STRATEGIC BRIEFING FOR EUROPEAN SMEs

VSME as the Gateway

How a voluntary EU standard is becoming the single most commercially important piece of structured data an SME can produce.

70%

of large companies issuing ESG data requests to suppliers

(Source: Eco Vadis, 2024)

25%

of EU SMEs have developed a strategy to reduce their carbon footprint

(Source: Eurobarometer, EC, 2024)

63%

of businesses feeling pressure to engage in and report on sustainable practices by their customers

(Source: PWC, Sage, ICC, 2023)

The demand is already here

Something material shifted for European SMEs in 2025. The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive did not simply create reporting obligations for large companies. It created demand. Under CSRD, over 5,000 large European companies must now disclose on supply chain sustainability — and to do so, they need data from their suppliers.

The 47-percentage-point gap between SMEs being asked for ESG data and those equipped to respond is not a compliance issue. It is a live revenue risk playing out in procurement decisions, supplier qualification rounds, and credit applications right now.

THE COMMERCIAL REALITY

An SME unable to respond to an ESG data request fails supplier qualification rounds, loses procurement decisions against equally-priced competitors who can respond, and misses access to green lending facilities.

47-point gap between demand and readiness

What the VSME actually is

The Voluntary Sustainability Reporting Standard for SMEs was developed by EFRAG under a European Commission mandate and officially adopted as a Recommendation in July 2025. It is now the standard format for supply chain ESG data exchange across the EU.

The critical insight: the underlying data already exists in most SMEs — in utility bills, HR systems, H&S logs, and management accounts. The VSME is the framework to structure and present it in a format that enterprise customers, banks, and investors recognise.

None of the 11 Basic disclosures require specialist ESG expertise to complete.

> *The VSME is not a new reporting burden. It is a structured home for information your business already holds — and the gateway through which that data becomes a competitive asset.*

11 BASIC DISCLOSURES

- Basis for preparation & company profile
- Sustainability policies & practices
- Energy & GHG emissions (Scope 1 & 2)
- Pollution controls & incidents
- Water use & management
- Resource use & circular economy
- Own workforce & HR data
- Supply chain worker practices
- Community & society impact
- Business conduct & governance
- Biodiversity considerations

COMPREHENSIVE MODULE +9 disclosures

Additional disclosures related to Transition plans · GHG targets · Climate risks · Biodiversity · Human rights in value chain

VSME — 11 Basic Disclosure Areas

futureplanet

01	Basis for Preparation & Company Profile
02	Sustainability Policies & Practices
03	Energy & GHG Emissions (Scope 1 & 2)
04	Pollution Controls & Incidents
05	Water Use & Management
06	Resource Use & Circular Economy
07	Own Workforce & HR Data
08	Supply Chain Worker Practices
09	Community & Society Impact
10	Business Conduct & Governance
11	Biodiversity Considerations

VSME — 9 Comprehensive Disclosure Areas (Additional)

futureplanet

01	Business Model and sustainability related initiatives
02	Practices, policies and Future Initiatives
03	GHG Emissions reduction targets, Climate Transition
04	Climate Risks
05	Additional General Workforce characteristics
06	Human Rights policies and processes
07	Severe negative Human Rights Incidents
08	Revenues from certain sectors and exclusions
09	Gender diversity in governance body

A no-regrets decision

Immediate commercial protection

A completed VSME report becomes your single source of truth — reusable across every customer, bank, or investor that asks. Instead of 50+ hours per year managing inconsistent questionnaires, respond with confidence in minutes.

1.5×

more likely to secure financing with a report

Source: Sage, ICC, 2024

Finance access

SMEs with a sustainability report are 1.5× more likely to secure financing (ICC & Sage, 2024), with 73% of financial institutions now offering preferential green finance products specifically for SMEs (OECD, 2023).

73%

of banks now offer green finance products for SMEs

Source: OECD, 2023

Regulatory positioning

The VSME is expected to form the foundation of an EU Delegated Act due June 2026. SMEs investing now build assets that remain compliant as frameworks evolve.

€789bn

green finance opportunity for SMEs globally

Source: Sage, ICC, 2024

The early movers are already ahead

SMEs in manufacturing and construction who completed a VSME disclosure in H2 2025 are reporting a 6 to 18-month competitive advantage in supplier qualification rounds. Enterprise procurement teams are explicitly identifying VSME-ready suppliers as preferred.

The VSME is not the endpoint of an SME's sustainability journey. It is the structured entry point that makes the journey manageable and commercially productive — without the cost or complexity of full CSRD compliance.

The question is not whether the VSME is worth doing. The question is whether your business can afford to be among the 86% who haven't started yet.

THE 47-POINT GAP

61% of EU SMEs have received an ESG data request in the past 18 months. Only 14% have a structured disclosure.

That gap is not a future risk — it is a current revenue exposure, and the VSME closes it.

6–18 months competitive advantage reported by early VSME adopters

The gateway, not the destination

For SMEs in a market where enterprise customers are required to ask, where banks are incentivised to reward sustainability performance, and where structured ESG data is fast becoming a baseline competitive requirement, the case for the VSME is clear.

The question is not whether the VSME is worth doing. The question is whether your business can afford to wait.

Start your VSME journey in 30 minutes

1. Book a free discovery call with Future Planet's VSME specialists
2. We'll map your data readiness and tell you exactly where you stand
3. Commit only when you're ready — no obligations

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