help improve their company's future resilience, over a third of business leaders (36%) point to improved access to talent. This view is consistent across markets and business types, ranging from 34% in Italy to 37% in Spain (see figure 22).

This emphasis on skilled labour reflects deeper concern. Across markets, a shortage of skilled workers is considered the number one threat to competitiveness over the next five years (see figure 23).

The message is clear: **Businesses are looking to the EU to reduce friction in access to talent**, whether through improved labour mobility, better alignment of skills systems, or cross-border recruitment pathways. But as with other EU-led mechanisms, this foundational freedom must be easier to navigate in practice. If the EU is to address workforce shortages meaningfully, it must ensure that labour mobility works not only in principle, but in practice – through simpler, more coordinated systems.

Figure 22: Percentage of business leaders who say improved access to skilled labour would help make their company more resilient in the future

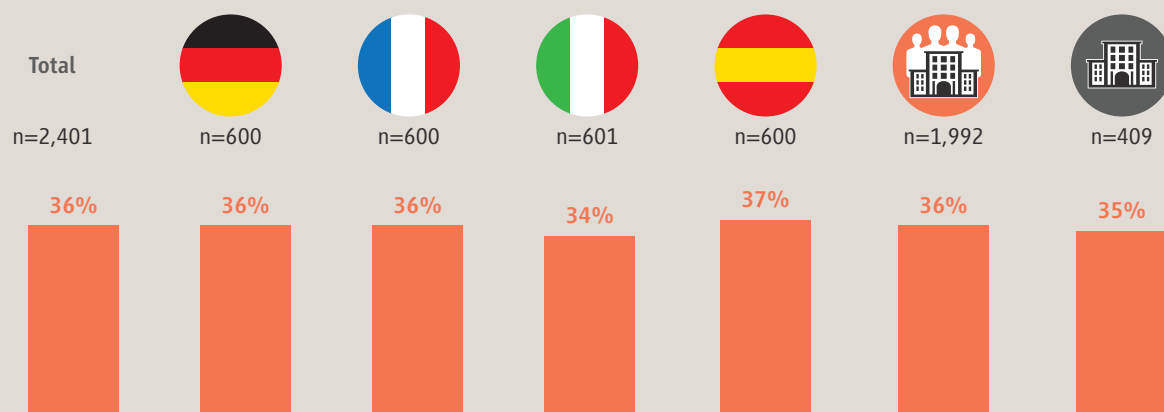
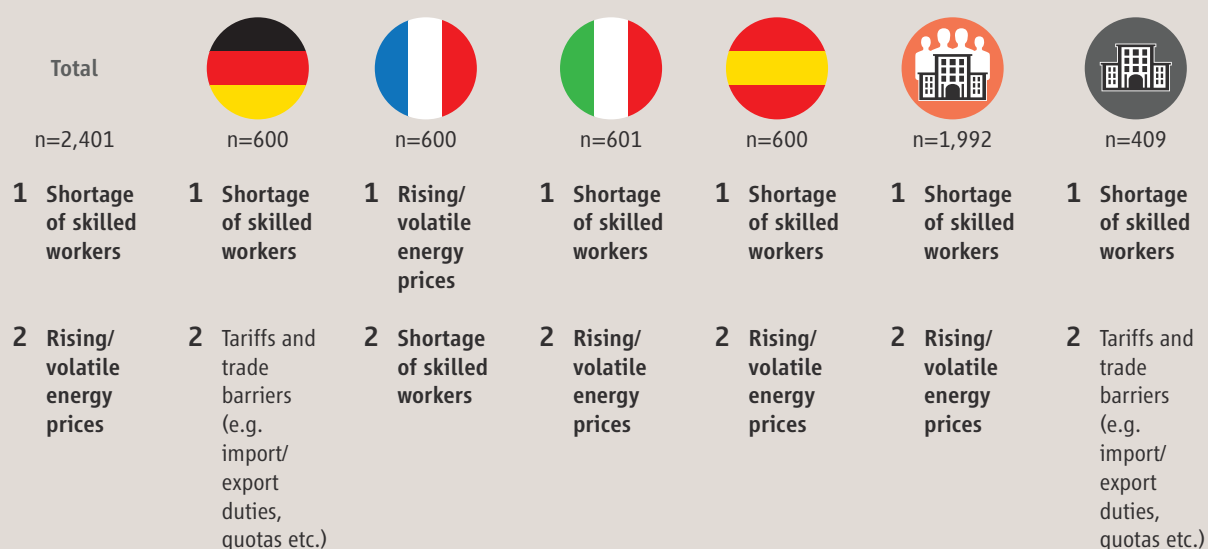


Figure 23: Ranking of top threats to competitiveness over the next 5 years



Also compare the paper of Garnitz et al. on succession in German family businesses "Nachfolge-Monitoring deutscher Familienunternehmen" (ifo Schnelldienst 12/2023, 76. Jahrgang, 2023).

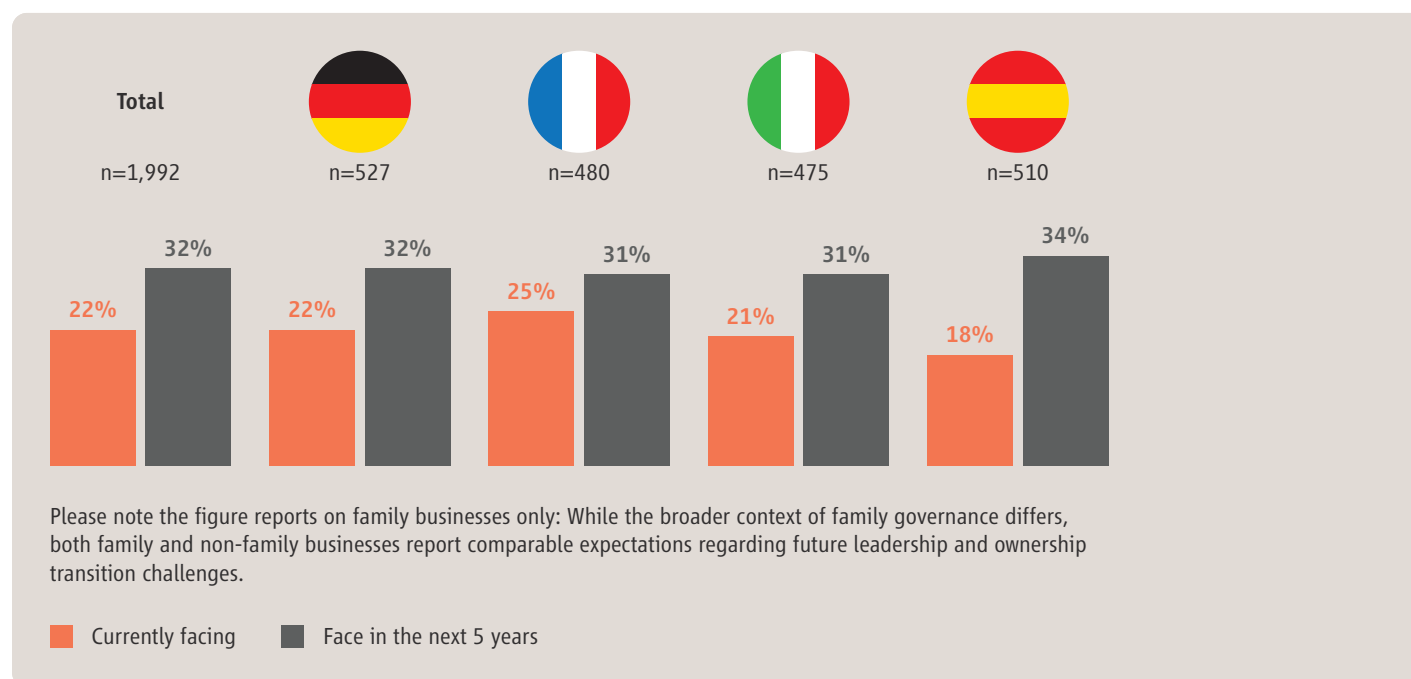
## Family businesses face an additional challenge: Planning for generational transitions.

The results show that the majority of family businesses have a plan to stay family run. Most family businesses are planning for continuity and intend to maintain family involvement across executive leadership and advisory roles (please refer to figure 3.1).

**But that does not mean that planning for succession is simple.** Despite their long-term outlook and operational resilience, many family businesses anticipate the ownership transitions they have in the years ahead will bring planning challenges. While just over one in five (22%)

are currently navigating leadership or ownership handovers, this rises to 32% when looking five years ahead. The shift is present across markets, particularly in Spain, where more than a third of family business leaders foresee transition as a future pressure point (34%), a large jump from the fifth who are feeling it right now (see figure 24).

*Figure 24: Percentage of business leaders who say support for planning leadership or ownership transitions to the next generation is a challenge they are currently facing or a challenge they expect to face in the next 5 years*



**Planning generational transitions is a key priority for family businesses, with many anticipating challenges in the next five years.** Strengthening frameworks that are accessible to family firms and ensure smooth succession, next-generation leadership readiness, and willingness will be critical.



## V. Conclusion: A Call for Smarter Integration

**Businesses across the EU, including many of its most established family firms, remain committed to its economic future.** They are planning, investing, and adapting with a long-term view. This study shows that they are not pulling back, they are ready to do more, provided the right conditions are in place.

There is strong belief in the value of EU-level frameworks, and a clear willingness to engage more actively in the years ahead. But businesses are also pragmatic: For the European Union to stay competitive, the tools it offers must be easier to access, simpler to use, and more predictable in practice.

At the heart of this is a call to reaffirm the EU's founding principles – the Four Freedoms: The free movement of goods, services, capital, and people. These are not just legal constructs; they are the basis of how businesses grow and operate within the Single Market. Business leaders are asking for renewed focus on these freedoms and practical improvements to make them work better across borders.

The priorities are clear:

- Simplify EU regulation
- Strengthen Single Market integration, particularly around labour mobility and digital coordination
- Make skilled labour more accessible
- And for family businesses, enable continuity through stable, long-term planning conditions

These are not new demands – but they are increasingly urgent. Businesses, including family businesses, are ready to contribute to the EU's next chapter. They now look to EU institutions to match that commitment with delivery ensuring the frameworks they offer are fit for purpose and future-ready.

The opportunity is real: To revitalise the Single Market, uphold the Four Freedoms, and equip EU businesses to build a more competitive, connected, and confident Union.



*For an insight into the challenges of the internationalising owner family itself refer to “Family, inheritance and tax law obstacles impeding the mobility of the international entrepreneurial family” published in “Beyond bureaucracy: A new vision for Europe” (Annual bulletin of the Advisory Board of the Foundation for Family Businesses, p. 87 et seq.; 2025).*





# Appendix

## Study Data

- **Target Group:** Business leaders of companies with 10 or more employees, across Germany, France, Italy and Spain. Business leaders can be defined as full-time owners or employees at an executive level or above, who have been with the business for at least a year.
- **Sample Size:** 2,401 participants, split evenly across markets (Germany: 600, France: 600, Italy: 601, Spain: 600)
- **Sampling Method:** Quota-based selection to ensure a minimum of family businesses in each market within the following ranges (80-90% (DE); 75-83% (FR), 75-85% (IT) and c.85% (ES)), balancing across markets applied on business size.
- **Interview Method:** 10-to-15-minute self-completed online survey in respondents' local language.
- **Survey Period:** May 28-July 7, 2025

## Description of Sample

The following breakdown shows the overall sample composition by demographic.

### Regional Distribution

- Germany: 25%
- France: 25%
- Italy: 25%
- Spain: 25%

### Gender

- Male: 65%
- Female: 35%

### Age Groups

- Gen Z 18-28: 4%
- Millennials 29-44: 57%
- Gen X 45-60: 36%
- Boomers & Silent Generation 61+: 3%

### Employment Status

- Employed full-time (employed by a company, 30 hours or more per week): 92%

- Self-Employed or running my own business full-time (30 hours or more per week): 8%

### **Industry**

- Construction: 10%
- Manufacturing: 11%
- Trade & Hospitality: 10%
- Business and Professional Services: 13%
- Information and Communication Technology: 14%
- Transport & Logistics: 11%
- Energy & Utilities: 5%
- Health: 6%
- Retail: 10%
- Education: 6%
- Other services: 3%
- Preferred not to answer: 1%

### **Family businesses in each market**

- Total: 83%
- Germany: 88%
- France: 80%
- Italy: 79%
- Spain: 85%

### **Business Size**

- Small (10-49) :42%
- Medium (50-249): 21%
- Large (250+): 37%

### **Revenue**

- Under 100M: 78%
- 100M or over: 22%

## Questionnaire

### Section 1: Screener

Note for reader: **CONTINUE** and **CLOSE** in these screener questions show where respondents were screened in, or out of the survey

**S1. In which country is your company primarily headquartered?**

*Please select one.*

1	France	CONTINUE
2	Germany	
3	Italy	
4	Spain	
5	Other	CLOSE

**S2. Which of the following best describes your current working situation?**

*Please select one.*

1	Employed full-time (employed by a company, 30 hours or more per week)	CONTINUE
2	Self-Employed or running my own business full-time (30 hours or more per week)	
3	Self-Employed or running my own business part-time (less than 30 hours per week)	CLOSE
4	Employed part-time (employed by a company, less than 30 hours per week)	
98	Other (e.g. unemployed, retired, full-time student, etc.)	
99	Prefer not to say	

**S3. Which of the following best describes your position or level within your organisation?**

*Please select one.*

1	Senior executive level (CEO, Owner, Founder, Finance Director, etc.)	CONTINUE
2	Executive level (General Manager, Executive Vice President, Executive Director, etc.)	
3	Upper-level management (Senior Director, Vice President, Senior Vice President, etc.)	CLOSE
4	Mid-level management (Director, Associate Director, Senior Manager, etc.)	
5	Lower-level management (Supervisor, Associate Manager, etc.)	
6	Experienced (non-manager)	
7	Entry level	
98	Other	
99	None of the above	

**S4. How long have you been working in your current role?**

*Please select one answer only.*

1	Less than 1 year	CLOSE
2	1 to 3 years	CONTINUE
3	4 to 5 years	
4	More than 5 years	

**S5A. Including yourself, approximately how many full-time employees are currently employed by your company in total?**

*Please select one response.*

1	1 employee/I am the only employee	CLOSE
2	2-9 employees	CONTINUE
3	10-49 employees	
4	50-249 employees	
5	250-499 employees	
6	500-999 employees	
7	1,000-4,999 employees	
8	5,000-9,999 employees	
9	More than 10,000 employees	CLOSE
10	Don't know/not sure	

**S5B. You previously said your company currently employs... [ANSWER GIVEN AT S5A]**

**Could you please tell us how many employees are employed in [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1], followed by the total headcount in all other markets. If you are unsure, please provide your best estimate.**

*If your company only operates in [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1], please type in "0" under "in all other markets."*

<div><div>_1. In</div><div>[RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1]</div><div>[Text box 1 and above]</div></div>	<div><div>_2. In all other markets</div><div>[Text box 0 and above]</div></div>
--	---

**S8. Would you describe your company as a family business?**

*Please select one response.*

1	Yes
2	No
97	Don't know/Not sure

**S9. Which of the following best describes your company's main industry?**

*Please select one response.*

1	Construction
2	Manufacturing
3	Trade & Hospitality
4	Business and Professional Services
5	Information and Communication Technology
6	Transport & Logistics
7	Energy & Utilities
8	Health
9	Retail
10	Education
95	Other services: please specify
99	Prefer not to answer

**S10. To better understand family involvement in your company's governance, please indicate whether the following statements apply to your organisation.**

*Please select one option for each row.*

		Yes	No	Don't know/ not sure
A	Family members of the current or previous CEO/Owner are currently active in executive management			
B	The company has a supervisory or advisory board			
C	Family members of the current or previous CEO/Owner are active on the supervisory or advisory board			
D	There is a designated successor for executive management from the current or previous CEO/Owners family			
E	There is a designated successor for the supervisory or advisory board from the current or previous CEO/Owners family			

## Section 2: Business Outlook

### Q1. What do you think the general state of your company will be in each of the following?

Please select one option on each row.

		A lot worse than today	Somewhat worse than today	Neither worse nor better than today	Somewhat better than today	A lot better than today	Don't know/ not sure
<b>A</b>	In the next 12 months						
<b>B</b>	In the next 5 years						

### Q2. What are the most pressing challenges your company is currently facing?

For the following question, you will see the term "Compliance burdens". If you are unsure of what is meant by the term "compliance burdens" then hovering your mouse over the text (where it appears) will provide you with a definition of what we mean by this.

Please select one option on each row.

By 'Compliance burdens' we mean the time, money, and effort businesses spend to meet rules and regulations – like tax filings, employment laws, safety standards, reporting, or permits.

		This is a challenge that we are currently facing	This isn't a challenge that we are currently facing, but is one we expect to face in the next 5 years	This isn't a challenge we are currently facing and we don't expect to face it in the next 5 years	This is a challenge our company has already overcome and don't expect to face again	Don't know/ not sure
<b>A</b>	Difficulty attracting or retaining skilled workers					
<b>B</b>	Rising operational costs (e.g. energy, materials, logistics)					
<b>C</b>	Trade barriers or tariffs affecting exports/imports					
<b>D</b>	Complying with sustainability and social responsibility regulations					
<b>E</b>	Competition from international markets					

		This is a challenge that we are currently facing	This isn't a challenge that we are currently facing, but is one we expect to face in the next 5 years	This isn't a challenge we are currently facing and we don't expect to face it in the next 5 years	This is a challenge our company has already overcome and don't expect to face again	Don't know/ not sure
F	Support for planning leadership handovers or ownership transitions to the next generation					
G	Adapting to digital transformation (e.g. implementing new digital tools, AI integration, automating processes, upgrading IT systems etc.)					
H	Financial insecurity or declining profit margins					
I	Regulatory complexity and compliance burdens (e.g. tax laws, labor regulations etc.)					

**Q11. What will be the biggest external threats to your company's competitiveness over the next 5 years?**

*Please rank up to five options, placing the option that you consider to be the biggest external threat to your company's competitiveness at number 1, and so on.*

As a reminder, if you are unsure of what is meant by the term “compliance burdens” then hovering your mouse over the text (where it appears) will provide you with a definition of what we mean by this.

1	Tariffs and trade barriers (e.g. import/export duties, quotas etc.)
2	Unpredictable trade conditions (e.g. delays, supply chain disruptions etc.)
3	Shortage of skilled workers
4	Pressure from changing or unpredictable regulations
5	Rising/volatile energy prices
6	Limited access to financing or investment capital
7	Increasing volume of regulatory and compliance burdens
8	Cost of administrative and compliance burdens

9	Geopolitical risks (e.g. war, sanctions, supply chain shocks etc.)
10	Competition from outside the EU
11	Cybersecurity threats (e.g. data breaches, ransomware, cyberattacks etc.)
99	Other (please specify)

**Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

*Please use a 7-point scale where 1 means that you "strongly disagree" and 7 means that you "strongly agree".*

	1– Strongly disagree	2	3	4– Neither agree nor disagree	5	6	7– Strongly agree	Don't know/ not sure
<b>A</b> Our company is financially healthy and well positioned to compete								
<b>B</b> Family businesses are under-recognised as drivers of European competitiveness								
<b>C</b> Economic and geopolitical instability has made it harder to stay competitive against other firms operating on a multinational level (e.g. rising costs, supply chain delays etc.) (SHOWN ONLY TO THOSE WHO OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY S5B_2=1 OR ABOVE)								
<b>C</b> Economic and geopolitical instability has made it harder to stay competitive in local and national markets (SHOWN ONLY TO THOSE WHO DON'T OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY S5B_2=0)								
<b>D</b> We have postponed key investments due to unpredictable market and policy conditions								



**Q4. Compared to your competitors in [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1], how would you describe your company's current competitive position?**

*Please select one response.*

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Much stronger than our competitors     |
| 2  | A little stronger than our competitors |
| 3  | About the same as our competitors      |
| 4  | A little weaker than our competitors   |
| 5  | Much weaker than our competitors       |
| 97 | Don't know/not sure                    |

**Q15. How would you rate [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1] as an investment location for your company?**

*Please select one response.*

- |    |                      |
|----|----------------------|
| 1  | Very bad             |
| 2  | Somewhat bad         |
| 3  | Neither good nor bad |
| 4  | Somewhat good        |
| 5  | Very good            |
| 97 | Don't know/not sure  |

**Q16. Thinking about your company as a whole, which countries outside of [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1] will your company primarily be investing in...**

Within the next 12 months? *Please type your answer(s) in the box below.*

Within the next 5 years? *Please type your answer(s) in the box below.*

1. My top choice would be... [OPEN END]	2. My second choice would be... [OPEN END]
--	---

### Section 3: Competitive Friction

**Q5. Below are some statements which reflect some common barriers and challenges that businesses have faced over the past few years.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Please use a 7-point scale where 1 means that you “strongly disagree” and 7 means that you “strongly agree”.*

For the following question, you will see the term “ESG”. If you are unsure of what is meant by the term “ESG” then hovering your mouse over the text (where it appears) will provide you with a definition of what we mean by this.

By ‘ESG’, we mean environmental, social and governance practices – how your company manages its impact on the environment, its people (employees, customers) and operates in a responsible and ethical way.

		1– Strongly disagree	2	3	4– Neither agree nor disagree	5	6	7– Strongly agree	Don't know/ not sure
<b>A</b>	Administrative processes related to tax and reporting drain time and resources that could be spent on growth								
<b>B</b>	The EU provides a regulatory framework which fosters innovation and technical progress								
<b>C</b>	Compliance demands (e.g. ESG, labour regulations etc.) have increased significantly								
<b>D</b>	EU-wide regulations put a heavier bureaucratic burden on our company today than ten years ago								
<b>E</b>	We lack accessible, up-to-date guidance to help us comply with new or changing <b>national</b> laws								
<b>F</b>	We lack accessible, up-to-date guidance to help us comply with new or changing <b>EU</b> laws								
<b>G</b>	Our company now needs dedicated compliance expertise and/or resources we didn't require in the past								

		1– Strongly disagree	2	3	4– Neither agree nor disagree	5	6	7– Strongly agree	Don't know/ not sure
H	Incentives like tax breaks or grants often favour newer or fast-growing companies over long-established or family-owned firms								
I	Administrative unpredictability makes it harder for our company to plan for the long-term								

**Q6. In general, to what extent, if at all, do the following regulatory challenges limit your company's competitiveness in...**

- in [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1] *Please select one option on each row.*
- in the EU? *Please select one option on each row.* (SHOWN ONLY TO THOSE WHO OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY S5B\_2=1 OR ABOVE)
- outside the EU? *Please select one option on each row.* (SHOWN ONLY TO THOSE WHO OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY S5B\_2=1 OR ABOVE)

As a reminder, if you are unsure of what is meant by the term “ESG” then hovering your mouse over the text (where it appears) will provide you with a definition of what we mean by this.

		Limiting a lot	Limiting a little	Not very limiting	Not limiting at all	Don't know/ not sure
A	Navigating employee contracts, working hours, or dismissal rules adds significant administrative complexity (e.g. complying with minimum wage rules, documenting working hours, managing contracts, or handling dismissals properly.)					
B	The frequency and complexity of tax filings place a strain on internal resources					
C	ESG reporting requirements have become increasingly demanding and resource-intensive					
D	Complying with data laws like GDPR requires ongoing investment in legal and IT systems					

		Limiting a lot	Limiting a little	Not very limiting	Not limiting at all	Don't know/not sure
E	Ensuring compliance with workplace health & safety rules, occupational standards and certifications such as fire safety, involves costly testing and ongoing documentation					
F	Cross-border trade is slowed down by inconsistent customs processes and procedures (ONLY SHOWN FOR INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE EU)					

**Q14. In general, how would you rate the work that the Institutions of the European Union – such as the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Council – have done over the past five years in shaping economic policy and enhancing the competitiveness of Europe-based businesses?**

*Please select one response.*

1	Very bad
2	Somewhat bad
3	Neither good nor bad
4	Somewhat good
5	Very good
97	Don't know/not sure

**Q7. For the following question, please think about these statements from the perspective of the EU supporting these initiatives.**

**Overall, would the following EU reforms make your company more or less competitive, or would it make no difference?**

*Please select one option on each row.*

		Much less competitive	Slightly less competitive	No difference	Slightly more competitive	Much more competitive	Don't know/not sure
A	Reducing administrative burdens on our company (e.g. simplifying permit applications, compliance reporting)						
C	Offering tailored advisory services to help navigate compliance requirements (e.g. one-on-one guidance on regulatory changes, customised support for sector-specific obligations)						

		Much less competitive	Slightly less competitive	No difference	Slightly more competitive	Much more competitive	Don't know/not sure
<b>D</b>	Creating faster or more transparent approval processes for permits, subsidies, or certifications						
<b>E</b>	Adjusting regulatory thresholds to reflect the characteristics of the company I work for						
<b>F</b>	Simplifying sustainability reporting frameworks to make them more practical for the company I work for						
<b>G</b>	Introducing a single digital portal to handle regulatory submissions, or business administration						
<b>H</b>	Release new regulation only with a trial phase /sunset clause						
<b>I</b>	Expanding access to public procurement opportunities (e.g. simplifying tender processes, improving visibility of cross border opportunities etc.)						

## Section 4: EU, Trade & Competitiveness

**Q8. Has your company ever used any of the following forms of support to enhance growth or competitiveness?**

*Please select one option on each row.*

	We currently use this	We have used it in the past, but don't use it currently	We have never used this but plan to use it in the future	We have never used this and have no plans to use it in the future	Don't know/not sure
<b>A</b> Access to the EU Single Market (e.g. cross-border trade, labour mobility)					
<b>B</b> Trade agreements between the EU and non-EU countries					
<b>C</b> EU-funded support or grant schemes					
<b>D</b> EU innovation funding (e.g. Horizon Europe, digitalisation programs etc.)					
<b>E</b> National or regional government support linked to EU funding					
<b>F</b> Business advisory services or training funded by EU or national programs					
<b>G</b> Participation in EU-supported clusters or business networks					
<b>H</b> Support for compliance with EU sustainability or reporting standards					

**Q9. Thinking about each of the following...**

**Overall, how would you rate the EU's impact on your company's ability to compete with other businesses in your sector?**

*Please select one option on each row.*

	Very negative	Fairly negative	Fairly positive	Very positive	Don't know/not sure
<b>A</b> In [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1]					
<b>B</b> In other EU markets (SHOWN ONLY TO THOSE WHO OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY S5B_2=1 OR ABOVE)					
<b>C</b> In markets outside the EU (SHOWN ONLY TO THOSE WHO OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY S5B_2=1 OR ABOVE)					

**Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how trade dynamics affect your company's competitiveness?**

*Please use a 7-point scale where 1 means that you "strongly disagree" and 7 means that you "strongly agree".*

		1– Strongly disagree	2	3	4– Neither agree nor disagree	5	6	7– Strongly agree	Don't know/ not sure
<b>A</b>	Trade instability (e.g. tariffs, customs delays, political tensions) puts our company at a disadvantage								
<b>B</b>	Uncertainty surrounding EU trade agreements limits our ability to compete internationally								
<b>C</b>	Competing in global markets has become more difficult than in the past								
<b>D</b>	The EU Single Market provides a strong foundation for scaling and expanding our company								
<b>E</b>	A deepening of the EU Single Market holds economic potential for our business								
<b>F</b>	The lack of harmonized regulations makes cross-border operations more difficult								
<b>G</b>	Global trade tensions – such as those involving the U.S., China, or post-Brexit UK-EU relations – negatively affect our company								
<b>H</b>	Trade agreements negotiated by the EU have opened new market opportunities for our company								

## Section 5: Future Readiness & Succession

**Q12. In general, how prepared do you feel your company is to deal with the following over the next 5 years?**

*Please select one option on each row.*

As a reminder, if you are unsure of what is meant by the term “ESG” then hovering your mouse over the text (where it appears) will provide you with a definition of what we mean by this.

		Very prepared	Fairly prepared	Not very prepared	Not at all prepared	Don't know/not sure
<b>A</b>	Economic uncertainty or financial shocks (e.g. inflation, recession, interest rate volatility etc.)					
<b>B</b>	Technological disruption or digital transformation (e.g. automation, AI adoption, cybersecurity risks etc.)					
<b>C</b>	Regulatory changes at the EU level (e.g. EU-wide compliance requirements, ESG disclosure rules, cross-border tax coordination, digital market regulations)					
<b>D</b>	Regulatory changes at the national level (e.g. domestic tax reforms, country-specific labour law updates)					
<b>E</b>	Labour market changes and access to skilled workers (e.g. recruitment challenges, evolving skill demands etc.)					
<b>F</b>	Supply chain disruptions or material shortages (e.g. global shocks, logistics challenges, sourcing dependencies etc.)					
<b>G</b>	Climate-related risks and sustainability requirements (e.g. carbon regulation, green transition, resilience to extreme weather etc.)					
<b>H</b>	Shifts in global trade conditions or geopolitical risks (e.g. trade barriers, EU border policies, global instability etc.)					
<b>I</b>	Access to capital for investment and innovation (e.g. availability of funding, investor confidence, cost of capital etc.)					



**Q13. What would most help your company become more resilient in the future?**

*Please select all that apply.*

As a reminder, if you are unsure of what is meant by the term “ESG” then hovering your mouse over the text (where it appears) will provide you with a definition of what we mean by this.

1	Greater policy and regulatory stability (e.g. more predictable frameworks for planning and investment)
2	Simplified compliance and reporting requirements (e.g. less administrative burden to meet legal obligations)
3	Improved access to skilled labour (e.g. workforce development or apprenticeships)
4	Stronger financial support for investment and innovation (e.g. grants, tax benefits, low-interest loans)
5	More tailored digitalisation and AI support programs (e.g. help adopting and integrating new technologies)
6	Improved access to cross-border trade and export markets (e.g. easier market entry, fewer trade barriers)
7	Tax benefits on wealth or inheritance tax to help family-owned or founder-led businesses pass ownership to the next generation without heavy financial burden
8	Better access to peer networks and mentoring (e.g. learning from similar businesses or industry-specific forums)
9	Incentives or guidance to meet sustainability targets (e.g. help navigating ESG requirements and greening operations)
10	Improved resilience planning for supply chain disruptions (e.g. diversification strategies, early warning tools)
95	Other (please specify)
99	Don't know/not sure

## Section 6: Classification

### C1. Which of the following best reflects your company's current generational structure?

*Please select one option. (ONLY SHOWN TO THOSE WHO WORK FOR A FAMILY BUSINESS S8=1)*

1	First-generation family ownership
2	Second-generation leadership
3	Third generation or beyond
4	Hybrid family and non-family professional leadership
5	Non-family professional leadership
99	Other (please specify)

### C2A. What was your company's total annual revenue in the most recent financial year (before tax)?

*Please select one option.*

1	Less than €500,000
2	€500,000 to €1.9 million
3	€2 million to €4.9 million
4	€5 million to €9.9 million
5	€10 million to €19.9 million
6	€20 million to €49.9 million
7	€50 million to €99.9 million
8	€100 million to €249.9 million
9	€250 million or more
99	Prefer not to say

### C2B. You previously said your company's total annual revenue was... [ANSWER GIVEN AT PREVIOUS QUESTION C2A].

Could you please tell us the total revenue in [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1].

Followed by the total revenue in all other markets. (SHOWN ONLY TO THOSE WHO OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY S5B\_2=1 OR ABOVE)

If you are unsure, please provide your best estimate.

	In [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1]	In markets outside of [RESPONDENT'S HOME MARKET GIVEN AT S1]
1	[Text box 0 and above]	[Text box 0 and above]

**C3. What year was your company founded?**

*Please type your answer in the box below, if you are unsure then please provide your best estimate.*

1	Less than a year
2	1-5 years
3	6-10 years
4	11-20 years
5	21-50 years
6	More than 50 years

**C4. How old are you?**

*Please type your age in the box below.*

[Text box 0 and above]
------------------------

**C5. Are you...?**

*Please select one response.*

1	Male
2	Female
3	Non-binary/third gender
4	Prefer to self-describe (please specify)
99	Prefer not to answer



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