



STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE OF TEXTILE, AEROSPACE, AND CONSTRUCTION SMES TO TRANSITION TOWARDS GREENER AND MORE DIGITAL SECTORS WITH SOCIAL AND BUSINESS INNOVATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Impact Assessment and KPI Monitoring Report (Deliverable D6.3) presents the outcomes of the two **DEVELOP calls** implemented within IN TRANSIT project, a Horizon Europe initiative supporting SMEs in textile, aerospace, construction, and advanced manufacturing sectors in their transition toward greener, more digital, socially responsible, and cross-sectoral business models. The report consolidates quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered through three sequential surveys and interviews, measuring the short- and mid-term impacts of the DEVELOP funding scheme.

Overall Purpose of DEVELOP

DEVELOP scheme supported SMEs through:

- **Financial support (FSTP):** €49,000 for individual projects and €98,000 for consortia
- **50 hours of personalised coaching** on business modelling, strategy, market analysis, sustainability, and circularity

Across its two calls, DEVELOP funded **43 projects and supported 61 SMEs**, building synergies, identifying cross-sectoral collaboration opportunities and supporting SMEs in their path toward market-readiness and scale-up.

Methodology

The impact assessment was conducted using a three-step survey approach complemented by qualitative interviews with beneficiary SMEs. Three questionnaires were administered: one before the start of each project to establish a baseline, one immediately after completion to capture direct results, and one several months later to measure medium-term impacts. The surveys assessed strategic, operational, and resource-related changes using a tailored impact framework developed by IRT Jules Verne, based on long-standing innovation-project evaluation methods. Data were analysed separately for each DEVELOP call to account for differences in timing and implementation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The IN TRANSIT project aims to **strengthen the resilience of textile, aerospace, advanced manufacturing and construction SMEs towards greener and more digital sectors with social and business model**, with a mixed support mechanism including **individual assessment support** and a **lump sum** and **coaching** to ensure their consolidation and sustainability.

IN TRANSIT aims to boost competitiveness in EU regions, providing **SMEs with support from incubation to scale-up of cross-sectoral solutions, focusing on circularity, digitalization, and sustainability**. The core strategy is based on four IN TRANSIT actions:

1. **INCUBATE** consisted in joint services for incubating cross-sectoral innovation and focuses on supporting SMEs in identifying market opportunities, needs, and pain points and connecting the different sectors favouring cross-sectoral learning, best practices exchange, and collaborative development.
2. **INNOVATE** consisted in customized advisory services, including assisted self-assessment and circular/ digital diagnostic, coaching/ training at a strategic level (business model). The Open Call for SMEs Circular Transformation Scheme to INNOVATE aimed at supporting and guiding SMEs in the self-exploration of the current business model towards a new circular business model, improving processes or developing new products
3. **DEVELOP** provided **FSTP** (Financial Support for Third Parties) support to develop projects, including coaching services for developing innovative and sustainable business models. More specifically, DEVELOP calls directly funded innovative SMEs in the form of vouchers (lump sum) for the implementation of projects.
4. **SCALE-UP** aims to bring solutions on the market and offers additional customized services for the new business models, leveraging additional private or public funds. SCALE-UP is focused on offering customized services to SMEs-beneficiaries of the DEVELOP tool.

Deliverable D6.3 presents the impacts of the project and its funding within the framework of DEVELOP calls, demonstrating the effects of these services and financial support on the selected SMEs.

2. DEVELOP Calls – Analysis of data

2.1 Methodology

The methodology adopted to conduct data collection and analysis, based on management science principles and SMEs engagement, used three sequential surveys to capture the DEVELOP project's impact over time:

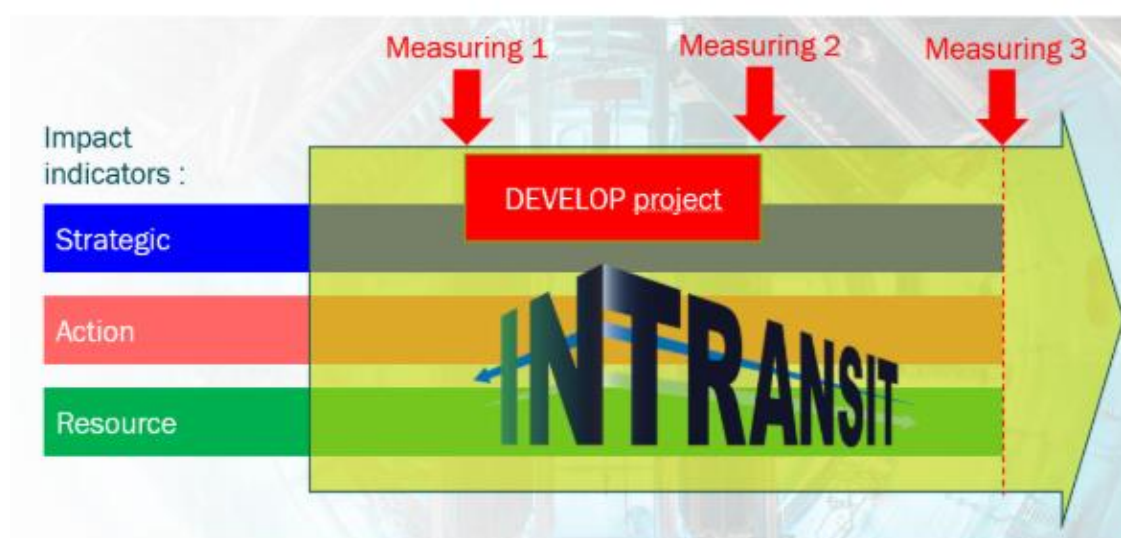
1. The first questionnaire, distributed prior to the start of the project, established a baseline of SMEs' knowledge and performance across a range of topics, providing an initial snapshot of their status before entering DEVELOP programme.
2. The second questionnaire was administered at the conclusion of DEVELOP to capture the benefits achieved over the three-month period immediately following the intervention. This timing ensured highly accurate responses, as the experience was still fresh in participants' minds.
3. The third questionnaire was sent six months after the completion of DEVELOP 1st Call and two months after the completion of DEVELOP 2nd Call, enabling an analysis of results before the end of the IN TRANSIT project. This final survey provided continuity and valuable insights into the longer-term impacts of the initiative.

This staged approach allowed the measurement of impacts over time, producing more meaningful and robust findings for SMEs and resulting in solid quantitative evidence of the project's effects.

To design the questionnaire, IRTJV drew on a standard typology of innovation-projects impacts. This framework has been applied for more than 10 years in European research initiatives and at the IRT Jules Verne. The team also integrated data collection methods from management science research. After designing the questionnaire, it was tested on SME-type companies in IRTJV ecosystem, to ensure it was user-friendly and easy to implement.

The questionnaire is divided into three main impact areas: strategy, corporate activities and corporate resources. For each area, IRTJV developed a set of questions addressing topics such as the creation of new products, the integration of new knowledge, or the company's strategic positioning. These questions were tailored to reflect the context of SMEs rather than large corporations.

In designing the questionnaire, IRTJV applied the defined KPIs to assess the impact of the DEVELOP project at its outset.



Strategic Indicators	1. New <u>Knowledge</u> integrated during the project 2. New <u>relationship</u> or strengthening the SME <u>ecosystem</u> 3. Positive <u>environmental</u> and social impacts (^"action taken")
Action indicators	4. Emergence of new products or services 5. Improving <u>existing</u> products or services 6. Increased <u>sales</u> related to project activities or number of "Business offers sent to clients »
Resource indicators	7. Attracting or hiring new <u>people</u> to the project 8. New corporate <u>investments</u> following involvement in the project 9. <u>Additional</u> grant for innovation <u>development</u>

In addition to these three questionnaires, we developed a document to gather, via DEVELOP beneficiaries' interviews, qualitative feedback on the impact of the project.

2.2 Data collection and analysis, and represented sectors

The table below summarises the number of answers received per survey and per call.

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
DEVELOP 1st call	30 (~97% of participating SMEs)	30 (~97% of participating SMEs)	30 (~97% of participating SMEs)
DEVELOP 2nd call	28 (93% of participating SMEs)	30 (100% of participating SMEs)	30 (100% of participating SMEs)

Data analysis was conducted in Excel, with a targeted selection of questions to ensure relevance to the deliverable.

For the presentation of results, we chose not to combine responses from the two calls, as they were conducted at distinct points during the project lifetime. This separation allows us to better assess the improvement in both partner coaching and collection of data between the two calls. Accordingly, this deliverable first presents the results of the DEVELOP 1st call, followed by those of DEVELOP 2nd call, organized by impact area.

The graphs below show the representation of target sectors in DEVELOP 1st and 2nd calls. We can observe the large presence of SMEs from textile sector in both calls, while the advanced manufacturing sector increases in DEVELOP 2nd call (30% vs only 7% in DEVELOP 1st call).

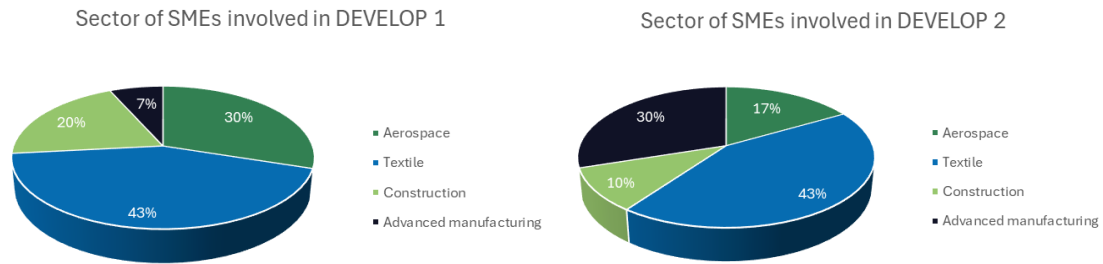


Figure 1. Graphic representation of target sector in the two DEVELOP calls.

2.2 General data

2.2.1 SMEs' initial expectations

A comparative analysis of feedback collected before and after the implementation of DEVELOP projects reveals strong alignment between participants' initial expectations and the benefits they reported.

Before committing to the program, participating SMEs identified several key expectations:

- Gaining access to targeted funding to drive the development of their innovations,
- Receiving strategic coaching — particularly on business model refinement and go-to-market strategies,
- Collaborating with other companies, especially within a cross-sectoral context,
- Accelerating the development of innovative and sustainable products,
- Becoming part of a European ecosystem to foster innovation and business growth,
- Enhancing their environmental practices through circular and eco-design approaches.

Feedback at the end of the program confirms that these expectations were largely met. Participants emphasized:

- The tangible impact of the funding received in progressing and completing their projects,
- The significant added value of coaching sessions in structuring their offerings, refining strategies, and strengthening their sales approaches,
- The pivotal role of new — often cross-sectoral — collaborations in developing and validating their solutions,
- The creation of prototypes or innovative products, in some cases unprecedented on the market (e.g., the project RECOTTEX introduced the world's first high-performance recycled cotton textile for fashion and aerospace, blending innovation and sustainability by creating eco-designed, zero-waste, fossil-free fabrics),
- The opportunity to join an active network of European innovation stakeholders,
- Concrete progress in sustainability, through the adoption of environmentally friendly materials and processes.

A clear continuity emerged between initial priorities and post-program outcomes. The program's main pillars — funding, guidance, collaboration, and sustainable innovation — were effectively deployed and acknowledged as significant contributors to success.

2.3 Strategic indicator

2.3.1 Knowledge and skills

DEVELOP helped enhancing the knowledge and skills of the participating SMEs. Significant gain in expertise was observed through the coaching sessions¹ in both DEVELOP 1st and 2nd calls. Following the coaching, the majority of SMEs rated themselves as having high or intermediate competencies in business modelling, market analysis, technical skills, management, communication, circular economy, and funding opportunities (Figure 2).

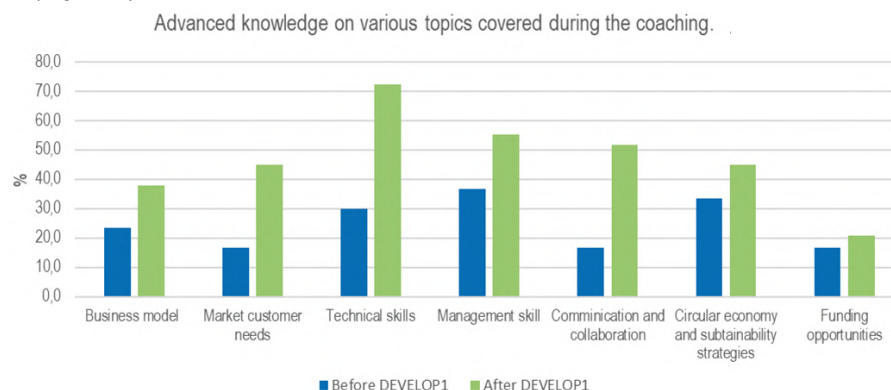


Figure 2a. Advanced knowledge on various topics covered during the coaching (DEVELOP 1st call).

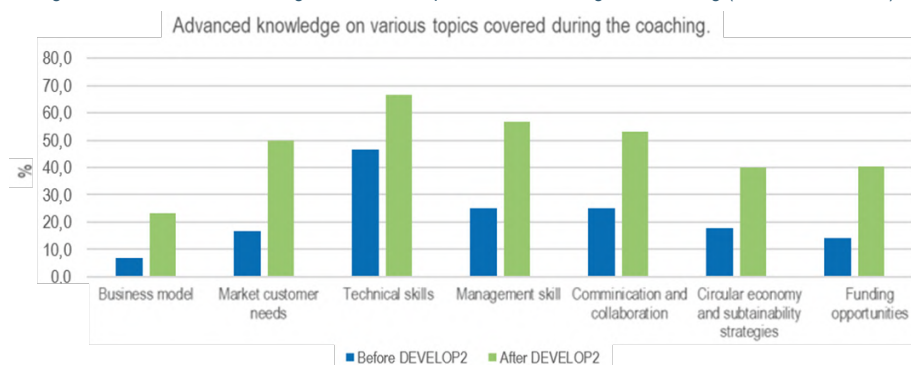


Figure 2b. Advanced knowledge on various topics covered during the coaching (DEVELOP 2nd call).

Based on the survey's answers, 100% of the SMEs reported improved knowledge across multiple areas. When asked in which areas they had improved the most, the most frequent cited areas were (Figure 3):

DEVELOP 1 st call	DEVELOP 2 nd call
1. innovation project management (62%), 2. cooperation and cross-sectoral knowledge (55%), 3. business model (45%), and 4. project visibility at the European level (45%).	1. innovation project management (53.3%), 2. business models (50%), 3. developing marketing plans (40%), 4. cooperation and cross-sectoral knowledge (40%), and 5. project visibility at the European level (40%).

For instance, in DEVELOP 2nd call, the analysis of pre- and post-coaching data reveals particularly strong gains in key areas: **market and customer needs** (+33.3 percentage points (pp)), **management skills** (+31.7 pp), and **communication and collaboration** (+28.3 pp).

¹ IN TRANSIT webinars on various topics (business models, transindustry, business planning, etc) are available on the [YouTube project page](#).

Post-project feedback shows that the activities carried out in DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call enabled participants to build a broad and diversified knowledge base, fully aligned with the objectives they had set beforehand. Analysis of the data confirms a very strong match between the knowledge participants hoped to acquire and the skills they actually gained. These learnings represent a solid foundation for their future growth and integration into sustainable and competitive market dynamics.

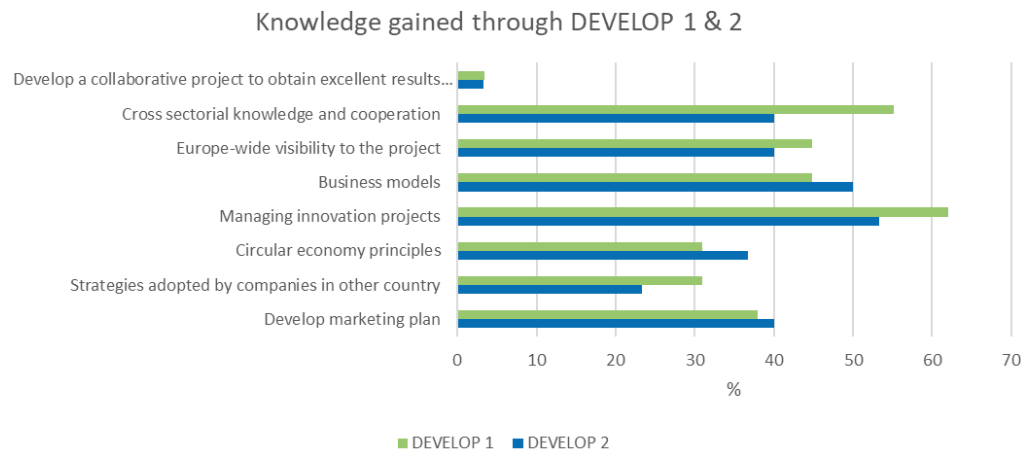


Figure 3. Knowledge gained through DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call. The results of DEVELOP 1st call also show that the IN TRANSIT project strengthened participants' expertise in additional cross-cutting coaching topics. In DEVELOP 2nd call, other improved areas include circular economy principles (36.7%) and strategies adopted by companies in other countries (23.3%).

Zoom In: Knowledge Gain Across Target Sectors

The evaluation of knowledge conducted before and after the DEVELOP program shows an overall improvement in competencies among SMEs across all sectors.

- **Aerospace:** SMEs showed steady progress in advancing their knowledge in all topics, except for "Circular Economy and Sustainability Strategies".
- **Textile:** SMEs capitalized on the DEVELOP initiative to strengthen their knowledge across all areas.
- **Advanced manufacturing:** SMEs significantly improved their knowledge in topics such as "Understanding Market and Customer Needs" and "Funding Opportunities".
- **Construction:** SMEs tended to focus more on enhancing management, communication, and collaboration skills, while progress in other areas remained moderate.

2.3.2 Relationships with other actors

Through DEVELOP, SMEs further expanded their ecosystems by establishing new relationships with variety of stakeholders producing a tangible impact on their business. The strongest synergies were reported with (figure 4a, b):

DEVELOP 1 st call	DEVELOP 2 nd call
- Other SMEs (75%) - Suppliers and distributors (75%) - Customers and end-users (65%) - Innovative technology companies (55%) - IN TRANSIT partners (58%) - Academic institutions (41%) - Financial backers (27%) - NGOs (21%) - Local and national governments (17%) - Local communities (17%)	- Other SMEs (79%) - Suppliers and distributors (59%) - Customers and end-users (55%) - Innovative technology companies (52%) - IN TRANSIT partners (52%) - Academic institutions (41%) - Local communities (34%) - NGOs (31%) - Opinion leaders (27%) - Local and national governments (24%)

- Opinion leaders (13%)

- Financial backers (21%)

These collaborations played a decisive role in strengthening companies' networks, reinforcing market access, fostering technological innovation, and in broadening the SMEs' visibility and diversifying their collaborative environment. In DEVELOP 2nd call, we can observe that the interaction with local entities and NGOs slightly increased when compared to DEVELOP 1st call.

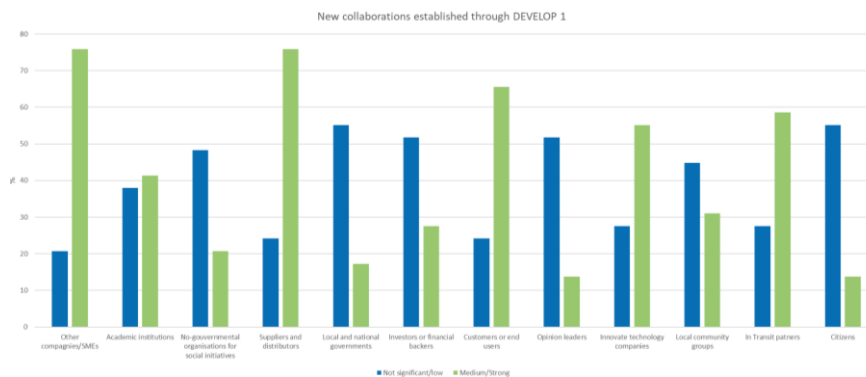


Figure 4a. New relationships / collaborations established during DEVELOP 1st call.

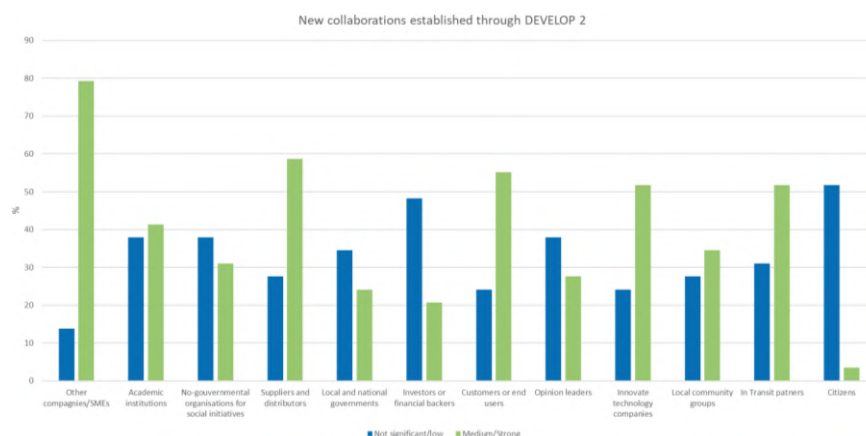


Figure 4b. New relationships / collaborations established during DEVELOP 2nd call.

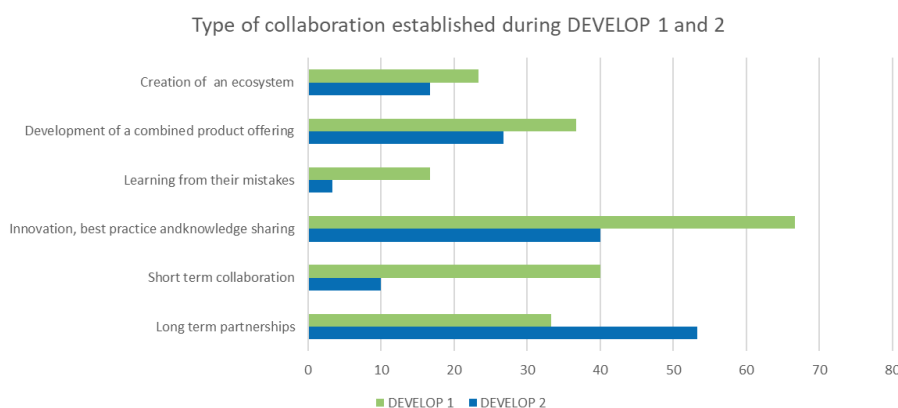


Figure 4c. Aim of the collaboration established during DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call (%).

In DEVELOP 1st, collaboration between SMEs enabled 67% of them sharing knowledge, innovations, and best practices, while collaborative projects naturally led to the creation of combined products (e.g., SUN.RICE project brought eco-sustainable, cement-free building blocks made from rice husk to the market, reducing the construction industry's carbon footprint and reintroducing agro-waste into the value chain). About 40% of SMEs developed short-term partnership, while 34% long-term partnerships. In DEVELOP 2nd call, the relationships built between SMEs were particularly fruitful: over 53.3% of SMEs reported the

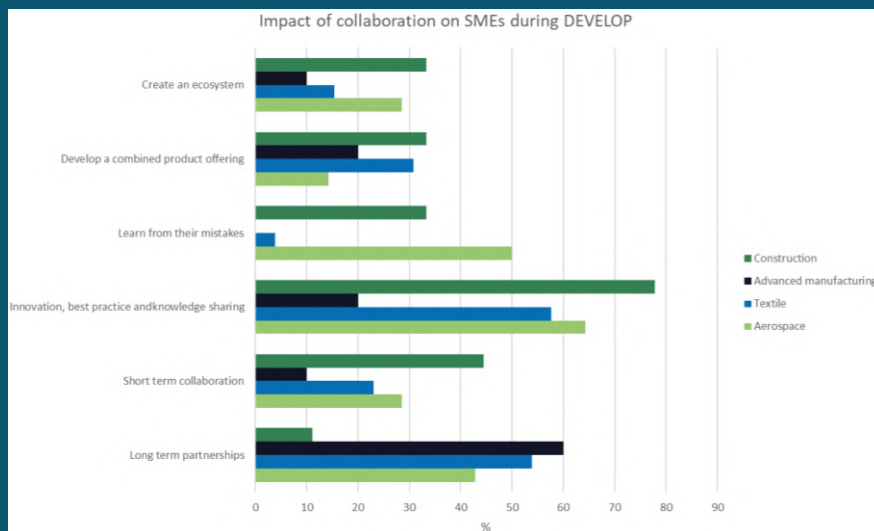
creation of long-term partnerships, while 40% benefited from sharing innovations, best practices, and knowledge. Furthermore, 26.7% developed combined product offerings, and 16.7% contributed to creating broader ecosystems (figure 4c).

Six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call, 69% of SMEs say they have kept in touch with the various entities they met during the project. As for long-term collaborations, 77% of SMEs say they are still working with these partners. Two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call, almost 52% of SMEs confirmed to still collaborate with SMEs and other entities met during the project; while 51% confirmed their long-term collaborations are still in place.

When looking at the data, SMEs participating in DEVELOP 2nd call showed a greater interest in building sustainable, long-lasting collaborations, alongside maintaining strong knowledge-sharing dynamics. These results highlight the capacity of IN TRANSIT project to go beyond short-term interactions, fostering more strategic partnerships that can significantly impact SMEs' growth and competitiveness in the European market.

Zoom In: Impact of SMEs Interaction Across Target Sectors

The establishment of long-term partnerships and the exchange of knowledge, innovations, and best practices emerges as the main benefit for aerospace, textile, advanced manufacturing sectors. SMEs from construction sector benefitted more from short term collaboration. These findings indicate that DEVELOP has primarily promoted the sharing of experiences and the creation of lasting relationships, while also revealing potential for future growth toward more integrated and strategic collaborations.



2.3.3 HR commitments

SMEs participating in **DEVELOP 1st call** reported that, prior to the project, certain dimensions, notably **workplace flexibility and promotion policies**, were already relatively well established. In contrast, **inclusive recruitment and training** displayed more uneven or heterogeneous levels of commitment.

Immediately after DEVELOP 1st call, a marked increase in commitment across all areas was reported: **87% intensified their training initiatives**, **83% enhanced workplace flexibility**, **73% improved their inclusive**

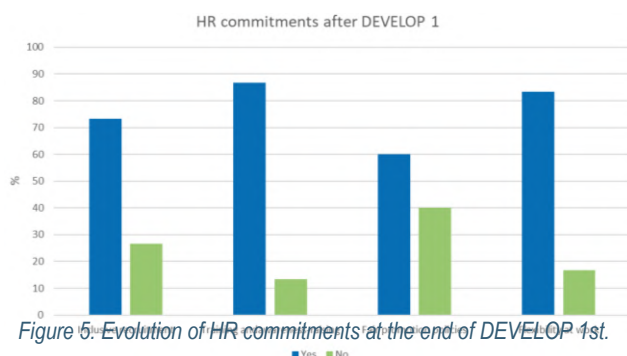


Figure 5: Evolution of HR commitments at the end of DEVELOP 1st.

recruitment practices, and 60% reviewed and updated their promotion policies.

These results point to a strong mobilizing effect, characterized by collective awareness and a rapid shift from intention to action. Six months later, SMEs confirmed that this initial momentum has translated into sustained changes across several dimensions: workplace flexibility remains the most consolidated area, with 22 companies maintaining a strong commitment; fair and transparent promotion policies continue to make steady progress, training and inclusive recruitment show a slight dip in intensity but retain a solid intermediate level of practice.

Following the implementation of **DEVELOP 2nd call**, SMEs reported a notable increase in their commitment to promoting equality and diversity within their organizations. The survey results indicate strong engagement across multiple dimensions immediately after the project: **90% of SMEs reported enhanced initiatives in training and awareness-raising, 90% increased their workplace flexibility measures, 70% revised their promotion policies to make them fairer, ~67% strengthened their recruitment practices making them more inclusive.** Two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call, SMEs reported to keep promoting flexibility at work (76%), inclusive recruitment (53%), fair promotion policies and training and awareness-raising (~47%). Overall, DEVELOP 2nd call confirms and strengthens the positive trends observed in DEVELOP 1st call, showing high levels of commitment – particularly in **training and flexibility** – and a positive, though slightly lower uptake in **inclusive recruitment**. **This highlights the IN TRANSIT project's capacity to drive both immediate and potentially lasting HR improvements in participating SMEs.**



Figure 6. Evolution of HR commitments at the end of DEVELOP 2nd

2.3.4 Implementation of social measures

Prior to DEVELOP 1st and 2nd calls, companies already identified social measures to be implemented:



Figure 7. Social measures to be implemented at the start of DEVELOP 1st call (on the left) and DEVELOP 2nd call (on the right).

At the end of the DEVELOP 1st call (fig. 8) and 2nd call (fig. 10), companies showed notable progress in areas closely linked to internal capacity building:

- promotion of equity and diversity in the workplace

- investments in employee training and development
- investments in employees' health and well-being.

Measures oriented toward external impact, such as support to local community or ethical sourcing, were less widely implemented. While some SMEs began taking steps or initiated discussions, adoption remained limited indicating that these measures may require additional resources, guidance, or strategic alignment to become fully integrated.

Six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call (fig. 9) and two months after the of DEVELOP 2nd call, SMEs continued to strengthen their social actions:

DEVELOP 1st call

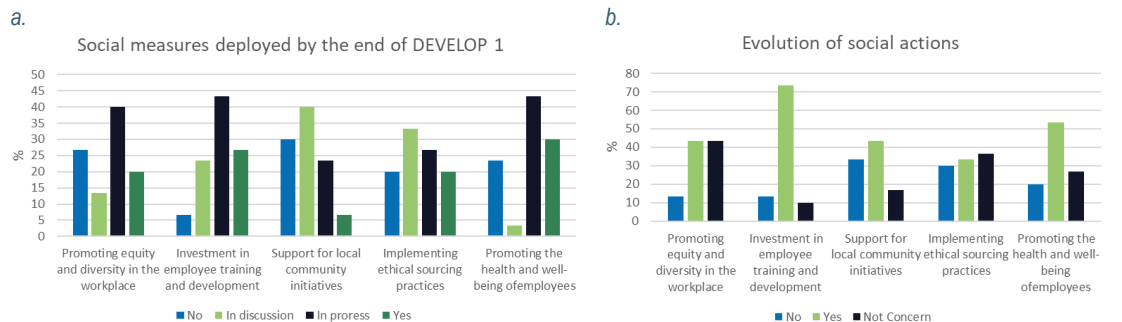
- equity and diversity promotion improved in 43.3% of companies
- a large majority (73.3%) increased their investment in employee training and development
- in terms of support for local community initiatives, 43.3% of companies deepened their actions, although one-third (33.3%) reported only limited progress.
- Regarding ethical sourcing, 33.3% of companies enhanced their practices, but a significant share remains unaffected by this measure.
- Finally, more than half (53.3%) intensified their initiatives to promote employee health and well-being, reflecting growing corporate attention to social responsibility.

DEVELOP 2nd call

- 77% of companies increased their investment in training and development
- and over 60% reinforced health and well-being initiatives.
- Similarly, 57% improved equity and diversity promotion in the workplace, though about one-third of companies reported being less engaged in this domain.
- For support to local community initiatives, 27% of companies strengthened their involvement.
- In the area of ethical sourcing, 50% of companies introduced improvements, while 40% is not concerned by this issue.

In summary, thank to DEVELOP **SMEs strengthened their commitment to internal social actions and raised awareness of broader social responsibilities**. It laid the foundation for gradual expansion toward external social impact, highlighting areas where further support could accelerate implementation.

DEVELOP 1st call



DEVELOP 2nd call

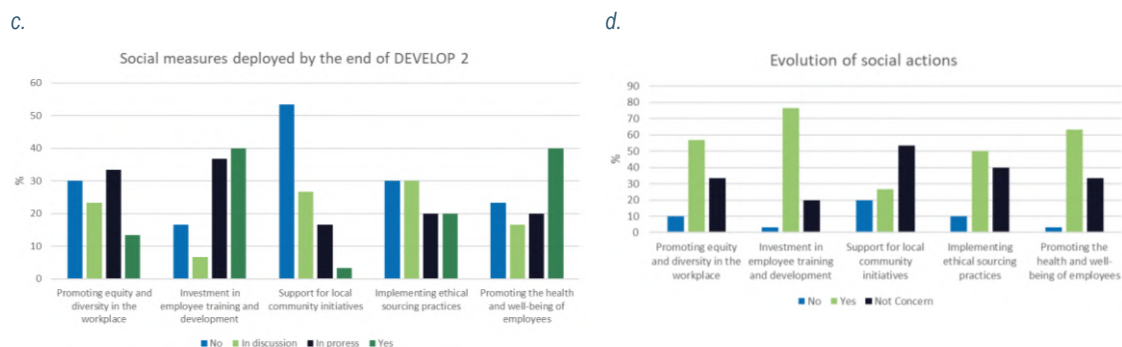


Figure 8. The above graphs show the social measures deployment by DEVELOP beneficiaries at the end of DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call (fig. a and c), and the evolution respectively six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st and two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call (fig. b and d).

2.3.5 Sustainable development objectives

Both DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call had a clear positive impact on the environmental practices of participating companies, although the extent of progress varies by theme.

Six months after the end **DEVELOP 1st call**, **60%** of companies reported achieving a high level of **progress in product innovation for sustainability**, compared with **71%** immediately after the end of the project. Employees engagement in sustainability initiatives also shows a solid progress: **44%** of companies reported a high level of progress just after the project, a figure that remains stable at **40%** six months later.

In contrast, results are more mixed in domains related to:

- **Energy and water management:** only 12% of companies declare a high level of progress at six months, compared with 28% just after the project, and 28% reported no progress at all – highlighting the challenge of converting intention into sustained action.
- **CO₂ emissions:** after peaking at 52% reporting high progress just after the project, this figure dropped to 28% at six months, with 16% of companies still having implemented no measures.
- **Waste:** 40% of companies reported high progress just after the project, compared with 20% six months later. However, 48% indicated they were making progress at an average level, suggesting continued but slower advancement.

Finally, 24% of companies reported high progress **to green their supply chain** at six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call, and 68% were making progress, although this is still an emerging area of action.

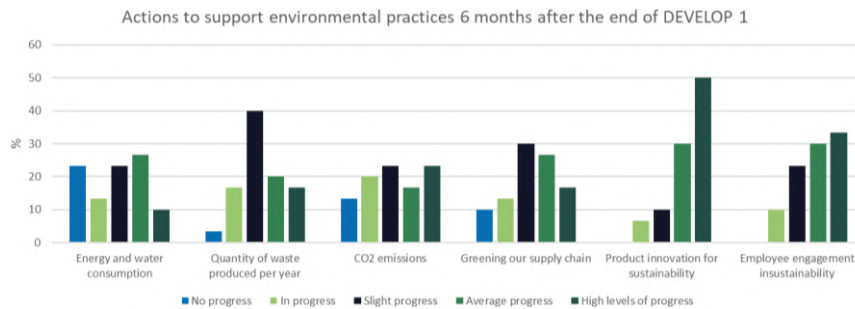


Figure 9. Progress of actions to support environmental practices six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call.

At the end of **DEVELOP 2nd call**, significant progress was observed, notably in areas directly linked to **innovation and employee engagement**. As in DEVELOP 1st call, energy management, waste, and CO₂ reduction showed moderate progress, highlighting challenges in translating initial intentions into concrete actions. Two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call, SMEs still reported high level of progress in **product innovation for sustainability and employee engagement** (respectively reported by 40% and 27% of SMEs). Average progress is reported by 30% of SMEs in actions related to energy and water consumption, and quantity of waste produced per year. The sectors where slight progress have been registered are CO₂ and greening of the supply chain (30% and 37%). The feedback is confirming the tendency recorded already at the end of the project.

Overall, the analysis of data showed that **DEVELOP framework helped SMEs integrating sustainability into their strategies, combining both immediate actions and long-term engagement.**

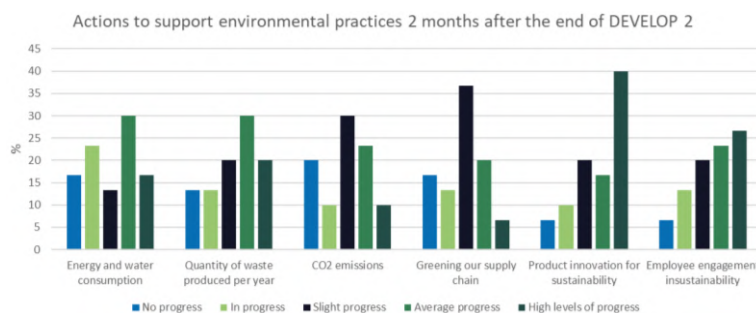


Figure 10. Progress of actions to support environmental practices at the end and two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call.

2.3.6 Environmental impact

Companies involved in **DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call** had already identified several measures to reduce their environmental impact, such as:

DEVELOP 1 st call	DEVELOP 2 nd call
- adoption of energy-efficient technologies (33%) - use of recycled or sustainable materials (33%) - reduction of waste through recycling and reusing (23%).	- adoption of energy-efficient technologies (25%) - use of recycled or sustainable materials (28%) - reduction of waste through recycling and reusing (29%).

Some measures were seen as a lower priority such as **carbon offsetting** which, for instance, was taken into consideration only by **6.7%** of the companies participating in DEVELOP 1st call.

At the end of DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call, progress was made in implementing these measures:

	DEVELOP 1 st call	DEVELOP 2 nd call
Adoption of recycled or sustainable materials	56.7%	53%
Adoption of energy-efficient technologies	40%	43%
Actions to reduce waste	40%	60%

However, carbon offsetting remained a little-implemented measure, involving just 16.7% of companies in DEVELOP 1st and 20% in DEVELOP 2nd call. Improving **water efficiency** was another area addressed (**30%** of companies implementing relevant actions in DEVELOP 1st and 27% in DEVELOP 2nd call).

Overall, although significant progress has been made even though some areas, such as carbon offsetting, remain under-exploited (it probably requires more resources and support to be fully integrated and implemented on a large scale or not all companies are fully concerned). **DEVELOP calls have therefore laid the foundations for more responsible environmental management, but there are still challenges to be met if these actions are to be sustained over the long term.**

2.3.7 Impact on the circular economy

To conclude this section on strategic indicators, the surveys allowed measuring the progress of SMEs across several environmental criteria, including:

- Circularity of products and materials
- Reduction of waste and pollution
- Participation to nature regeneration project.

At the beginning of DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call, a large majority of SMEs already reported implementation in processes and products or were in the planning phase. The results from the last questionnaires, after the end of DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call, show that SMEs have continued to make progress in integrating sustainability into their core operations. When asked about their current strategies, a significant percentage of SMEs indicated that they had moved forward with the integration of environmental actions:

	DEVELOP 1 st call	DEVELOP 2 nd call
Circularity of products and materials (re-use, recycle, repurpose, etc.)	33.3% of SMEs have fully integrated this measure into their core business strategy, while 30% are in the process of implementing it.	Half (50%) of SMEs have already fully integrated this measure into their core business strategy, while nearly one-quarter (23%) are currently implementing it.

Reduction of waste and pollution (sustainable by design, carbon capture, greener materials, etc.)	36.7% of SMEs have incorporated these actions into their core business strategy, and 33.3% are actively working on implementation.	43% of SMEs have already embedded these actions into their core business strategy, while 36% are actively implementing them.
Participation in nature regeneration projects	While 46.7% of SMEs have not yet made this a strategic priority, 20% are currently planning or gathering intelligence for future integration, and 3.3% have already incorporated it into their operations.	Participation in nature regeneration projects has also advanced, though more slowly, with 20% of companies having integrated this approach into their strategy and 10% currently implementing it.

Overall, the findings confirm that SMEs supported by the DEVELOP 2nd call project are following a similar trajectory to those in DEVELOP 1st call, consolidating ongoing actions and embedding certain circular and pollution-reducing practices into their business strategy. The emphasis on strategic integration indicates a successful transition from awareness to operational action, even though some areas, such as nature regeneration, remain emerging and may require additional support to achieve comparable impact.

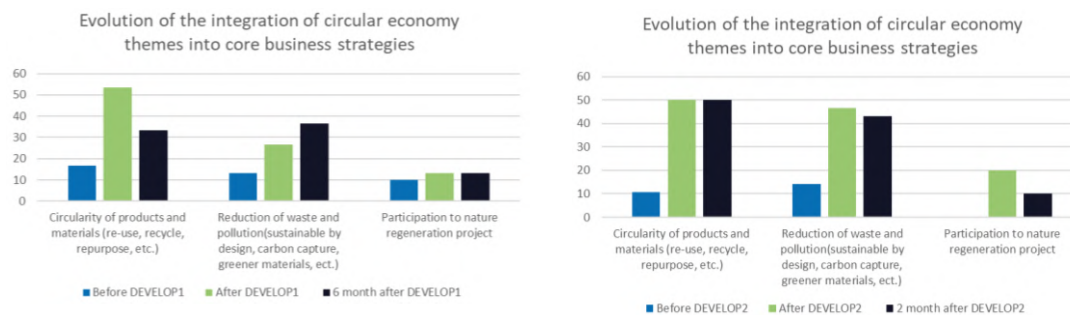


Figure 11. Evolution of the integration of circular economy themes into core business strategies.

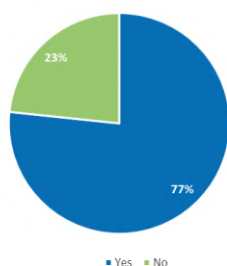
2.4 Action indicators

2.4.1 Product or services developed

At the beginning of DEVELOP 1st call, 29 SMEs, representing 97% of the funded companies, declared their intention to develop a new product or service during DEVELOP project. By the end of DEVELOP 1st call, 60% (18 SMEs) successfully launched a new product or service. Six months later, the third questionnaire showed that 79% of SMEs had further expanded their product or service portfolio, demonstrating a strong and sustained innovation dynamic. Only 21% reported no additional growth (figure 12).

The results from the DEVELOP 2nd call questionnaires confirm the continuation of the positive trend observed in DEVELOP 1st call. At the start of the project, almost half of SMEs (46%) aimed to develop a new product, while smaller shares planned to launch a service (21%) or both (29%). By the end of the project, 53% of SMEs introduced a new product or service, demonstrating that more than half of the companies successfully converted their intentions into tangible outcomes. Although nearly half of SMEs (47%) did not report new additions, the overall trend confirms the positive impact of DEVELOP initiative on innovation, consistent with the growth recorded in the first survey. The shift from intention to results highlights the practical value of DEVELOP in helping SMEs bring new offerings to market. Two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call, 77% of companies confirmed the expansion of their products / services (figure 12).

Percentage of SMEs that expanded their product or service offering within two months after the end of DEVELOP 2



Percentage of SMEs that expanded their product or service offering within six months after the end of DEVELOP 1

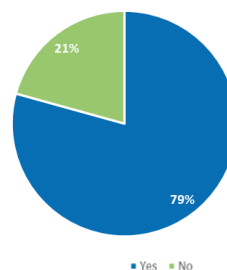


Figure 12. New products / services developed. (a) The graph shows the development / expansion of new products and services, respectively, six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call and two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call.

2.4.2 Patents and trademarks

The number of patents held by SMEs engaged in the DEVELOP 1st call project increased from 20 at the project's outset to 30 after six months, representing a net gain of 10 patents. This progression clearly demonstrates the DEVELOP 1st call project's strong and structuring impact on SMEs' capacity to safeguard their innovations through patenting. Even though the increase was modest, we recorded that after DEVELOP 2nd call, the total number of patents moved from 14 to 17.

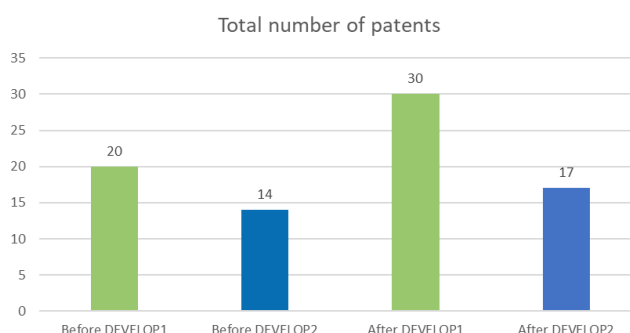


Figure 13. Total number of patents before and after DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call.

Before the launch of DEVELOP 1st call, 19 SMEs reported owning one or more trademarks. This figure remained almost unchanged at the end of the project but increased sharply six months later to 29 SMEs – representing 96% of those involved in DEVELOP 1st call.

Similarly, before the launch of DEVELOP 2nd call, 18 SMEs claimed to own at least one trademark. This number rose modestly to 22 by the end of the project and then increased sharply to 43 just two months after completion.

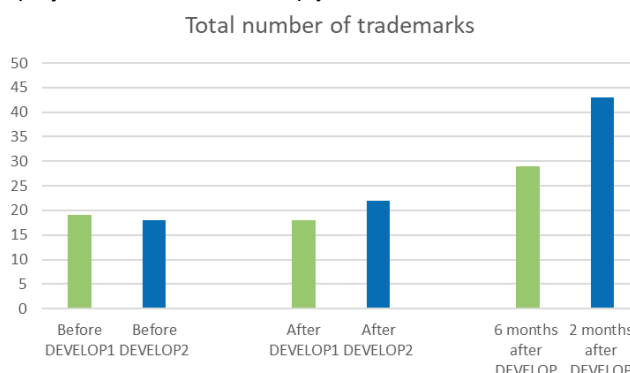


Figure 14a. Total number of trademarks before and after DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call.

When analysing these results, we need to consider the time required to initiate and process trademark registration procedures, including preparation of the file, exchanges with INPI (or equivalent), and administrative validation times. Thus, the concrete effects of the support provided during DEVELOP project on the intellectual property strategy of SMEs appear with a slight time lag. This highlights a delayed but lasting impact, showing that the SMEs have continued with the actions initiated during the project, particularly in terms of promoting and protecting their commercial identity.

Responses to the question on the territories where patents and trademarks were filed reveal a gradual trend toward greater internationalization of intellectual property strategies over time:

	DEVELOP 1 st call	DEVELOP 2 nd call
Europe	The number of SMEs reporting Europe-wide filings increased from 15 to 18 six months after the end of DEVELOP 1 st call, showing a moderate but steady expansion into broader markets.	The number of SMEs reporting Europe-wide filings remained constant at 10.
Europe and beyond	International filings also grew, from 6 to 7 SMEs, confirming a slight but positive shift toward global protection strategies.	We recorded a moderate increase from 7 to 11 SMEs declaring international filings.
National	In contrast, filings limited to the national level declined from 7 to 4 SMEs, suggesting a strategic move away from a purely domestic focus toward more ambitious, geographically extensive approaches.	The number of national filings increased from 6 to 9 two months after the end of DEVELOP 2 nd call.

Although modest, this evolution reflects a clear maturation of SMEs' approach to intellectual property. It aligns with the support provided through DEVELOP calls which encouraged companies to look beyond the national market and pursue development on a European and even global scale (figure 14).

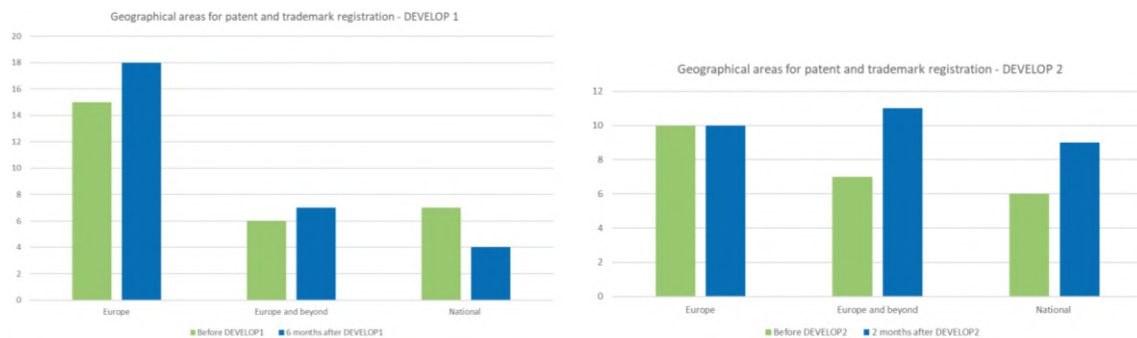


Figure 14b. Geographical distribution of patent and trademark registration during and after DEVELOP 1st (on the left) and 2nd (on the right) at national and international level.

Zoom In: Patents across DEVELOP target sectors

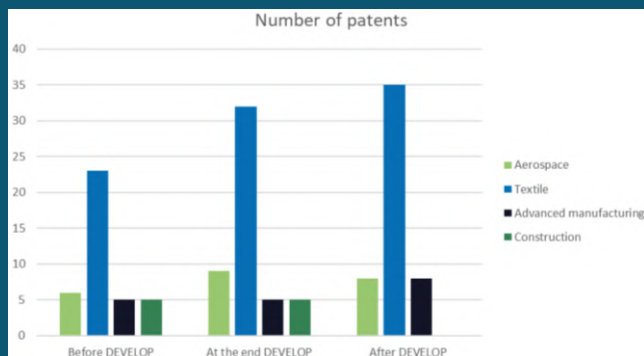
The data indicate that the **textile sector** experienced the most significant growth, with the number of patents increasing steadily from 23 before DEVELOP to 32 at the end and reaching 35 afterward. This suggests a substantial and sustained positive impact of DEVELOP initiative on innovation in this field.

The **aerospace sector** also recorded progress, rising from 6 patents before DEVELOP implementation to 9 at the end, and maintaining a similar level (8) afterward. This reflects moderate but consistent development.

The **advanced manufacturing** sector remained stable at 5 patents before and during DEVELOP, but rose slightly to 8 patents after DEVELOP implementation, suggesting a delayed response to the initiative.

In contrast, the **construction** sector maintained a constant number of patents (5) throughout all stages, indicating minimal or no effect from DEVELOP program.

In summary, DEVELOP program appears to have had the most pronounced effect on the textile sector, followed by modest gains in aerospace and advanced manufacturing, while construction shows no observable change with regards with the patent ownership.

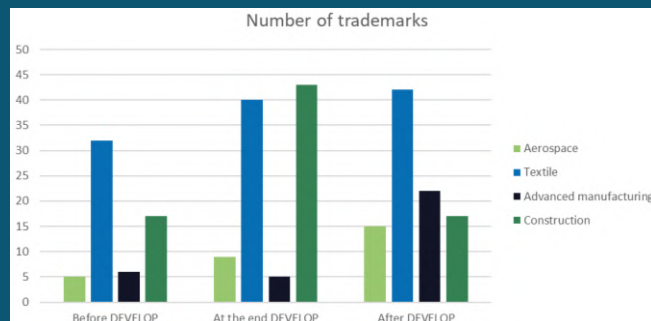


Zoom In: Trademarks across DEVELOP target sectors

For what concerns the trademarks evolution, the **textile sector** consistently registered the highest number of trademarks, increasing steadily from 32 before DEVELOP to 40 at the end and 42 after, indicating continuous growth and strong branding activity.

The **aerospace sector** also demonstrated steady progress, rising from 5 trademarks before DEVELOP to 9 at the end, and 15 after the program, suggesting that the initiative had a lasting positive effect.

The **advanced manufacturing** sector showed significant improvement, growing from 6 trademarks before DEVELOP to 22 afterward — a notable increase that reflects enhanced innovation and market presence.



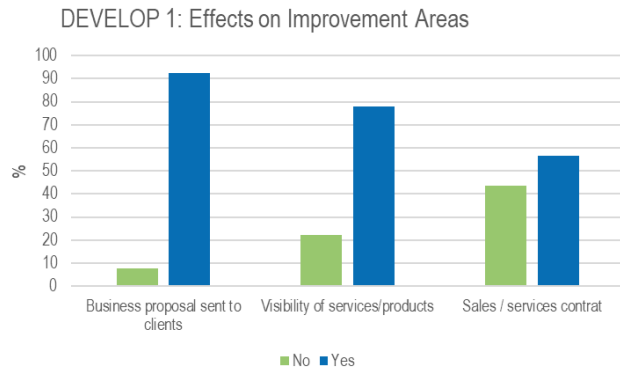
In contrast, the **construction sector** experienced a sharp rise during DEVELOP (from 17 to 43 trademarks) but declined afterward to 17, indicating a temporary boost that was not sustained once the program concluded.

Overall, DEVELOP program appears to have had a strong and lasting impact on textile, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing, while the construction sector benefited only in the short term.

2.4.3 Impact of the project on sales in various areas

We also examined whether, through DEVELOP, SMEs improved their business proposals and service offerings, increased the visibility of their products or services, and boosted sales.

In DEVELOP 1st call, questionnaire responses indicate that 80% of SMEs enhanced their business proposals and the visibility of their offerings. Sales showed improvement as well, though to a lesser extent (44%) (Figure 15). The DEVELOP 2nd call survey confirms, and in some areas strengthens, these trends. A large majority of SMEs reported improvements in business proposals (88.9%) and visibility of products or services (92.9%). Sales and service contracts also saw gains, though somewhat smaller, with 76% of SMEs reporting improvement.



These results suggest that DEVELOP project had a meaningful and sustained impact on SMEs' market-facing activities. Participating companies not only refined their offerings but also increased their visibility and commercial reach. Compared to DEVELOP 1st call, where 80% of SMEs reported improved proposals and visibility, DEVELOP 2nd call outcomes demonstrate an even stronger alignment between project support and tangible business benefits, showing that guidance and resources provided by the project were effectively translated into actionable results over time.

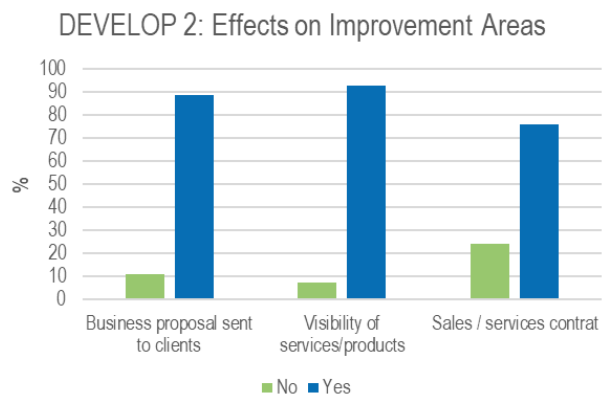


Figure 15. Impact of DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call on key areas of improvement

2.5 Resource indicators

2.5.1 Human resources

DEVELOP played a remarkable role on the human resources management within the participating SMEs, bringing improvements both in terms of skills and personnel management (Figure 16).

At the start of both DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call, SMEs were primarily interested in:

	DEVELOP 1 st call	DEVELOP 2 nd call
1. Improvement of employees' skills	77% of SMEs	85% of SMEs
2. Hiring new employees	50% of SMEs	50% of SMEs
3. Converting temporary contracts into permanent ones	13% of SMEs	10% of SMEs

These initial objectives were characterized by a strong emphasis on strengthening existing team skills and expanding human resources. At the end of DEVELOP 1st call, 73% of SMEs succeeded in enhancing employee skills, a figure slightly below the initial target, yet still substantial. Team stabilization was also achieved, with 17% of SMEs converting temporary contracts into permanent ones, up from 13% at the outset. The goal of hiring new employees fell to 30%, possibly reflecting a strategic focus on internal development rather than immediate recruitment. Six months after the project's conclusion, the program's effects became more pronounced: 62% of SMEs had recruited new employees (corresponding to 40 new

hires), a marked increase from the 30% reported previously. This suggests that, once skills had been strengthened and teams stabilized, SMEs were ready to expand their workforce.

The DEVELOP 2nd call results reinforce the trends observed in DEVELOP 1st call, regarding human resource management. Post-project data show that most SMEs successfully enhanced employee skills (77%), reflecting strong continuity with DEVELOP 1st and demonstrating that the program effectively supported workforce development. Progress in converting temporary contracts to permanent positions was limited (3%), and recruitment remained moderate (23%). Nevertheless, since the end of the project, participating SMEs have hired 12 new employees, indicating that DEVELOP 2nd contributed to workforce expansion, albeit more gradually.

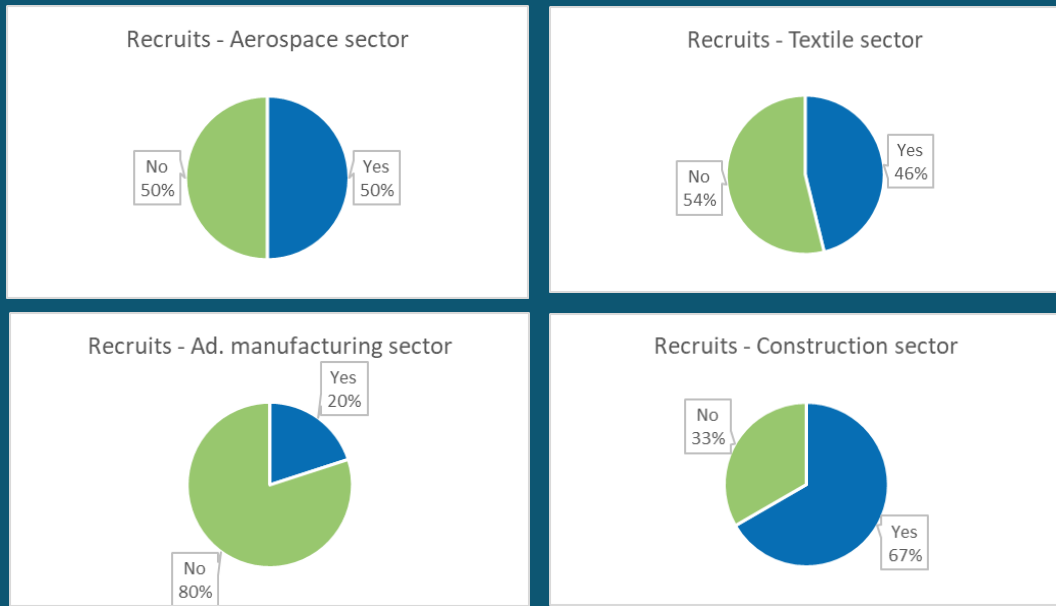
In conclusion, although SMEs' priorities changed over the course of the project, the overall impact of both DEVELOP calls was positive. SMEs not only strengthened their in-house skills but also showed early signs of workforce stabilization and, following the project's conclusion, experienced a significant increase in hiring.



Figure 16. (a,b) On the left, objectives related to the HR management at the launch of DEVELOP 1st vs. progress at the end of DEVELOP 1st. On the right, the percentage of SMEs having recruited new employees since the end of DEVELOP 1st. (c,d) On the left, objectives related to the HR management at the launch of DEVELOP 2nd vs. progress at the end of DEVELOP 2nd. On the right, the percentage of SMEs having recruited new employees since the end of DEVELOP 2nd.

Zoom In: Human Resources Across DEVELOP Target Sectors

DEVELOP contributed to recruits, even though recruitment activity varies by sector. SMEs from construction sector show the strongest recruitment tendency, followed by SMEs from aerospace and textile sectors. In terms of recruits, SMEs from advanced manufacturing sector lags behinds.



2.5.2 Training or development programs implemented

By the end of DEVELOP calls, SMEs achieved tangible results in establishing training programmes:

- **DEVELOP 1st call:** 77% of SMEs launched technical training initiatives; 40% implemented managerial training programmes, and 43% introduced soft skills training.
- **DEVELOP 2nd call:** 70% of SMEs organised technical trainings; 37% launched managerial training programmes, and 33% invested on soft skills training.
-

These outcomes indicate widespread adoption of technical training, alongside growing recognition of the importance of management and interpersonal skills for overall company performance.

Six (DEVELOP 1st) and two (DEVELOP 2nd) months after the project's conclusion, SMEs continued to invest in employee training, though at a slightly reduced pace:

- **DEVELOP 1st call:** 67% of SMEs maintained technical training, while 27% continued both managerial and soft skills training.
- **DEVELOP 2nd call:** 53% of SMEs maintained technical training, while 23% continued both managerial and soft skills training.

While technical training remained the main priority, a modest decline was observed in managerial and behavioural training. This may reflect a renewed focus on core technical competencies, perhaps considered more urgent for market adaptation and competitiveness (Figure 17).

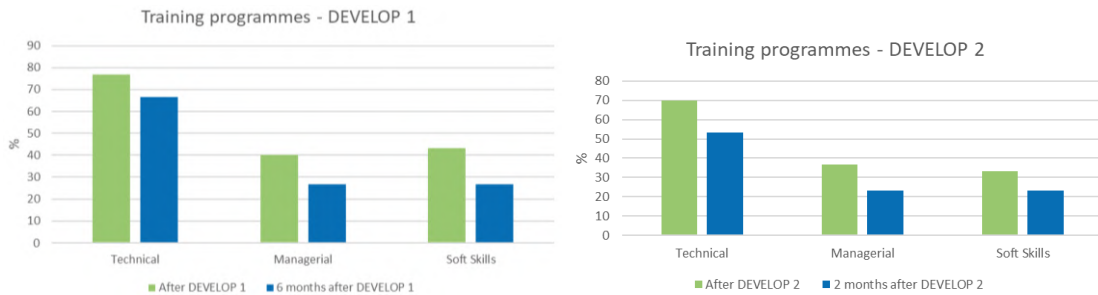


Figure 17. Training programmes set up by SMEs involved in DEVELOP 1st and DEVELOP 2nd call.

2.5.3 Investment in innovation and technological

The level of SMEs investment in innovation and technological development remained consistently high throughout DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call, showing a slight upward trend over time. At the launch of DEVELOP 1st, more than half of the companies (53.3%) reported investing over 10% of their sales in this area. This proportion remained stable at the end of DEVELOP 1st and rose modestly six months later to 55.2%. Overall, these trends highlight a strengthening of SMEs' commitment to innovation. DEVELOP project therefore helped consolidate existing momentum while motivating the less engaged companies to increase their efforts in this strategic domain.

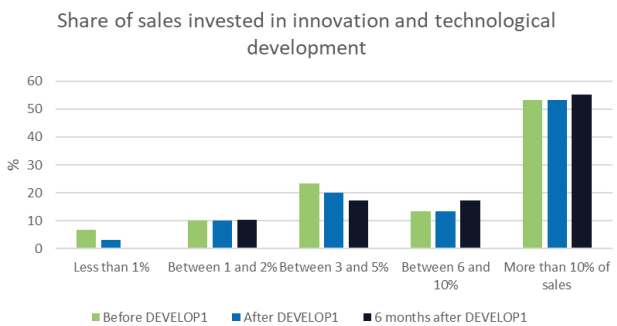


Figure 18. Evolution of SMEs investment in innovation and technological development before the launch, at the end and six months after the conclusion of DEVELOP 1st call.

The data presented in figure 19 illustrate the evolution of SMEs' investment in innovation and technological development before, immediately after, and two months following the DEVELOP 2nd call.

Overall, the share of sales devoted to innovation remained high throughout the period, with a visible shift toward higher levels of investment after the project. The proportion of SMEs investing more than 10% of their sales increased steadily, rising from around 46% before DEVELOP 2nd to 50% two months after its conclusion. This indicates that a growing number of companies are committing significant resources to innovation. Taken together, these results show that DEVELOP 2nd helped to consolidate and

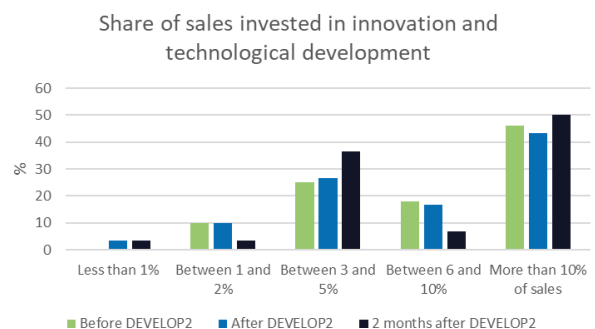


Figure 19. Evolution of SMEs investment in innovation and technological development before the launch, at the end and six months after the conclusion of DEVELOP 2nd call.

strengthen SMEs' commitment to innovation, encouraging a progressive increase in the share of sales allocated to technological development and a reduction in low-investment behaviours.

The types of investment made or planned as part of the DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call show a very marked

orientation towards research and development (R&D), confirming the SMEs' desire to innovate in depth. From the outset, a large majority of companies (56.7% and 40% respectively in DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call) planned to invest in R&D to support their project. This intention became a reality during DEVELOP with 66.7% of SMEs declaring that they had invested in this area at the end of DEVELOP 1st call, and 69% six months later. This steady progression reflects a strong and growing commitment to technological innovation and internal processes.

In DEVELOP 2nd call, we recorded an increase of investment in R&D during the program (57%), followed by a reduction two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd (23%). In both DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call, other forms of investment remained marginal but constant throughout the project. Probably SMEs, having invested heavily in R&D during the project, have begun to broaden their innovation strategy by integrating complementary actions: internal skills development, marketing of solutions, and improvement of working conditions. DEVELOP project thus served as a catalyst for initiating sustainable investment dynamic, initially focused on technology, then gradually extended to the company's ecosystem.

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2.5.4 Investments and financing requested

During DEVELOP 1st call, 66.7% of the beneficiaries planned to invest between 10.000 € and 50.000 €, and 20% more than 50.000 €. At the end of DEVELOP 1st, a slight rise in investments under 10.000 € (16.7% → 23.3%) was observed: it reflects a redistribution rather than reduced engagement. The 30.000 € – 50.000 € range grew sharply (20% → 36.7%), suggesting that some companies increased their investments based on emerging opportunities and positive project results. SMEs in DEVELOP 2nd call also showed a strong investment intent. Actual spending revealed a shift toward the 10.000 € - 30.000 € range and fewer high-value investments. Overall, SMEs remained financially committed, adjusting their budgets to opportunities identified during the project. **Overall, the trend shows strong financial commitment, with several companies exceeding their initial plans.**

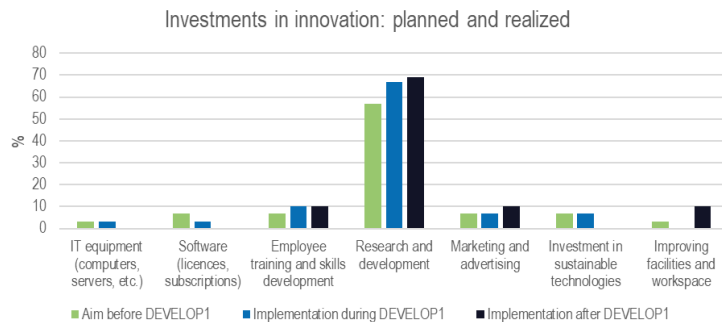


Figure 20. Investments in various key areas at the launch of DEVELOP 1st call, at its end and six months after its end.

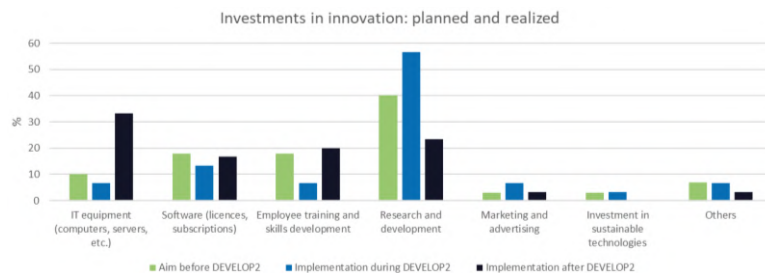


Figure 21. Investments in various key areas at the launch of DEVELOP 2nd call, at its end and six months after its end.

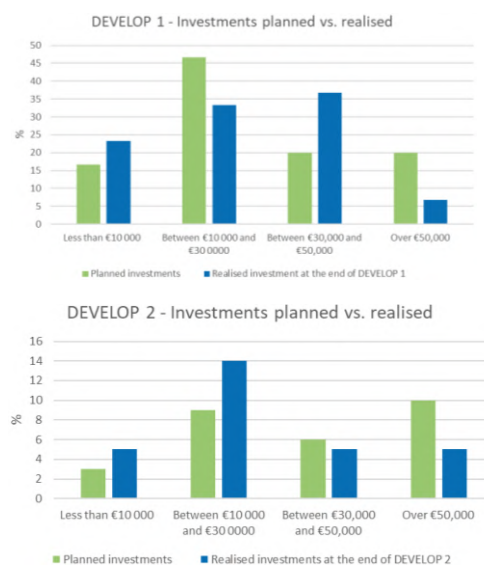


Figure 22. Investments planned vs. investment realised by SMEs at the end of DEVELOP 1st (on top) and 2nd (bottom).

Financing methods vary widely among SMEs: **European, regional, and national funds** remain the most common. After DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call, additional funding was secured:

DEVELOP 1st call:

- European funds (31.0%),
- private funds (20.7%),
- regional/national funds (34.5%),
- bank loans (10.3%),
- and fund-raising (17.2%).

DEVELOP 2nd call:

- European funds (23%),
- regional or national funds (23%),
- private investments (17%),
- bank loans (7%)
- and fund raising (7%) (Figure 25).

These results show that many SMEs continue to seek funding to sustain and expand their project initiatives (Figure 23).

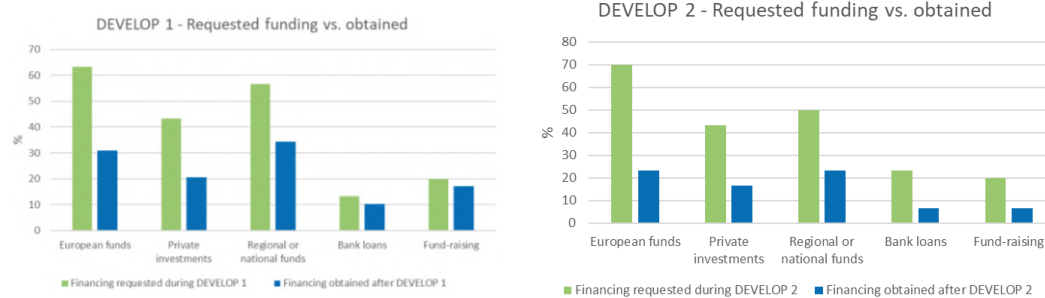


Figure 23. Source of funding after DEVELOP 1st (on the left) and DEVELOP 2nd (on the right).

2.5.5 Return on investment (ROI)

Assessing the expected ROI of participating SMEs highlights the economic impact of DEVELOP calls and thus of IN TRANSIT project.

In DEVELOP 1st call, a comparison between initial expectations and results six months later is possible and shows a clear shift in perceptions (Figure 24).

During DEVELOP 1st call:

- 48,4% of SMEs expected ROI in 12 to 24 months after the end of the project,
- ~26% in 6 to 12 months,
- ~23% beyond 24 months,
- 3,2% within 3-6 months.

These figures show realistic expectations, reflecting the long cycles typical of industrial innovation (e.g., long product development or market access cycles).

Six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call:

- 32.3% of SMEs reported ROI in 3–6 months (+29 points),
- 16.1% in 6–12 months,
- 38.7% in 12–24 months,
- 0% beyond 24 months.

Data show the project accelerated ROI for one-third of SMEs. Key drivers of this performance included strategic coaching, greater market visibility, and stronger collaboration and technical validation.

In summary, rapid ROI (3 to 6 months) rose tenfold from 3 to 32%, most SMEs now expect profitability within 6 to 24 months. None foresee payback beyond 2 years, showing real progress in market readiness. DEVELOP not only met but exceeded economic goals, significantly shortening the payback period.

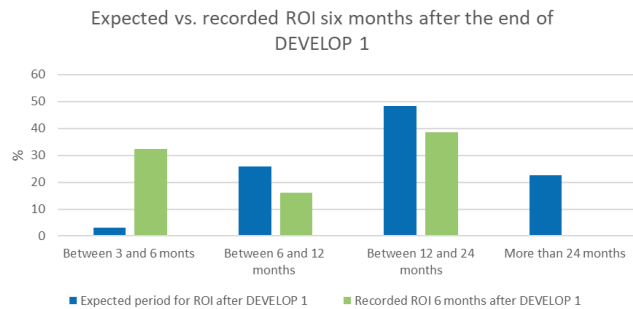


Figure 24. ROI expected vs observed six months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call.

In DEVELOP 2nd call, it was not possible to compare expected and actual ROI six months after project completion, as the final survey was conducted only two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call, due to time constraints linked to the IN TRANSIT project schedule. Despite this limitation, we were able to collect the following data:

During DEVELOP 2nd call:

- 50% of SMEs expected ROI in 12 to 24 months after the end of the project,
- 23% in 6 to 12 months,
- 23% beyond 24 months,
- 3,3% within 3-6 months.

These figures show realistic expectations, like those shared by SMEs participating in DEVELOP 1st call.

Two months after the end of DEVELOP 2nd call

Only 5 SMEs reported a ROI over the past two months. The other SMEs expect their ROI in a period of:

- 3 to 6 months (~26%),
- 6 to 12 months (~41%),
- 12 to 24 months (~30%)

Data show that the majority of SMEs still expect a return on investment (ROI) within 6 to 12 months, while a smaller proportion anticipate achieving it in a shorter timeframe.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of DEVELOP calls demonstrates that IN TRANSIT project has delivered a substantial and multidimensional impact on European SMEs operating in the textile, aerospace, construction, and advanced manufacturing sectors. Through a combination of financial support, personalised coaching, and cross-sectoral collaboration opportunities, the project successfully enabled SMEs to accelerate their transition toward greener, more digital, and more resilient business models.

Across both calls, SMEs reported significant improvements in strategic capacities, particularly in business modelling, innovation management, circular economy integration, and market analysis. The structured coaching approach proved highly effective in enhancing skills and knowledge while aligning closely with SMEs' initial expectations. The project also played a key role in strengthening cooperation across the European SME ecosystem, fostering both short-term interactions and long-lasting partnerships that continue beyond the project's conclusion.

DEVELOP contributed to measurable progress in social responsibility and HR practices, including training, diversity, and workplace flexibility. Similarly, environmental performance improved in several areas, notably sustainable product innovation, waste reduction, and adoption of greener materials and technologies.

Notably, the project stimulated innovation, including new products and services, increased patenting and trademark activity, expansion of product portfolios, and improved market visibility. Many SMEs also strengthened their investment culture, dedicating a substantial share of turnover to R&D and securing complementary funding from European, national, and private sources. This investment dynamic translated into encouraging economic outcomes: a significant proportion of SMEs achieved or expect a much faster return on investment than initially anticipated.

In conclusion, DEVELOP acted as a catalyst for transformation, equipping SMEs with the strategic, environmental, and technological capabilities needed to thrive in an increasingly competitive and sustainability-driven European market. The outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness and relevance of IN TRANSIT approach, paving the way for continued impact as SMEs scale up their innovations and pursue long-term adoption of circular, digital, and resilient business models.

Summary of Key Findings and Impacts

1. SME Participation and Sector Coverage

- **DEVELOP 1st call:** 21 projects selected for funding, representing a total of 31 SMEs
- **DEVELOP 2nd call:** 22 projects selected for funding, representing a total of 30 SMEs

SMEs from **textile** sector represented the large majority in both calls, while **advanced manufacturing participation increased sharply in DEVELOP 2nd call** (30% vs. 7% in DEVELOP 1st call). The geographic distribution was diverse, with Spain, Italy, France, and Portugal strongly represented.

2. Strategic Impacts

2.1 Knowledge & Skills Development

Coaching generated major improvements across all evaluated domains:

- **100% of SMEs reported improved knowledge across multiple areas** in business modelling, market and customer needs analysis, innovation management, communication, circular economy, and funding access.

TOP GAINS :

Innovation project management (62% in DEVELOP 1st call; 53% in DEVELOP 2nd call)

Business model development (45% in DEVELOP 1st call; 50% in DEVELOP 2nd call)

Cross-sectoral cooperation and knowledge-sharing (55% in DEVELOP 1st call; 40% in DEVELOP 2nd call)

Strong alignment was confirmed between SMEs' initial expectations and the skills ultimately acquired.

2.2 Relationship Building & Collaboration

New collaborations were a major outcome:

DEVELOP 1 st call:	DEVELOP 2 nd call:
- Other SMEs (75%) - Suppliers and distributors (75%) - Customers and end-users (65%) - Innovative technology companies (55%) - IN TRANSIT partners (58%) - Academic institutions (41%) - Financial backers (27%) - NGOs (21%) - Local and national governments (17%) - Local communities (17%) - Opinion leaders (13%)	- Other SMEs (79%) - Suppliers and distributors (59%) - Customers and end-users (55%) - Innovative technology companies (52%) - IN TRANSIT partners (52%) - Academic institutions (41%) - Local communities (34%) - NGOs (31%) - Opinion leaders (27%) - Local and national governments (24%) - Financial backers (21%)

Long-term partnerships were created:

- **77% (DEVELOP 1st call)** and **~52% (DEVELOP 2nd call)** of SMEs continued collaborations after project completion.

2.3 Social and HR Improvements

DEVELOP had a measurable positive effect on HR policies:
Training initiatives intensified (87% in DEVELOP 1 st ; 90% in DEVELOP 2 nd)
Workplace flexibility strengthened (83% in DEVELOP 1 st ; 90% in DEVELOP 2 nd)
Inclusive recruitment and ethical practices improved , though at a slower pace

SMEs showed increased commitment to social responsibility, especially employee well-being, training, and diversity policies.

3. Environmental & Circular Economy Impacts

3.1 Sustainability Actions

Strong advancements were recorded in:

- **Product innovation for sustainability**
- **Employee engagement in sustainability**

More challenging areas included:

- Energy & water management
- CO₂ emissions reduction
- Waste

3.2 Environmental Measures Adopted

Companies involved in DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call had already identified several measures to reduce their environmental impact. Adoption levels increased notably for the following actions:

- **Recycled/sustainable materials:** 56.7% (DEVELOP 1st) and 53% (DEVELOP 2nd)
- **Energy-efficient technologies :** 40% (DEVELOP 1st) and 43% (DEVELOP 2nd)
- **Waste reduction & recycling:** 40% (DEVELOP 1st) and 60% (DEVELOP 2nd)

3.3 Circular Economy Integration

A significant portion of SMEs moved from planning to integrating several measures into their core business strategy:

- **Circularity integrated into core strategy:** DEVELOP 1st: 33% & DEVELOP 2nd: 50%
- **Waste and pollution reduction embedded:** DEVELOP 1st: 36.7% & DEVELOP 2nd: 43%

Participation in nature restoration projects remained emerging but increased.

4. Action Indicators

4.1 New Products and Services

Innovation outputs :
DEVELOP 1st call: 60% of SMEs launched a new product/service; 79% expanded their portfolio after 6 months.
DEVELOP 2nd call: 53% of SMEs launched new products/services; 77% expanded further after 2 months.

4.2 Patents & Trademarks

Intellectual property activity increased:

Patents :
o From 20 → 30 six months after the end of DEVELOP 1 st call
o From 14 → 17 two months after the end of DEVELOP 2 nd call
Trade marks:
o DEVELOP 1 st call: from 19 → 29 (six months after the end of the project)
o DEVELOP 2 nd call: from 18 → 43 (two months after the end of the project)

SMEs showed a trend toward more **European and international filings**, demonstrating maturation in IP strategy.

4.3 Business Growth & Sales

DEVELOP strengthened SMEs' market presence:

- **DEVELOP 1st call:**
 - o 80% of SMEs improved business proposals & visibility
 - o 44% of SMEs increased sales
- **DEVELOP 2nd call:**
 - o 88.9% of SMEs improved proposals
 - o 92.9% of SMEs improved visibility
 - o 76% of SMEs improved sales or service uptake

5. Resource Indicators

5.1 Human Resources

DEVELOP influenced recruitment and workforce expansion:

- **DEVELOP 1st call :**
 - o 73% improved employee skills
 - o 40 new hires within 6 months after the end of DEVELOP 1st call
- **DEVELOP 2nd call :**
 - o 77% enhanced skills
 - o 12 new hires since the end of DEVELOP 2nd call

Recruitment was strongest in construction, aerospace, and textile sectors.

5.2 Training Programmes

Widespread implementation of training:

- **Technical training:** 77% of SMEs in DEVELOP 1st call organised tech training, 70% in DEVELOP 2nd call.
- **Managerial training:** 40% of SMEs in DEVELOP 1st call implemented managerial training programmes, 37% in DEVELOP 2nd call.
- **Soft skills training:** 43% of SMEs in DEVELOP 1st call introduced soft skills training, 33% in DEVELOP 2nd call.

Training activity slightly decreased post-project but remained significant.

5.3 Investment in Innovation

A high investment culture was consolidated:

- Over **50% of SMEs involved in DEVELOP 1st and 2nd call invested >10% of turnover in innovation**
- R&D remained the priority investment area
- SMEs broadened investment over time (marketing, skills, working conditions)

5.4 Financing Secured

After DEVELOP, SMEs accessed additional funding:

DEVELOP 1st call:	DEVELOP 2nd call:
• European funds (31.0%), • private funds (20.7%), • regional/national funds (34.5%), • bank loans (10.3%), • and fund-raising (17.2%).	• European funds (23%), • regional or national funds (23%), • private investments (17%), • bank loans (7%) • and fund raising (7%).

5.5 Return on Investment (ROI)

DEVELOP 1st call saw strong acceleration:

- Expected rapid ROI (3–6 months): 3% → actual 32%
- **No SME** expected ROI beyond 24 months after completion
- Majority expect ROI between **6 and 24 months**
-

DEVELOP 2nd call (shorter observation window):

- 3–6 month ROI expected by 26%
- 6–12 months: ~41%
- 12–24 months: ~30%

CONCLUSION

DEVELOP calls delivered **significant and multi-dimensional impact** across the SMEs ecosystem:

- Strengthened **innovation capacity** and accelerated **product development**
- Improved **strategic skills, sustainability practices, and circularity adoption**
- Stimulated **cross-sectoral collaboration and durable partnerships**
- Enhanced **market readiness, visibility, and IP protection strategies**
- Encouraged **investment in R&D**, workforce development, and recruitment
- Achieved **rapid and higher-than-expected ROI**

Overall, DEVELOP played a catalytic role in enabling European SMEs to pursue greener, more digital, and resilient business trajectories, fully aligned with the mission of IN TRANSIT project and EU industrial priorities.

« This program has enabled to **diversify our business strategy** as it has shown the potential of our product for another transformation path, enabling to enter **new market applications**. »

« Yes, the IN TRANSIT project **created valuable connections** with like-minded SMEs and partners across Europe, opening clear opportunities for **future collaboration**. »

GreenWeave Project

« We found the funding for carrying out the tests and the accompanying coaching on business development to be **very impactful**. This has given us the technical and business knowledge **to prepare a new, more sustainable generation of satellite structures**. »

Yes, this was **our first participation in a European project**. Based on our **positive experience**, we will also consider applying for other European calls for proposals. »

GreenCube Project

« Within IN TRANSIT people were hired with whom was established a good working relationship and **who will be hired on the following projects**. It has partly contributed to refining the internal organization regarding searching for and **acquiring highly qualified experts and talents**. »

SESI Project