

BALANCE  
*green and stable*

# Green and stable SMEs

## Needs analysis survey

Grant agreement	2020-1-KA204-079048
Programme	Erasmus+
Key action	Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action	Strategic Partnerships for adult education
Project acronym	BALANCE
Project title	BALANCE - Green & Stable - Bringing Sustainability and Environmental Action Together for Better Future
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Project duration	24 months
Project end date	31/10/2022

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# NATIONAL REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

The Balance project aims to develop and provide SME's decision-makers and owners with an innovative program that will help companies transform their procedures and practices into more greener ones while improving their financial literacy and their environmental awareness. Based on this a Google form questionnaire was sent out to 60 SME decision makers in order to gather information regarding their business needs in terms of the management, knowledge, and awareness of the established green policies in Greece. Out of this number 14 SME's decision-makers and owners answered the questionnaire.

## Analysis of the survey

### SECTION 1 : Information on SMEs

#### 1. What is the size of your organization?

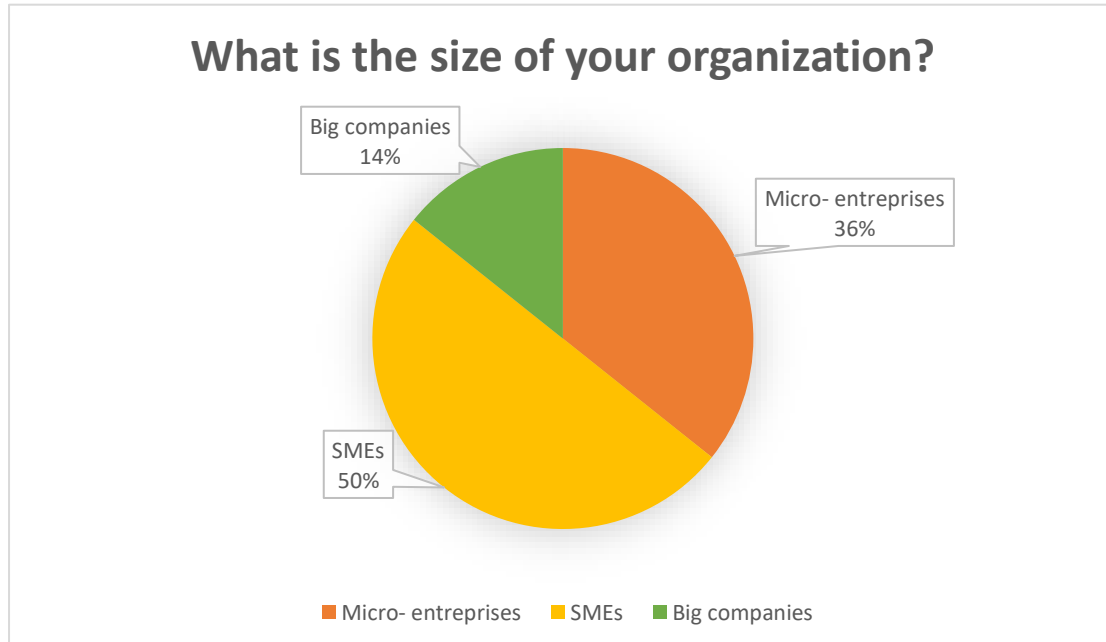


Figure 1: The size of the organizations

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Figure 1 illustrates the SME's sizes that responded to the questionnaire. In more detail 5 companies were micro-enterprises and they represent 36% of the total respondents, 7 companies were SMEs, and 2 are larger enterprises that consist of more than 250 workers. Small and Medium enterprises (SMEs) characterize more than half of the enterprises in Greece.

## 2. In which sector does your organization belong?

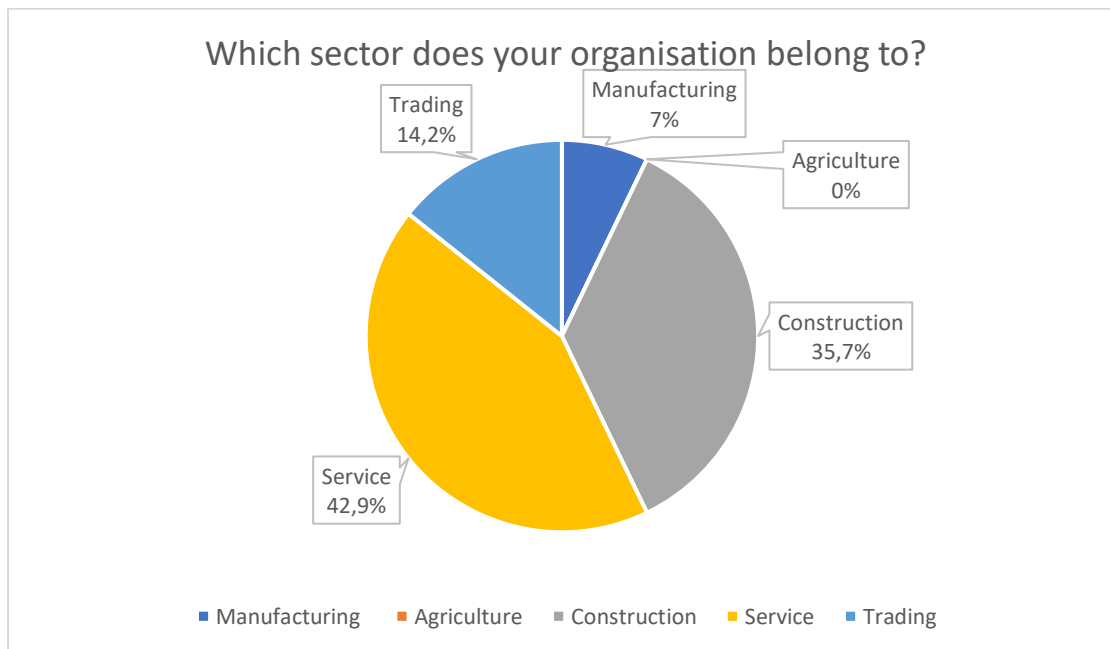


Figure 2: In which sector does the SME belong?

SME's decision-makers were asked in which sector the enterprise is involved in and 42.9% of the respondents replied that they provide different services whereas only 1 out of 14 organizations belong to the manufacturing sector.

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## Section 2: Awareness related to GREEN ECONOMY

3. Are you aware that Europe aims in becoming a climate-neutral continent by 2050?

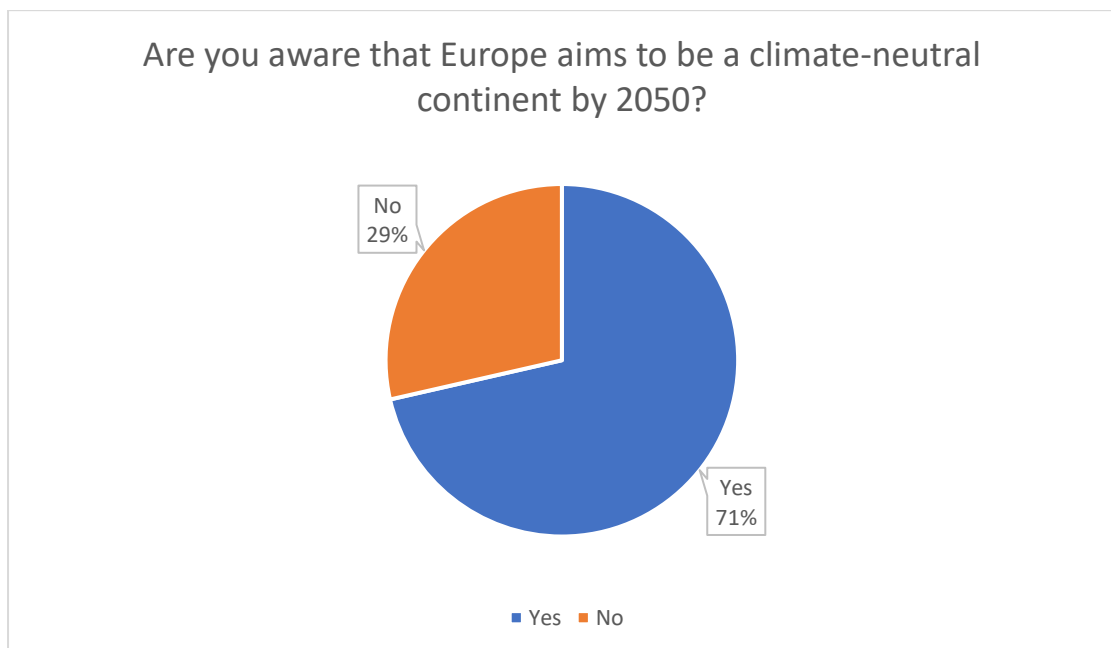


Figure 3: Level of awareness on whether Europe will turn into a climate-neutral continent.

According to the pie chart it is encouraging that 71% of the Greek SME decision-makers are aware that Europe is aiming to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050.

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4. Are you aware of the Green Policies in your country?

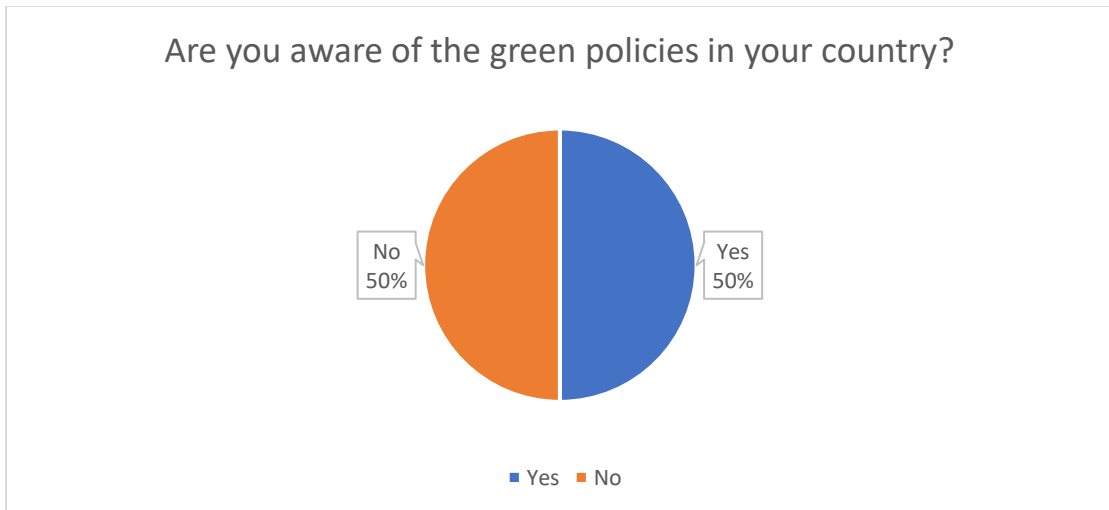


Figure 4: The level of awareness on green policies in Greece

The pie chart shows that half of the SMEs in Greece are not aware of the green policies in Greece and hence are not aware of the laws and regulations which are linked to these policies.

5. Do you know about the existing financial environmental aids in Greece?

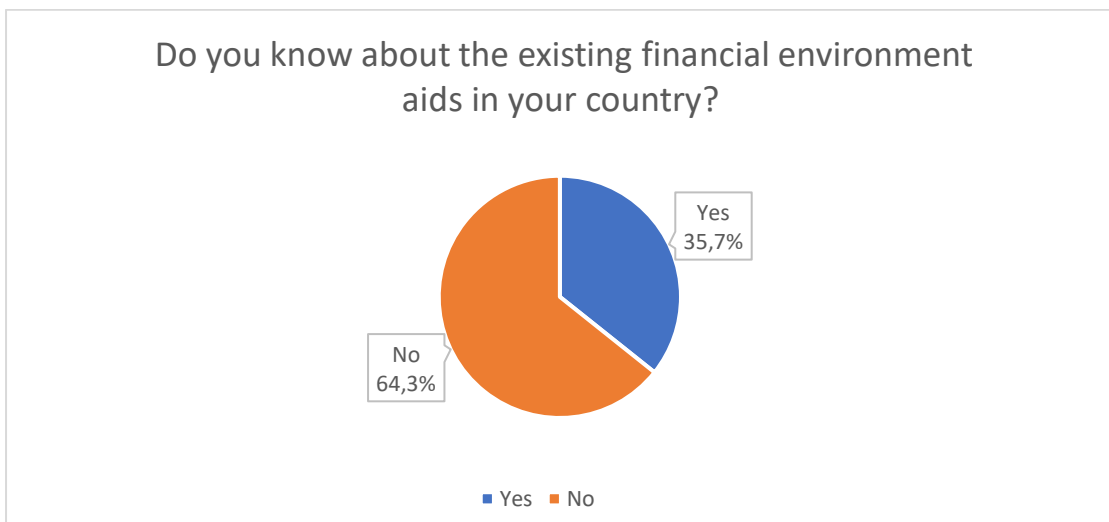


Figure 5: Level of awareness on existing financial environmental aids

Out of the 14 respondents only 5 answered yes whereas the majority 35.7% are not aware of the topic or have not been informed neither by the government nor by collaborative bodies.

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6. Do you think you need more information related to green policies?

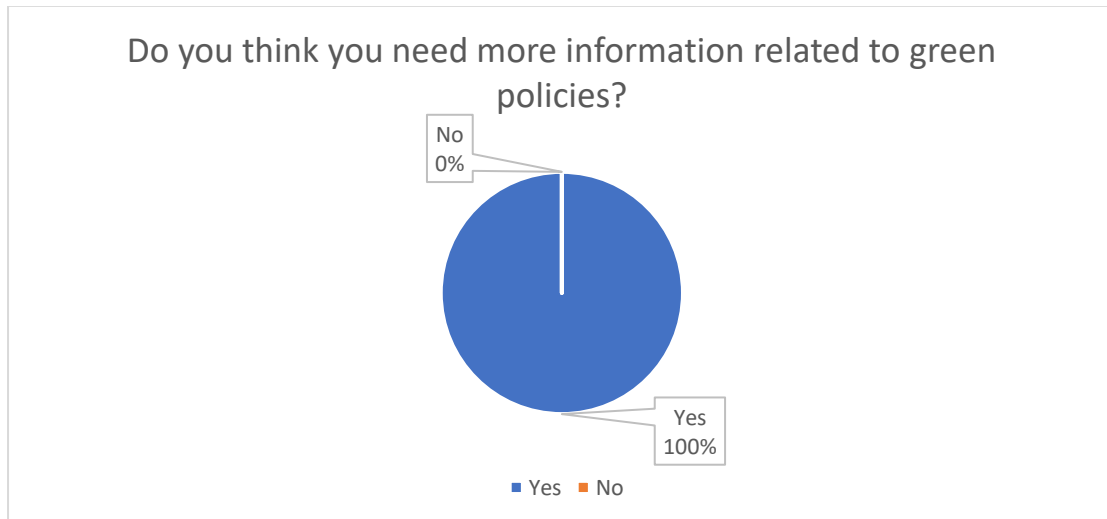


Figure 6: The need for more information related to green policies

All of the participants stated that they need more information related to green policies.

7. What do you think about implementing green measure in your company?

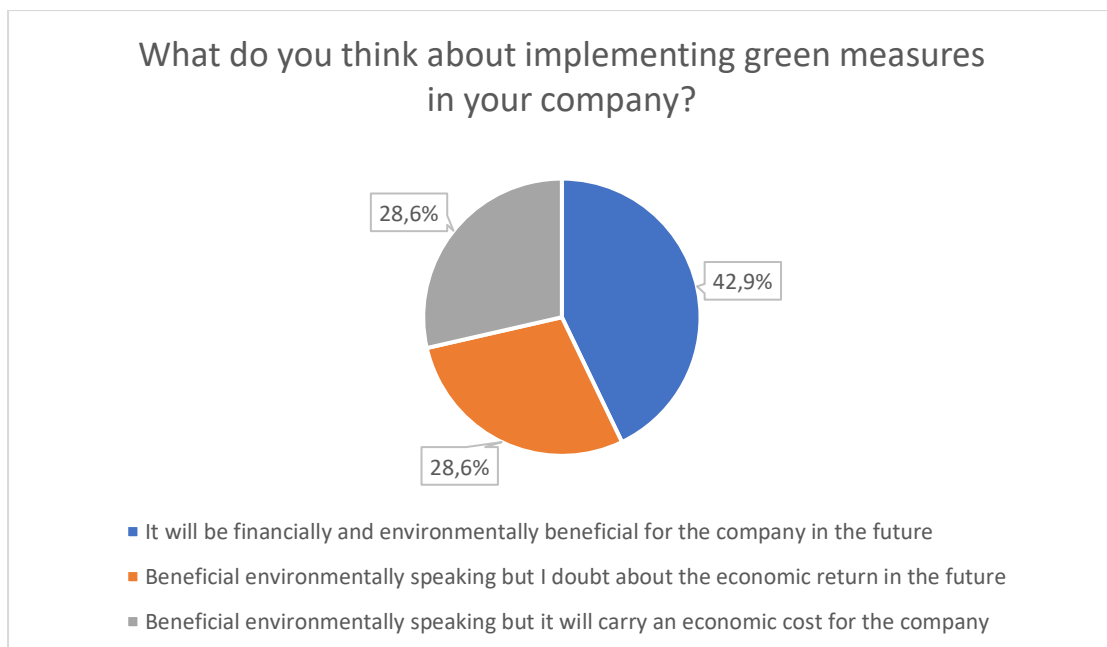


Figure 7: How approved is the idea of implementing green measures

From the pie chart one can see that more than 40% of the respondents consider that implementing green measures within the enterprise, is financially and environmentally beneficial for the company itself in the future. On the other hand the rest of the respondents contemplate that by applying green measures within the

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company, it is environmentally beneficial but there is a concern about the financial return in the future.

### SECTION 3: Green Measures

#### 8. Do you apply any circular economy methods within your SME?

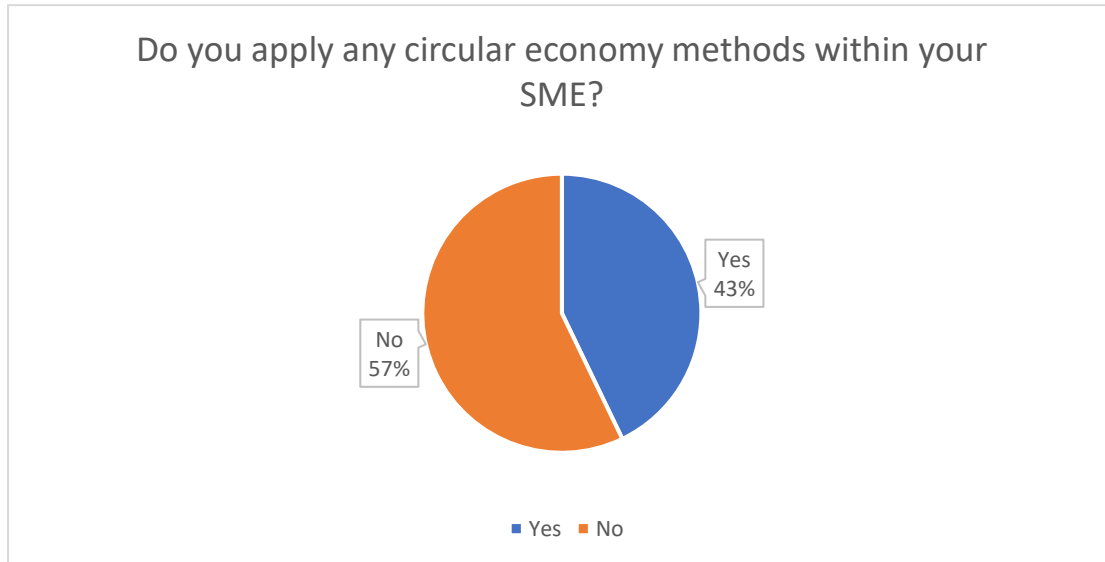


Figure 8: Application of Circular Economy methods within Greek enterprises

More than half of the respondents, specifically 57% do not apply any circular economy methods within their company.

8.1 For the companies who answered yes, they were asked to explain the circular economy methods they apply as part of their practices. These are the received answers:

- Creating a "new product" (KLIMIS Charcoal) from the produced "waste" of their main production process
- Thermal insulation with the installation of energy frames, use of photovoltaic panels for cooling and heating the offices
- Recycling

8.2 The pie below illustrates the percentage of respondents that wish to learn how to but also educate themselves and their staff on applying circular economy and sustainable methods.

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## 8.2 Would you like to learn how to apply circular economy tools

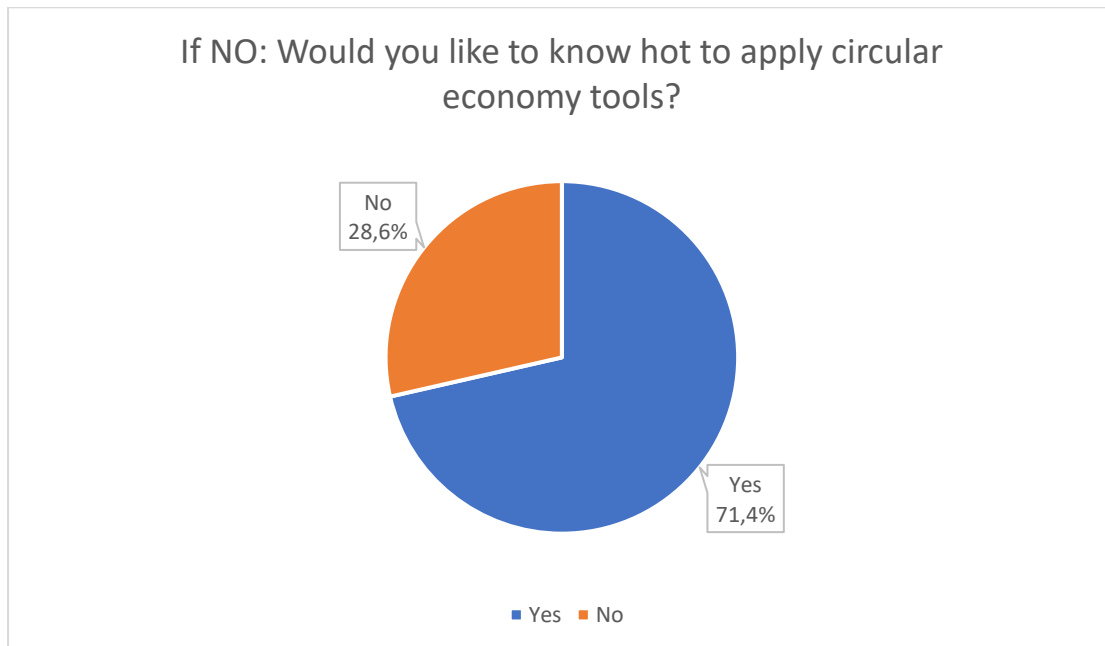


Figure 9: Willingness to learn how to apply circular economy tools

## 9. Do you know the generated carbon footprint of your company?

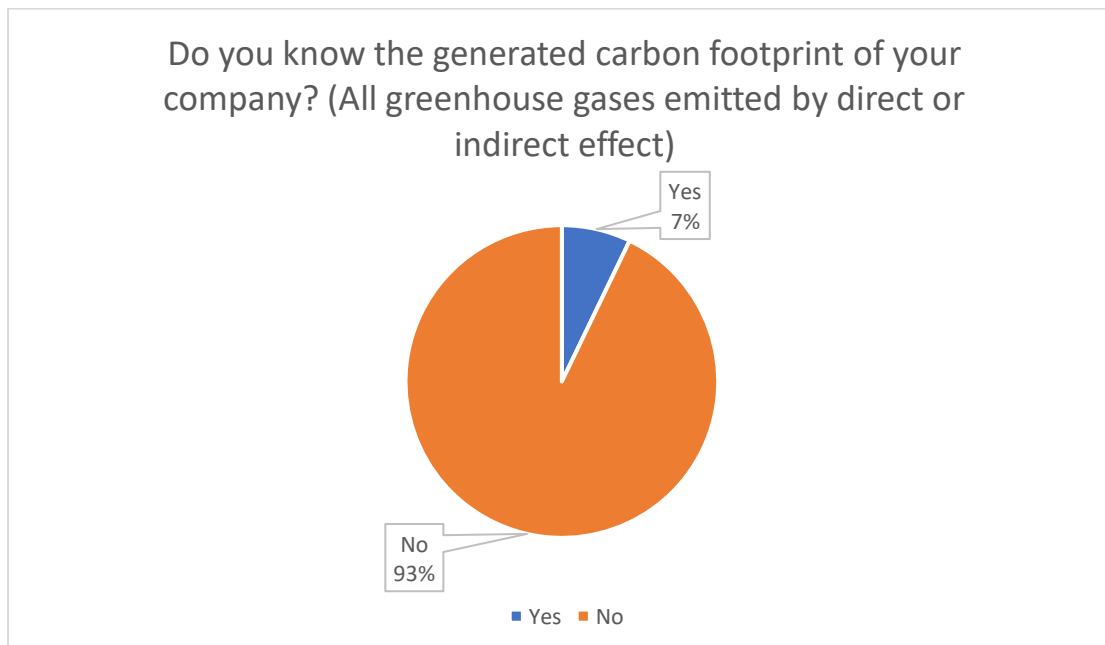


Figure 10: Level of awareness on the generated carbon footprint

The chart shows that 9 out of 10 decision-makers for Greek enterprises are unaware of how the carbon-footprint of their SME is generated and how to evaluate it. However as shown in Figure 11 below, 71,4% of the respondents that do not know

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how to calculate it, are willing to find ways to learn how to calculate and have a better understanding of this concept.

The one company that answered yes stated that they make continuous efforts to reduce electricity bills in an effort to calculate the produced carbon-footprint of their enterprise.

## 9.2 Would you like to learn how to measure the carbon footprint of your SME

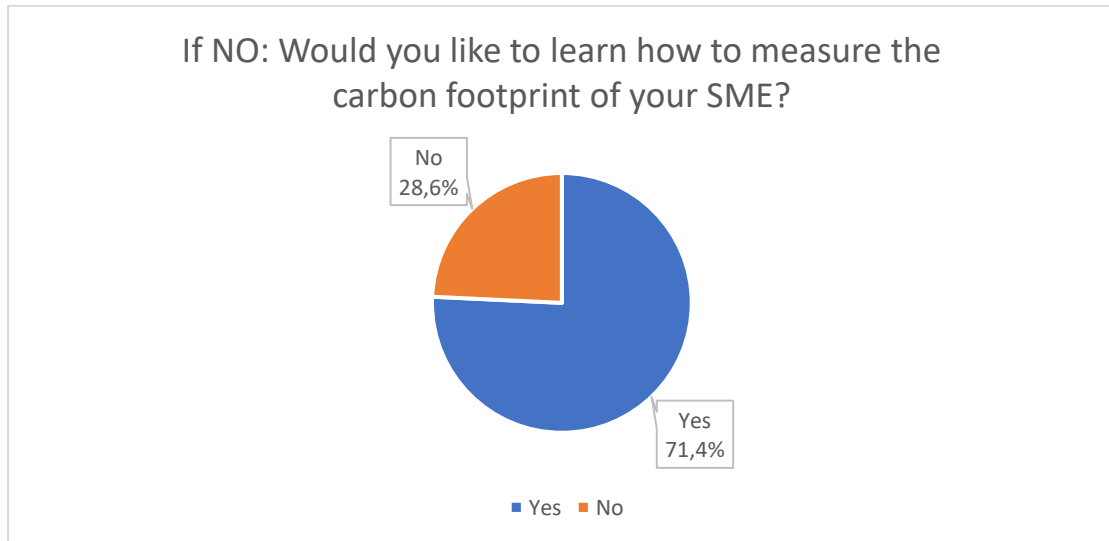


Figure 11: Willingness of SME decision-makers to calculate their carbon-footprint

## 10. Do you measure the environmental footprint of your SME?

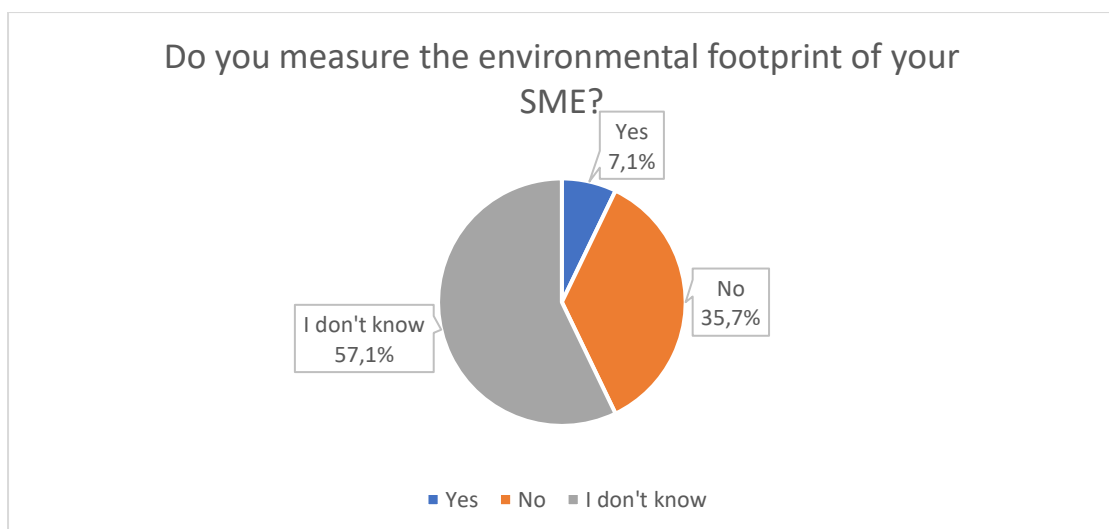


Figure 12: The percentage of decision-makers that measure the environmental footprint of the SME

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## 11. Is your SME energy efficient?

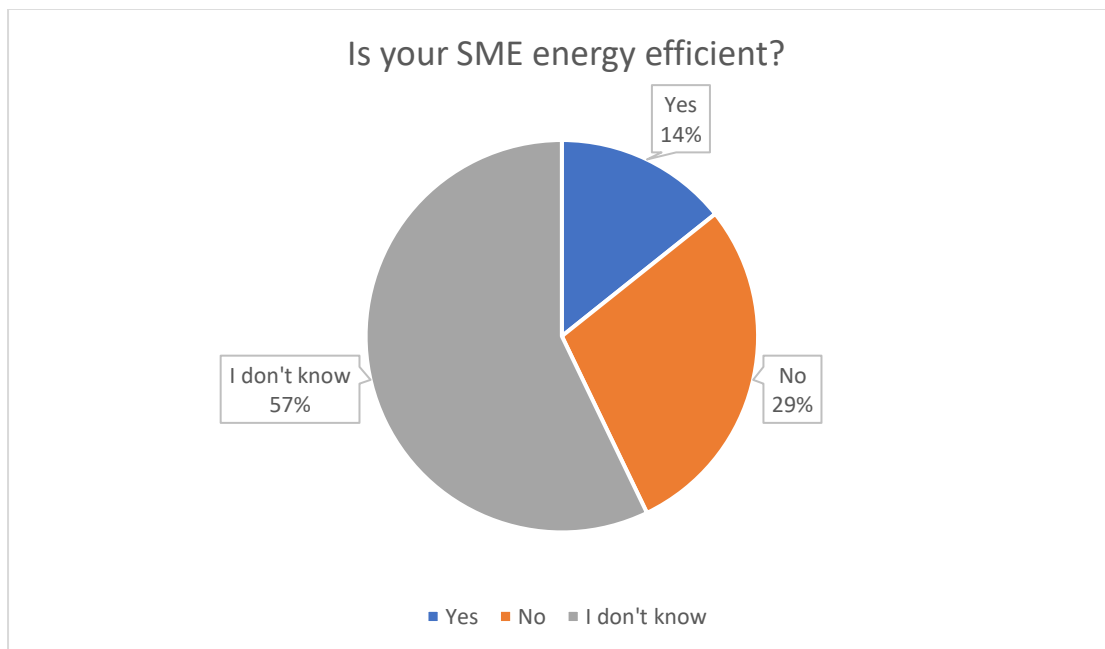


Figure 13: The energy efficiency of Greek SMEs

57% of the respondents replied that they do not know if their SME is energy efficient whereas 29% answered no and only 2 answered yes. This indicates that there is a great need for providing information to decision-makers of Greek SMEs on green policies and explain new concepts such as “energy efficiency” or “environmentally sustainable”.

11.1 The 2 decision-makers that answered positively whether they consider that their company is energy-efficient, indicated the ways they are aiming in converting the SME into a more energy-efficient one. More specifically the provided answers were:

- Thermal insulation, recycling, use of photovoltaic panels, use of electrical appliances of higher energy class (A +++)
- Electromobility

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12. Do you follow any internal communication strategies to establish green operations in your SME?

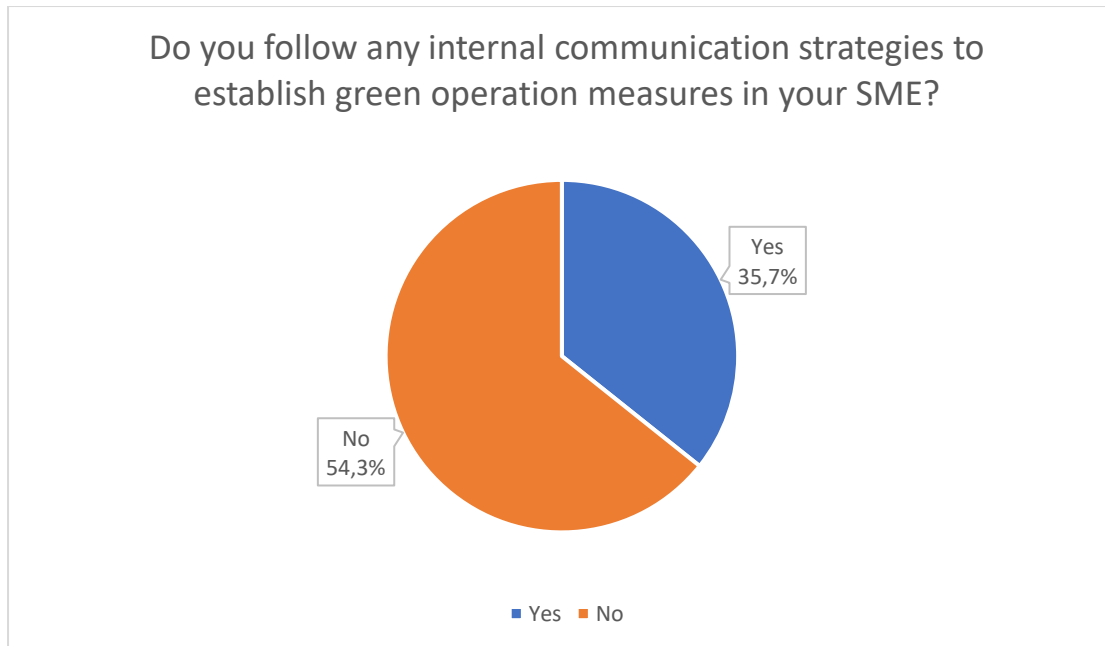


Figure 14: Internal communication for green operation within SMEs

For question 12 the five Greek decision makers that answered positively explained for question 12.1 that they apply internal communication based on the ISO 14001:2015 guidelines, they inform on recycling options and procedures and they also provide training seminars to employees.

13. Do you train your employees to be aware of green measures?

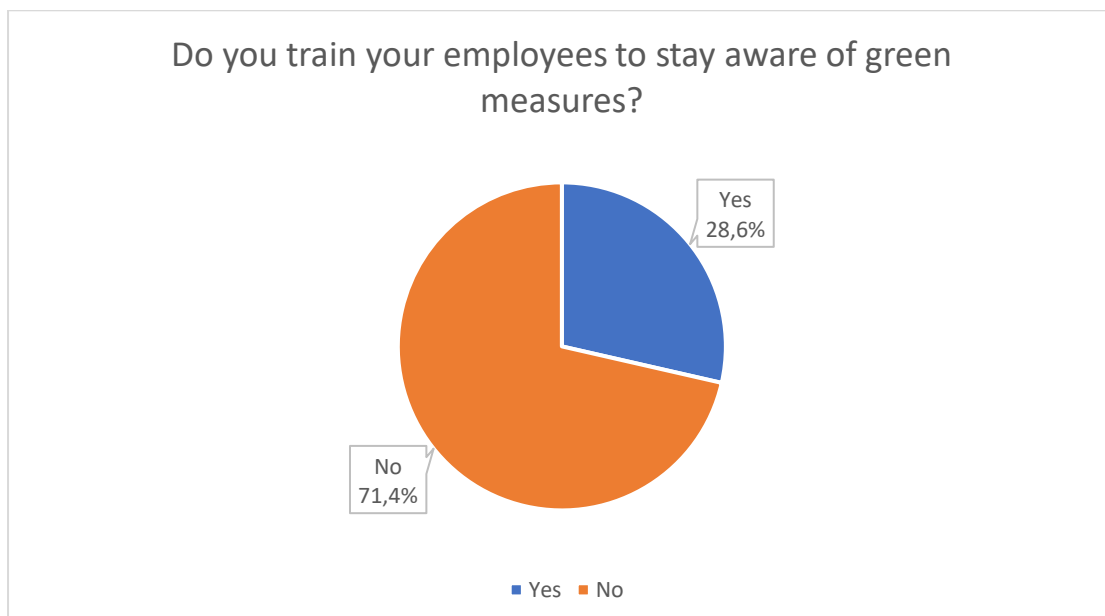


Figure 15: Percentage of Greek SMEs where employees are trained on green measures

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The majority answered that they do not train their employees around green measures.

13.1 For the companies that answered positively, they were asked how employees stay aware of green measures.

- Participating in seminars
- Standard operating procedures
- Recycling procedures
- Training on recycling

14. The reason why Greek SMEs have not been applying green practices.

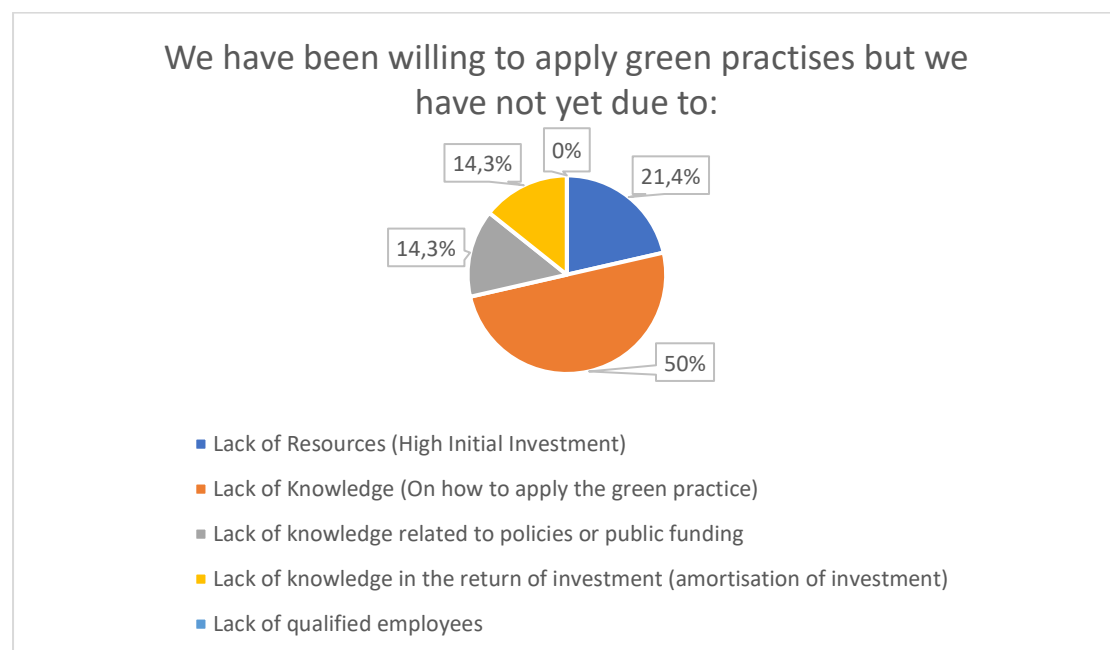


Figure 16: Setbacks on applying green practices

All the companies were asked what was the reason why they have not initiated green practices although they were willing to. More specifically the survey results showed that:

- 3 of them answered that it was due to the lack of Resources (High Initial Investment), (21,4%)
- 7 of them answered it was due to the lack of Knowledge (On how to apply the green practice), (50%)
- 2 of them answered it was due to lack of knowledge related to policies or public funding (14,3%)
- 2 of them answered it was due to lack of knowledge in the return of investment (amortization of investment) (14,3%)
- None of them said it was due to the lack of qualified employees (0%)

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### 15. What are your concerns on applying green measures?

To this question the respondents explained that their main concerns are:

- Not being able to easily access financial programs and handle the bureaucracy process to obtain them.
- The cost
- The concern that green measures will not impute since climate change is rather inevitable
- Correct use and sensible costs
- None
- This is a bubble and with no serious studies the environmental crisis will not be resolved
- Financial
- I will not apply the measures, so I am not particularly worried
- Whether they will affect the product flow
- Lack of ecological awareness

### 16. Have you received any training on the environmental topic of the business operations?

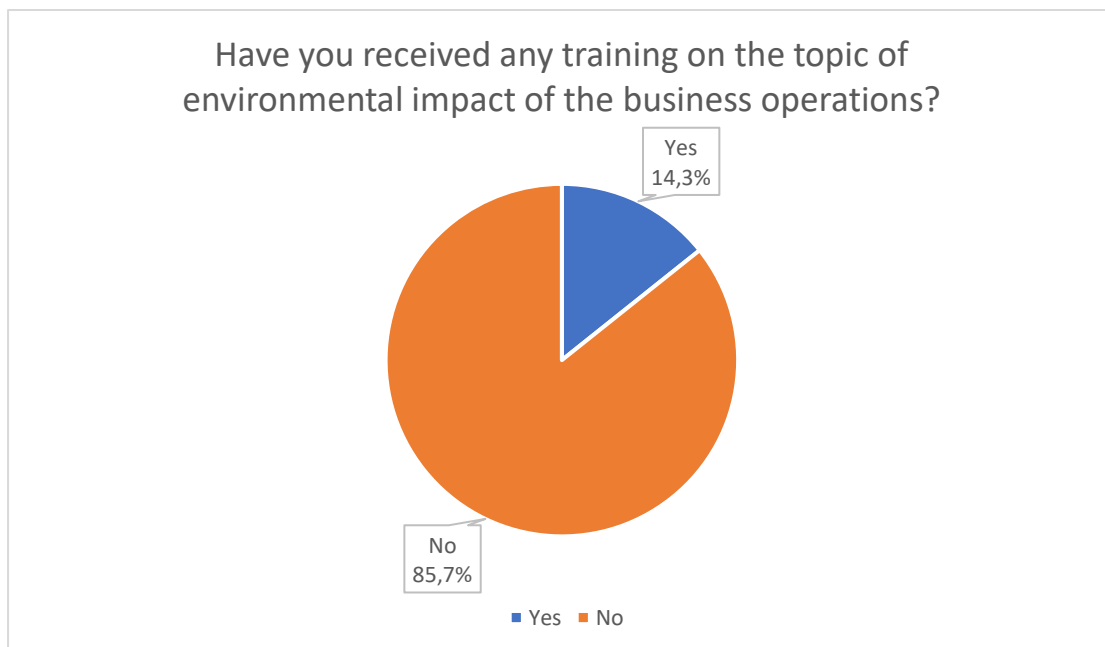


Figure 17: Percentage of received training within Greek SMEs

Two out of the 14 SME's decision-makers answered that they have received a training on this topic (14,3%) whereas the other 12 answered negatively (85,7%).

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From those that received the appropriate training it was explained in question 16.1 that they found it very useful but it was an excessive cost for the company.

## Section 4: The Balance Project

### 17. How likely would you recommend the Report to other stakeholders?



Figure 18: How highly would you recommend the Report?

The companies were asked how highly would they recommend the BALANCE report, which was developed at the first stages of the project, as a manual or a guide to other stakeholders. The answers provided were:

- 2 companies answered that they would highly recommend it (14,3%)
- 12 companies answered that they would recommend it (85,7%)
- None of them answered that they would not recommend it (0%)

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18. The last question was focused on how the BALANCE Project can help their organization become greener and more sustainable. The respondents explained:

- “Accessible financing along with the correct education are the key components in moving towards a green and sustainable business. So, if the BALANCE program moves in that direction, I think there will be a success”.
- “Due to the materials used, a lot of rubbish and rubble is produced. In addition, due to the bureaucracy we use a lot of paper”.
- Turn the business into a greener and more sustainable one without high initial investment costs
- Include a larger variety of ideas for green practices
- Composition by a group of expert scientists. Clear judgement of green growth with worse uncontrollable effects on the environment, something few know. Environmental awareness within the company
- Awareness
- Interested in transforming the business in a more profitable and greener one.
- With the correct use of a guide and the right information
- Receive training on how to make an investment plan for green practices.
- Cost savings

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## CONCLUSION

One of the main goals of the European Commission is Europe turning into a climate-neutral continent by 2050 with a sustainable economy and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. This objective is part of the European Green Deal and is in line with the European's Union commitment to global climate action under the Paris Agreement.

It can be concluded that most of the responses come from SMEs and are from the service sector. From these answers even if more than 71% companies know that the EU aims at reducing the produced carbon footprint all of them have not been able to take initiatives in reducing the amount of the greenhouse gas emissions. But all of them are willing in receiving the appropriate information and educating accordingly their staff on green policies.

The survey showed that most of the companies are not aware of the company's result on their carbon footprint. This is expected since they do not have the appropriate training and employees are not often educated on this subject. However some have carried out seminars especially if the company itself has initiated green practices. Additionally all relevant answers show that decision-makers of companies in Greece are willing to learn more about green measures and one can understand that there is a great need for training of employees on green practices even though the sample of answers is very small.

Finally the survey results show that it will be financially and environmentally beneficial for a Greek company in the future and it would have a positive outcome on the company's future and hence becoming sustainable. But some companies are not ready to take this step further because they have doubts about the economic future of the company. They all gave different reasons why they have not applied green practices yet, although they were willing to. The most recurrent one was the lack of resources.

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