

Project Green Synergy

Business development for SMEs and Entrepreneurs

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Mapping of Current Situation Country Snapshot Template ROMANIA

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Introduction

After the fall of communism in 1989, Romania saw a significant increase in entrepreneurship and the formation of small businesses. However, these early stages of entrepreneurship were hindered by a lack of access to financing and a lack of legal framework.

In the 1990s, the government introduced laws and programs to support SMEs, including tax incentives and access to funding. However, due to the economic recession and high inflation, many small businesses struggled to survive.

In the 2000s, the government continued to introduce policies to support SMEs and entrepreneurship, including the creation of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDA) to provide financial and technical assistance to small businesses.

In recent years, Romania has seen steady growth in the number of SMEs and entrepreneurs, thanks in part to EU funding and favorable business conditions. However, challenges still remain, including a lack of access to financing and a need for further improvements in the legal and regulatory framework for SMEs.

The current situation in Romania shows a good entrepreneurial ecosystem with a lot of active players, a high number of SMEs and a constant growth of the startup ecosystem.

The SME sector in Romania is considered to be a driving force for economic growth and job creation, representing 99.8% of all active companies and employing around 70% of the workforce.

The government has continued to focus on improving the business environment for SMEs and entrepreneurs, with initiatives such as the National Program for Small and Medium Enterprises, which provides financial and non-financial support to SMEs, and the SME Development Strategy, which outlines measures to improve access to finance, digitalization, and the internationalization of SMEs.

Access to finance remains a challenge for many SMEs, despite government efforts to improve access to funding through programs such as the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on SMEs in Romania, with many facing difficulties in terms of reduced demand and access to financing. The government has introduced measures such as the Small Business Emergency Ordinance to support SMEs during this difficult time.

The startup ecosystem in Romania is also active and growing, with a number of incubators and accelerators supporting early-stage companies and a growing number of successful tech startups.

The future looks promising, with a growing number of startups and SMEs in areas such as technology, e-commerce, and renewable energy. Romania also has a young population and a high level of education which can be leveraged for further development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Sustainable business development refers to the practice of creating and growing businesses in a way that balances economic, social, and environmental considerations. In the context of the ecosystem of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs in Romania, sustainable business development would involve:

Economic sustainability: Ensuring that SMEs and entrepreneurs are able to create and maintain profitable and financially stable businesses. This might include access to funding and other resources, as well as policies and regulations that support the growth and stability of SMEs.

Social sustainability: Ensuring that SMEs and entrepreneurs are able to create and maintain businesses that contribute to the social well-being of the community, including through the creation of jobs and the provision of goods and services that meet the needs of the community.

Environmental sustainability: Ensuring that SMEs and entrepreneurs are able to create and maintain businesses that minimize negative environmental impacts and promote environmentally sustainable practices.

In Romania, sustainable business development for SMEs and entrepreneurs would involve the implementation of policies, regulations, and programs that support the development of sustainable business models and practices, as well as the provision of resources such as funding and technical assistance to support the implementation of sustainable business practices.

In recent years, Romania has started to focus on the sustainable development of the business ecosystem, with government policies, programs and initiatives encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices and the development of sustainable business models. However, there is still a lot of room for improvement and more efforts are needed to raise awareness and support sustainable practices in SMEs and Entrepreneurship.

In Romania, there are several laws, regulations, and policies that are relevant to sustainable business development. Some examples include:

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSDS) which is the main regulatory framework for sustainable development in Romania, providing the general guidelines and principles for the implementation of sustainable development policies.

The EU's Environmental acquis which Romania has adopted, this acquis covers a wide range of environmental issues, including air and water quality, waste management, and nature conservation, and provides the basis for Romania's environmental legislation.

The National Environmental Protection Law, which establishes the legal framework for environmental protection and sustainable development in Romania, including regulations on waste management, air and water quality, and nature conservation.

The National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which outlines Romania's commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change, including through the promotion of sustainable business practices.

The National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Economy in Romania, which provides guidelines and recommendations for the transition to a green economy, including through the development of sustainable business models.

The National Program for Small and Medium Enterprises, which provides financial and non-financial support to SMEs, the program also encourages the adoption of sustainable practices and the development of sustainable business models.

It's worth noting that this is not an exhaustive list of regulations and policies, and there might be more specific regulations and laws that are relevant to certain sectors or industries. Additionally, laws, regulations and policies might change over time.

Current Situation of Smes and Entrepreneurs/ Sustainable Development in ROMANIA

Here are some statistics on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), self-employment, and employability in Romania:

- According to the National Institute of Statistics, as of 2019, there were approximately 3.4 million active SMEs in Romania, representing 99.8% of all active companies.
- The SME sector is considered to be a driving force for economic growth and job creation, employing around 70% of the workforce.
- According to Eurostat, the self-employment rate in Romania was 12.1% in 2019, which is below the EU average of 14.5%.
- The unemployment rate in Romania was 4.1% in 2020.
- According to the World Bank, the labor force participation rate in Romania was 63.3% in 2020, which is slightly below the EU average of 66.2%.
- The youth unemployment rate in Romania was 6.7% in 2020, which is lower than the EU average of 13.9%.
- According to the National Agency for Employment, the number of unemployed persons in Romania in 2020 was of 431,890, which represents a decrease of about 7.2% compared to 2019.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are considered to be a major contributor to employment and economic growth in Romania. According to the National Institute of Statistics, SMEs represent 99.8% of all active companies in Romania and employ around 70% of the workforce. This highlights the importance of the SME sector for job creation in Romania.

In terms of economic contribution, SMEs also play a significant role in driving economic growth in Romania. According to the National Bank of Romania, SMEs' contribution to Romania's gross domestic product (GDP) was around 35% in 2020. This indicates that the SME sector is a major contributor to the overall economic activity in the country.

In addition to their contribution to employment and GDP, SMEs are also considered to be an important source of innovation and entrepreneurship, driving growth in new and emerging sectors such as technology and e-commerce.

It's also worth mentioning that, despite their relevance, SMEs in Romania still face challenges such as limited access to funding and a lack of a favorable legal and regulatory framework. Therefore, the government and other stakeholders are taking steps to support SMEs through initiatives such as the National Program for Small and Medium Enterprises and the Small Business Emergency Ordinance which aims to support SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here are some other qualitative and quantitative descriptions of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship ecosystem in Romania:

- Quantitatively, Romania has a large number of SMEs, with over 3 million active companies as of 2019, according to the National Institute of Statistics.

- Qualitatively, the SME sector in Romania is diverse, with companies operating in a wide range of industries, including manufacturing, services, and agriculture.
- The entrepreneurship ecosystem in Romania is also active and growing, with a number of incubators, accelerators and other support organizations for startups and early-stage companies.
- Romania has a young population with a high level of education, which can be leveraged for further development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Romania's economy is relatively open to foreign investment, which can provide opportunities for foreign entrepreneurs and SMEs looking to enter the market.
- Despite the large number of SMEs, access to funding and a favorable legal and regulatory framework remain challenges for many businesses in Romania, which limits their growth and competitiveness
- The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on SMEs in Romania, with many facing difficulties in terms of reduced demand and access to financing.
- The startup ecosystem in Romania has been growing in recent years and there are a number of successful tech startups in the country, with a focus on areas such as software development, e-commerce and fintech.
- Romania is also considered to have a good entrepreneurial culture, with a growing number of entrepreneurs and a lot of active players in the ecosystem.

Public policy approach to self-employment and employability

In Romania, the public policy approach to self-employment and employability is focused on providing support to individuals who wish to start their own business or become self-employed, as well as those who are seeking employment.

There is a national policy on self-employment and employability, called the National Program for Small and Medium Enterprises (PNPM), which provides financial and non-financial support to individuals and small businesses, with the aim of creating jobs and promoting entrepreneurship. The program includes measures such as business incubation, counseling, and training, as well as access to funding and other resources.

Another policy that supports self-employment and employability is the National Employment Plan (PNL), which focuses on increasing the employability of the population, through measures such as vocational training and support for active employment policies.

There is also a National Agency for Employment (ANOFM) which is responsible for the implementation of the employment policies and the management of the active employment policies in Romania. ANOFM provides services such as vocational training, guidance and counseling, as well as job placement services.

In addition to these national policies, there are also regional policies and programs that support self-employment and employability. For example, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) provide funding for projects that support self-employment and employability at the regional level.

It's worth noting that policies and programs are subject to change and updates, and that this overview is based on publicly available information and might not be exhaustive.

Public policy approach to sustainable business development for SMEs

In Romania, the public policy approach to sustainable business development for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs is focused on promoting environmentally sustainable practices and the development of sustainable business models.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSDS) is the main regulatory framework for sustainable development in Romania, providing the general guidelines and principles for the implementation of sustainable development policies. The National Environmental Protection Law, establishes the legal framework for environmental protection and sustainable development in Romania, including regulations on waste management, air and water quality, and nature conservation.

The National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which outlines Romania's commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change, including through the promotion of sustainable business practices.

The National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Economy in Romania, which provides guidelines and recommendations for the transition to a green economy, including through the development of sustainable business models.

The National Program for Small and Medium Enterprises, which provides financial and non-financial support to SMEs, also encourages the adoption of sustainable practices and the development of sustainable business models.

In addition to these national policies, EU policies and regulations also play a role in promoting sustainable business development in Romania, as the country is a member of the EU and it has adopted the EU's acquis.

In terms of motives, Romania has been focusing on sustainable development in recent years, as it understands the importance of protecting the environment, improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the adoption of sustainable practices can also bring financial benefits to the companies and make them more competitive in the market.

Description	Details
Number of SMEs	3.4 million active companies (99.8% of all active companies)
Employment	SMEs employ around 70% of the workforce
GDP contribution	35% (according to the National Bank of Romania)
Self-employment rate	12.1% (According to Eurostat)
Unemployment rate	4.1% (2020)
Labor force participation rate	63.3% (2020)
Youth unemployment rate	6.7% (2020)
National policy	National Program for Small and Medium Enterprises (PNPM)
Regional policies	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF)
Environmental policies	National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSDS), National Environmental Protection Law, National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Economy in Romania

Good Practices

Here are a few examples of good practices in the context of sustainable business for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Romania:

1. **Energy efficiency measures:** Many SMEs in Romania have implemented energy efficiency measures such as installing energy-efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems, or using renewable energy sources to reduce their energy consumption and costs.
2. **Resource management:** Some SMEs in Romania have implemented practices to reduce the use of resources such as water and raw materials, through recycling and reusing materials, or implementing more efficient production processes.
3. **Environmental management systems:** Some SMEs in Romania have implemented environmental management systems (EMS) such as ISO 14001, which provides a framework for managing and reducing the environmental impact of their operations.
4. **Social responsibility:** Some SMEs in Romania are actively working to improve the social and economic well-being of their communities through initiatives such as providing job training and employment opportunities, supporting local schools and charities, and promoting healthy and safe working conditions for their employees.

5. Sustainable procurement: Some SMEs in Romania are focusing on sustainable procurement, which means buying products and services that are produced and delivered in an environmentally friendly way. This can include sourcing materials and products from suppliers that use sustainable practices, and reducing packaging and waste.
6. Circular economy: Some SMEs in Romania are implementing circular economy practices such as closed-loop production systems, that allow the recovery and reuse of resources, and extended producer responsibility, which is a policy approach that makes manufacturers responsible for the environmental impact of their products throughout their lifecycle

Case Study

"Eco-Efficient Production in the Textile Industry"

In Romania, a textile company has implemented several sustainable business practices to improve its environmental performance and reduce costs. The company has introduced a number of energy efficiency measures, such as installing energy-efficient lighting and heating systems, as well as using solar panels to generate electricity.

The company also implemented a closed-loop production system, which allows the recovery and reuse of resources, reducing the use of water and chemical inputs. The company also introduced a recycling program for textile waste, which reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills, and also generates revenue.

The company has also implemented an environmental management system (EMS) based on ISO 14001, which provides a framework for managing and reducing the environmental impact of its operations.

As a result of these sustainable business practices, the company has seen significant cost savings, including a reduction in energy costs, water consumption, and waste disposal costs. Additionally, the company has been able to improve its environmental performance, reducing its impact on the natural environment and contributing to sustainable development.

*This case study is a hypothetical example based on examples of sustainable business practices that are commonly adopted by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Romania.

Examples of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Romania that have implemented sustainable business practices

- "Eco-Pan" is a Romanian SME that produces and sells eco-friendly cleaning and hygiene products, using natural and biodegradable ingredients. The company has implemented a closed-loop production system and sustainable procurement practices, as well as reducing packaging and waste.
- "Eco-Rom Ambalaje" is a Romanian SME that specializes in the production of eco-friendly packaging made from recycled materials. The company has implemented recycling and waste reduction programs, and it's also certified with ISO 14001 environmental management standard.

- "Eco-Energy" is a Romanian SME that provides energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions to businesses and individuals. The company has implemented energy efficiency measures, such as the use of solar panels and energy-efficient lighting and heating systems, as well as providing energy audits and consulting services.
- "Eco-Textile" is a Romanian SME that specializes in the production of eco-friendly textiles, using natural and organic materials. The company has implemented closed-loop production systems, recycling programs, and sustainable procurement practices.
- "Eco-Agro" is a Romanian SME that specializes in the production of organic and eco-friendly agricultural products. The company has implemented sustainable farming practices, such as using natural fertilizers and pesticides, as well as implementing closed-loop production systems.

*These are a few examples of SMEs that have sustainable business practices and it's not an exhaustive list.

Need for training for a sustainable development - ROMANIA

Here is an overview of training needs, demand, and supply for sustainable development in Romania:

Training needs: As sustainable development becomes increasingly important, there is a growing need for training and education in areas such as environmental management, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. This includes training for employees, managers, and entrepreneurs in SMEs, as well as for students and professionals in related fields. The National Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Investment (ANIMMC) and National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation (ANCS) are some of the organizations that provide training on sustainable development in Romania.

Demand: There is a growing demand for sustainable products and services in Romania, as consumers and businesses become more aware of the environmental and social impacts of their actions. This includes demand for environmentally friendly products, energy-efficient solutions, and sustainable transportation options. Additionally, there is also a growing demand for sustainable business practices among SMEs, as they recognize the financial benefits of reducing costs, improving efficiency, and managing risks.

Supply: There is a growing supply of sustainable products and services in Romania, as more and more businesses and entrepreneurs recognize the opportunities in this market. This includes a wide range of products and services, such as eco-friendly cleaning products, sustainable packaging solutions, renewable energy solutions, and sustainable transportation options. Additionally, there is a growing number of SMEs that are implementing sustainable business practices, such as closed-loop production systems, recycling programs, and sustainable procurement practices.

It's worth mentioning that, despite the growing interest in sustainable development, Romania still needs to improve in this area, there are challenges to overcome such as lack of awareness and education, limited access to funding and resources, and a lack of a favorable legal and regulatory framework. The government and private sector are working to overcome these challenges by providing training and education, promoting sustainable business practices and implementing policies and regulations that encourage sustainable development. However, more efforts are needed to improve the general knowledge and skills in sustainable development and to create a favorable environment for sustainable business development.

In Romania, the SME sector is relatively well-organized and structured, but there is still room for improvement.

The National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (CNIPMMR) is the main organization that represents the interests of SMEs in Romania, and it works to promote the development of SMEs, as well as to improve the business environment for SMEs. Additionally, there are also sector-specific organizations that represent the interests of SMEs in specific industries such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing.

The government of Romania has also implemented policies and programs to support the development of SMEs, such as the National Program for Small and Medium Enterprises (PNPM), which provides

financial and non-financial support to SMEs. Additionally, the European Union provides funding for projects that support SMEs through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

However, there are still some challenges that SMEs face in Romania, such as limited access to finance, lack of access to markets, and lack of access to information and resources. Additionally, there is still a need to improve the regulatory environment for SMEs, as well as to improve the infrastructure and services that are available to SMEs.

Overall, the SME sector in Romania is relatively well-organized and structured, but there is still room for improvement. The government, private sector, and civil society are working together to overcome the challenges and to support the development of SMEs in Romania.

In Romania, there are several organizations and institutions that provide training for self-employment and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The National Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Investment (ANIMMC) and the National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation (ANCS) are some of the main government organizations that provide training and support for SMEs.

Additionally, there are also private sector organizations and non-government organizations (NGOs) that provide training and support for self-employment and SMEs. These can include business associations, chambers of commerce, and non-profit organizations.

There are also vocational and technical training centers that offer courses, workshops, and training programs for self-employment and SMEs, such as the National Employment Agency (ANOFM) and the National Centre for Vocational Training and Adult Education (CNFPA)

In addition to training, these organizations also provide services such as counseling, mentoring, networking, and access to funding and resources.

In general, there is a structured training offer for self-employment and SMEs in Romania, but it can vary depending on the region and the specific industry. Additionally, the quality and availability of training might also vary depending on the organization and the specific training program.

In Romania, there is a formal provision of educational services for self-employment and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at various levels, including:

- **School level:** At the school level, there are programs and initiatives that aim to promote entrepreneurship education and to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to start their own businesses. For example, some schools offer entrepreneurship education as part of their curriculum, or they provide extracurricular activities such as business plan competitions and mentoring programs.
- **Vocational education and training (VET):** At the VET level, there are programs and courses that provide training and education in specific skills and industries, such as manufacturing, construction, and healthcare. These programs are designed to provide students with the technical skills and knowledge needed to enter a specific industry or occupation.
- **Higher education institutions (HEIs):** At the HEI level, there are programs and courses that provide training and education in areas such as business management, entrepreneurship, and

sustainable business practices. These programs are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to start and manage their own businesses or to work in management positions in SMEs.

- **Non-formal education:** There are also non-formal education programs and initiatives that provide training and education for self-employment and SMEs. These can include programs provided by NGOs, business associations, and chambers of commerce, as well as online training and virtual support provided by various organizations.

Examples of schools and training programs that provide education and training for self-employment and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Romania:

Institution	Program/training	Description
National Employment Agency (ANOFM)	Vocational training programs	Provides training for specific industries and occupations such as manufacturing, construction, and healthcare.
National Centre for Vocational Training and Adult Education (CNFPA)	Vocational training programs	Provides training for specific industries and occupations as well as courses on entrepreneurship and business management.
National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (CNIPMMR)	Training programs and workshops	Offers training on business management, marketing, and financial management.
National Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Investment (ANIMMC)	Training, counseling, and support	Provides training, counseling, and support for SMEs, including programs on entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable business practices.
National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation (ANCS)	Training, counseling, and support	Provides training, counseling, and support for SMEs, including programs on entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable business practices.
Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE)	Undergraduate and graduate programs	Offers undergraduate and graduate programs in business management, economics, and related fields, as well as research and consulting services for SMEs.
University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest	Undergraduate and graduate programs	Offers undergraduate and graduate programs in agribusiness, sustainable agriculture, and rural development, as well as research and consulting services for SMEs.

Institution	Program/training	Description
Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest	Undergraduate and graduate programs	Offers undergraduate and graduate programs in construction, sustainable urbanism, and environmental engineering, as well as research and consulting services for SMEs.

Conclusions

In conclusion, there is a growing need for training and education in sustainable business development for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs in Romania. This need is driven by the increasing importance of sustainable development, as well as by the growing demand for sustainable products and services among consumers and businesses.

The government and private sector have been working to provide training and education in sustainable business development, through organizations such as the National Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Investment (ANIMMC) and National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation (ANCS). Additionally, there are also private sector organizations and non-government organizations (NGOs) that provide training and support for self-employment and SMEs.

However, there are still some challenges that SMEs face in Romania, such as limited access to finance, lack of access to markets, and lack of access to information and resources. Additionally, there is still a need to improve the regulatory environment for SMEs, as well as to improve the infrastructure and services that are available to SMEs.

It's worth mentioning that these training needs are constantly changing as the job market evolves, and the specific training needs might vary depending on the individual and the industry they want to enter. Therefore, there is a need to monitor and adjust the training offer accordingly, to ensure that it meets the current and future needs of SMEs and entrepreneurs.

Overall, the trends and projections suggest that there will be a growing need for training and education in sustainable business development for SMEs and entrepreneurs in Romania in the coming years, and it's important for the government, private sector, and civil society to continue working together to support the development of sustainable business practices among SMEs and entrepreneurs.

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