

Assessment of the framework conditions for business transfers in the EU member states

Overview of measures to facilitate transfer of business



A report by the Network of SME Envoys

June 2024

Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the report and policy background

The SME Relief Package adopted on 12 September 2023 lays down that the Commission ‘will assess framework conditions for business transfers in Member States together with the Network of SME Envoys’.

The purpose of this report is to review the implementation of measures facilitating the transfer of business in the member states as called for by the [Commission’s Recommendation on the transfer of small and medium-sized enterprises](#) and followed up in the [Communication on Transfer of Businesses - Continuity through a new beginning](#).

‘Business transfer’ refers to the process of handing over a business to a new owner and usually new management. In the past, this has often been thought to happen primarily when the initial owner of a business approaches retirement. Now this concept is much broader, and transfer is seen as an event in the development of a business that can happen at any time, not just when an owner is reaching retirement. Business transfer is a complex process that is carried out in accordance with the concrete regulatory, fiscal and administrative environment of each country. It can benefit from a conducive business environment offering support to both transferors and successors (sellers and buyers).

Apart from providing the gist of the EU policy milestones, the report also contains the information about EU efforts to support the development of different solutions, tools, best practices and case studies of how different elements of the business transfer ecosystem were established and improved in EU countries and regions over the last decade. More details about these actions can be found [here](#).

Organisation of work and methodological approach

In September 2023 the SME Envoys agreed that the task of drafting the report will be entrusted to the SME Envoys from Belgium and Luxemburg who will create a joint reporting team to carry out the work in collaboration with the Commission.

The reporting team has held regular meetings to decide about the organisation of work, methodology, the content of the questionnaire, the division of tasks and overall approach to carrying out the assessment, including interim deadlines for specific tasks.

The work has started in October 2023 and was organised along the following timeline:

- Designing and validating the questionnaire (October – November 2023),
- Launching the survey (12 January 2024),
- Running the survey and collecting information (12 January – 16 February, deadline extended till 29 February 2024),
- Analysing the survey results and drafting the assessment (March-April 2024),
- Consulting the draft assessment with Sherpas (May 2024),
- Integrating the data provided by member states after the SME Envoy Sherpas meeting (May-June),
- Validating the content of assessment by the SME Envoys and finalising the report (June 2024).

The main tool used to collect information about the existing, 'desired' and new/planned measures related to business transfers in EU countries was a questionnaire that contained 39 questions in total, and was divided into the following parts:

- general information about the respondent,
- fiscal measures,
- legal and administrative measures,
- financial environment,
- other (soft) support measures,
- collection of data on business transfers,
- perceptions regarding the importance of business transfers.

The questionnaire was addressed to representatives of EU countries' governments (different ministries, agencies with public functions etc.). While different governmental actors and experts could be consulted/involved in preparing the reply to the questionnaire, finally only one reply per country has been received and analysed for the purpose of this report.

Replies to the survey were received from 21 EU countries with one additional country (Sweden) providing a written contribution.

Contributions from business organisations

The contributions from business organisations that are observers at the Network of SME Envoys and from Transeo¹ are attached to the report in *Annex C*, as they contain useful information and observations on the different elements of the business transfer process. However, as they were mostly of a general character and not country specific, they were not included in the analysis and reporting of the results.

Summary of findings

It is important to underline that the interpretation of survey results must be done with caution. Main reasons are: the incomplete input (not all countries have responded to the survey), the limited scope of analysis and some inconsistencies detected between replies.

One of the main findings of this assessment is that a large majority (over 80%) of the responding countries recognised that 'facilitating business transfer is important as a growing number of companies will have to change owners in the near future'. This is mostly due to the aging of current business owners who belong to the 'baby boomers' generation, but also to other reasons, e.g., career change.

The review of EU policy milestones, solutions and tools developed to support the implementation of the business transfer policy in member states shows that many good practices and examples of how they can be

¹ Transeo is an association bringing together experts in transfers and acquisitions of small and medium-sized businesses from Europe & beyond, <https://www.transeo-association.eu/>.

used to improve their business transfer ecosystems exist and are available for further application by other EU countries and regions.

Findings on the level of implementation of different sets of measures analysed in this report show that the business transfer ecosystems of the countries participating in the assessment demonstrate different stages of maturity and readiness to support business owners who need to transfer their company in whatever form (e.g., intra-family succession, selling to a third party or transferring to the employees).

Based exclusively on the number of implemented measures reviewed for the purpose of this report, countries have been grouped in the following clusters:

- high scoring countries,
- average scoring countries,
- low scoring countries.

Type of measures	High scoring countries	Average scoring countries	Low scoring countries	Total No of measures per type	Total No of measures implemented across EU
Fiscal measures	BE, ES, FR (6) AT, NL (4)	DE, IR, PT (3) FI, HU, PL, (2)	GR, IT, LT, LU, MT, SI (1) BG, EE, HR, SK (0)	8	47
<i>No of measures</i>	26	15	6		
Legal/administrative measures	IT, HU, PL (4) EE, FI, FR, ES, SK (3)	AT, BE, DE, LU, MT, NL, PT, SI (2)	GR, HR, IR, LT (1) BG (0)	5	47
<i>No of measures</i>	27	16	4		
Financial measures	BE (5) FR, IT (4)	AT, FI (3) DE, ES, PT, SI (2)	EE, GR, HR, HU, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, SK (1) BG, IR (0)	5	37
<i>No of measures</i>	13	14	10		
Other support measures	BE (11) DE, FI (10) SI (9)	FR (8) IT (7) MT (6) AT, LU (5)	ES, HU, PT (3) GR, HR, SK (2) BG, NL, PL (1) EE, LT (0)	11	89
<i>No of measures</i>	40	31	18		
Data collection measures	NL [3 +(3 [^])] DE [(3 +(2 [^])] FR (2)	EE, IT, MT, PT (1 +(1 [^]) AT, BE (1)	BG, HR, HU, IR, LT, GR, IR, LU, PL, SI (0)	8	14 +(9 [^])
<i>No of measures</i>	8 (5 [^])	6 (4 [^])	0		
Grand Total	114	82	38	37	234 (9 [^])

Legend

^	More advanced measures are already in place (annual data collection instead of periodical (e.g., every 2-3 years))
	Maximum number of measures per set of measures that could be implemented (they are not part of any calculation)
Countries that have provided answers 'other' or 'I don't know' are not listed in this table.	

As reported by participating countries, the total number of implemented measures across the EU is 234. The evidence shows differences between countries when it comes to the level of advancement in the implementation of various types of measures. The relatively low level of implementation can be observed in the area of data collection, followed by financial measures. The average level of implementation can be observed in the area of legal/administrative measures and fiscal measures, while the highest level of implementation appears to be in the area of 'other' support measures that covers different types of advisory/mentoring services, trainings, online matching platforms, availability of information/awareness raising tools, etc.

The data in the table above show that the cluster of the highest scoring countries is responsible on average for the implementation of almost 50% of all measures that were applied across the EU while the cluster of low scoring countries managed to reach about 16%.

It has to be underlined that the report focused only on a quantitative assessment, pointing out the number of existing measures without entering into the qualitative analysis of their effectiveness or efficiency. The same measures can have a slightly different effect in each country as their real impact will depend on the overall regulatory, institutional, administrative environment and the business culture. Certain measures might be much more significant for companies in terms of their real impact than other measures, but as in this report their importance is not assessed, the counting of each measure is identical.

It also needs to be highlighted that countries implementing the highest number of measures do not automatically have the best environment for business transfers. E.g., a high number of implemented tax related measures/exemptions may simply be the way for a government to mitigate the relatively severe tax system.

Furthermore, significant discrepancies have been detected between existing and 'desired' measures to facilitate business transfer in each country. A possible follow-up to this report could be the decision by the governments to find out the reasons for these discrepancies. This could become a topic for internal discussions regarding the current state of the business transfer environment in each country and for exploring ways of how it could be improved and adjusted to the current situation.

Regarding the initiatives to improve the business transfer ecosystems by introducing/or planning new measures, seven countries (AT, BE, EE, GR, HU, SI, SK) have reported concrete actions in that direction.

No country has reported the revoking of any of the previously existing measures aimed at facilitating business transfers.

The table below presents the summary of results per country and per set of measures:

Framework conditions for business transfers in the Member States – SME Envoys report						
Results per country and per set of measures – Summary table						
Country	Fiscal measures Total (out of 8)	Legal and administrative measures Total (out of 5)	Financial measures Total (out of 5)	Other support measures Total (out of 11)	Data collection Total (out of 8)	Grand Total per country
2024						
Austria	4	2	3	5	1	15
Belgium	6	2	5	11	1	25
Bulgaria	0	0	0	1	0	1
Czechia						
Denmark						
Germany	3	2	2	10	3 (2 [^])	20 (2 [^])
Estonia	0	3	1	0	1 (1) *	5 (1 [^])
Greece	1	1	1	2	N/A	5
Spain	6	3	2	3	*	14
France	6	3	4	8	2	23
Croatia	N/A	1	1	2	0	4
Ireland	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	4
Italy	1	4	4	7	1 (1 [^])*	17 (1 [^])
Cyprus						
Latvia						
Lithuania	1	1	1	0	0	3
Luxembourg	1	2	1	5	0	9
Hungary	2	4	1	3	0	10
Malta	1	2	1	6	1 (1 [^]) *	11 (1 [^])
Netherlands	4	2	1	1	3+ (3 [^])	11 (3 [^])
Poland	2	4	1	1	N/A	8
Portugal	3	2	2	3	1 (1 [^])	11 (1 [^])
Romania						
Slovenia	1	2	2	9	0	14
Slovakia	0	3	1	2	0	6
Finland	2	3	3	10	*	18
Sweden						
EU Total	47	47	37	89	14 (9 [^])	234 (9 [^])

Legend:

[^]	More advanced measures are already in place (annual data collection instead of periodical (e.g., every 2-3 years). They are not counted here as implemented measures.	*	Other measures exist	<p>Estonia – the digital business register allows for making queries about the ownership changes.</p> <p>Italy – the digital business register contains data on business transfers, but it has currently no function to extract and analyse data on business transfers.</p> <p>Malta –the business register generates statistics (no information about planned transfers).</p> <p>Finland – experimental statistics project is in place (there is no information on the type of data collected).</p> <p>Spain – developed online platform where offers of buyers and sellers are available, but no information on the number of finalised transactions.</p>
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Recommendations

Based on the results of this assessment, the following recommendations are proposed for the member states to consider:

1. Establishing a national focal point/forum on business transfer to ensure the proper identification of potential issues and coordination of activities focused on improving a national business transfer ecosystem that could result in developing national action plans on business transfer.
2. Reviewing the current fiscal, legal and administrative environment in a country with a view to make sure that it is fit for purpose or redesign it, if needed.
3. Identifying the sources of finance available for businesses and making sure that the existing financial instruments/products do not impede in any way on access to finance for business takeovers. The need for new solutions to facilitate access to finance could also be explored.
4. Building up the broad partnerships between national/regional administrations and business support organisations as well as educational institutions to design and implement 'soft' measures to facilitate business transfers such as e.g., advisory/mentoring services, trainings, online matching platforms, availability of information/awareness raising tools, while also benefiting from the existing solutions and good practices developed by different EU funded projects.
5. Progressing in the digitalisation of business registers as they can help generate data on realised business transfers, thus contributing to evidence-based policy making.
6. Establishing a partnership with business associations and/or academia to coordinate collections of data on upcoming transfers that is usually done via surveys among business owners.
7. Benefiting from the existing solutions and good practices presented in this report to design/improve the environment for business transfers that are readily available and tested in other EU countries and regions. The assistance of the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI), providing tailor-made technical expertise to EU member states, could be used to design and implement the necessary reforms/support systems.

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1. Introduction

The assessment of framework conditions for business transfer in the Member States was included in [the SME Relief Package](#) adopted on 12 September 2023. According to its provisions, the Commission ‘*will assess framework conditions for business transfers in Member States together with the Network of SME Envoys*’.

It has been agreed that this assessment will take the form of a Report by the Network of SME Envoys.

1.1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this exercise is to establish the current situation regarding the implementation of measures facilitating business transfer in the member states, as called for by the [Commission’s Recommendation](#) on the transfer of small and medium-sized enterprises and followed up on in the [Communication on Transfer of Businesses - Continuity through a new beginning](#). The aim is also to identify new measures or initiatives that Member States have introduced recently or are planning to do so in near future.

1.2. Organisation of work

At the meeting of the Network of SME Envoys held on 29 of September 2023, it has been agreed that this task would be entrusted to the SME Envoys from Belgium and Luxemburg who will create a joint reporting team to carry out the work in collaboration with the Commission.

The reporting team has held regular meetings to decide about the organisation of work, methodology, the content of the questionnaire and overall approach to carrying out the assessment, including interim deadlines for specific tasks.

The reporting team has also decided and agreed about the division of tasks between Belgium and Luxemburg, and about the input from the Commission. The work has started in October 2023 and was organised along the following timeline:

- Designing and validating the questionnaire (October – November 2023),
- Launching the survey (12 January 2024),
- Running the survey and collecting information (12 January – 16 February, deadline extended till 29 February 2024),
- Analysing the survey results and drafting the assessment (March-April 2024),
- Consulting the draft assessment with Sherpas (May 2024),
- Integrating the data provided by member states after the Sherpas meeting (May-June),
- Validating its content by the SME Envoys and finalising the assessment (June 2024).

The link to the survey was shared with all Envoys on the 12th of January 2024, with the 16th of February 2024 as the deadline to provide replies by. The observers taking part in the work of the SME Envoys were kept informed and received the questionnaire at the same time.

By the 16th of February, only ten EU countries had provided their replies, resulting in the decision of the reporting team to extend the deadline for replies to the 23rd of February 2024. Lack of responses resulted in

the deadline being extended a second time to the 29th of February 2024. In total, 16 EU countries have provided their replies to the survey by this date.

At the meeting of the Network of SME Envoys held on the 14th of March 2024, the countries who had not provided a reply had yet another possibility to answer the survey by the end of March 2024, but no further replies were received. Only one country (Sweden) provided a short contribution in writing about recent changes having an impact on business transfers but without filling the survey.

The first draft of the assessment of survey results was shared with Sherpas on the 2nd of May 2024 for comments, with the possibility to discuss the provisional results during the meeting scheduled for the 8th of May 2024. The objective of the Sherpas meeting was to prepare the meeting of the Network of SME Envoys to be held on the 13th of June 2024 during which the draft assessment will be presented and submitted for Envoys' final comments. The target date to complete the report is the end of June 2024.

Following the Sherpas meeting held on the 8th of May 2024, the following countries and business organisations have provided their comments/input:

- Austria, Italy and Spain provided additional information/comments/clarifications regarding the data or existing measures and related activities.
- Portugal provided the filled-in questionnaire.

At the meeting of the Network of SME Envoys held on 13 June 2024, it has been emphasised that a significant number of member states (10 out of 27) still did not reply to the survey. It has been stressed that the fragmented input of data limits the representativeness of the results and is likely to reduce the usefulness of the assessment. Therefore, to address these shortcomings, it has been decided that those member states who did not yet reply to the survey, will be able to do so by 20 of June 2024.

Finally, four additional member states have provided replies to the questionnaire (Estonia, France, Greece and Slovakia).

Overall, 21 EU countries took part in the assessment by providing the structured information allowing for comparisons.

2. Policy background

2.1. Introduction

'Business transfer' refers to the process of handing over a business to a new owner and usually new management. In the past, this has often been thought to happen primarily when the initial owner of a business approaches retirement. Now this concept is much broader, and transfer is seen as an event in the development of a business that can happen at any time, not just when an owner is reaching retirement.

Successful business transfers benefit Europe's economy and its social fabric. They contribute to safeguarding economic activity and know-how, and avoiding job losses by ensuring business continuity.

Transferring business ownership is carried out in accordance with the concrete regulatory, fiscal and administrative environment of each country. Business transfer can greatly benefit from a conducive business environment offering support to both transferors and successors (sellers and buyers).

However, it has to be highlighted that not all businesses are transferable. There is no contradiction between a certain closure rate of old firms and their replacement by new companies that are better adjusted to a new environment and an expanding innovating economy. Transferring a business can become a particular problem in shrinking economic sectors or sectors undergoing structural changes.

2.2. Why are business transfers important?

Overall, the volume of business transfers in Europe is increasing, mostly due to the aging of entrepreneurs, but also due to a more dynamic approach to an entrepreneur's life decisions (companies are sold at different moments and for different reasons, e.g., due to a change of career path, sector of activity etc).

As underlined in the Commission's study on [Improving the evidence base on transfer of business in Europe](#), the majority of EU countries do not collect descriptive data on business transfers, therefore EU-wide comprehensive statistics on business transfers cannot be generated. Although Eurostat publishes statistics on business demography at European level, including data on business births and closures, in the business register, these data lack information on changes in business ownership. Hence business transfers are not observable in the business demography datasets.

In this context, the digitalisation of business registers is very important as, once fully implemented, business registers will be able to facilitate access to information about individual businesses, including ownership details, financial information, and other relevant data. This will support informed policy and decision-making, and provide access to data e.g., to researchers.

Currently, only a few EU countries collect data on realised transfers (descriptive data). In some countries data on upcoming transfers (predictive data) are collected by different types of business associations or research centres/academia². It is worth stressing however, that wherever such data are available, they show a similar trend: an increasing number of companies will need to be transferred.

In Germany, according to the research carried out in 2023 by Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW),³, around 224,000 owners of small businesses plan to transfer their business to a new generation in the years 2023 and 2024 alone. It is forecasted that by the end of 2027, this number will reach 626,000 overall.

² For instance, in Finland, the Business Transfer Forum publishes every second year the Business Transfer Barometer. <https://ov-foorumi.fi/omistajanvaihdosfoorumi-in-english/>.

In France, the Federation of Worker Cooperatives (CGSCOP), issues each year the information about the number of worker cooperatives established, including transfers of companies in the form of a cooperative. Eg.in 2023, following a business transfer to its employees, 54 new worker cooperatives have been registered in France, either after a legal procedure (liquidation) or after a transfer of a « healthy business » to its employees (usually from a retiring owner). More information <https://rapport-activite.les-scop.coop/.2023/#page=11>).

³ The Status report on SME successions, KfW, 2023, https://www.kfw.de/About-KfW/Newsroom/Latest-News/Pressemitteilungen-Details_795968.html

Currently, 30% of business owners in Germany are over 60 years old, while the number of potential successors has been declining for years due to current demographic changes.

This means that more businesses are seeking successors now than ever before and are already well advanced in the succession process. 41% of them already have their succession arrangements in place, and a further 31% are already in negotiations. The number of successions already finalised has reached an all-time high. This proves that the level of planning of current owners in Germany is better than before.

However, not every business owner is looking for a successor. Around 97 000 of all SME owners in Germany plan on closing their business by the end of the year 2024. This is roughly half the rate of the previous year.

The main obstacles to successful transfers identified in Germany are: finding a suitable successor (74%), agreeing on a purchase price (30%), bureaucracy (30%), legal complexity (28%) and financing aspects (16%)⁴. As already mentioned, difficulty with finding a new owner is mostly due to demographic factors; the declining birth rates result in subsequent generations being less numerous.

In France, which is the second largest economy in the EU, around 25% of managers are over 60 years old and 11% are over 66 years old. The number of companies that will need to be transferred in the next 10 years is around 700 000⁵.

In Austria, due to the demographic change, the number of business transfers has increased noticeably in recent years. While the number of handovers in 2015 was 5 995, by 2022 this figure had risen to 7 110. In the period 2020-2029, around 51 500 businesses with at least one employee are projected to be transferred in Austria, which corresponds to almost 23% of all such companies in the country⁶.

If the transfers are not successful, more than 692 000 jobs could be lost over the next ten years. On the other hand, successful takeovers may contribute to an increase of company performance. 61% of companies taken over managed to increase turnover rates, 36% managed to create new jobs and 60% managed to increase investments⁷.

There are also significant differences between EU member states regarding the level of experience in supporting business transfers, e.g., Western Europe has seen inter-generational business transfers for many decades, while companies established in Central and Eastern Europe started to reach a maturity level in the beginning of the 90s, resulting in discussions about hand-over for many of them being held only recently. This proves that there is a great potential for EU countries and regions to learn from each other and benefit from the experience of those who have been building support systems for successful business transfers for decades.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ According to the estimates generated by CPME and CCI France, CMA-France, CRA-Cédants et repreneurs d'affaires, <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r22-033/r22-0331.pdf>

⁶ Data source: *Austrian Federal Economic Chamber*.

⁷ Idem.

2.3. EU policy milestones

As one of the key stages of a company life cycle, business transfer has been in the EU sphere of interest for over three decades. However, this policy area has primarily been seen as an issue that is most effectively addressed at a national or sub-national level. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that actions at EU level need to reflect the level of EU competences in this area and for this very reason they are mainly focused on supporting national developments in member states through analysis and reference to good practices developed in this field. The milestones in the EU policy on business transfer involve:

1994

The [Commission Recommendation of 7th December 1994](#) aimed to improve the framework conditions for business transfers in the EU member states. The Commission had identified that unsuccessful transfers and subsequent loss of jobs and economic activity were not necessarily due to market forces but to insufficient preparation for succession and the inadequacy of certain aspects of member states' laws. Therefore, it has put forward a set of legal, fiscal and administrative recommendations complemented by those related to the need for awareness raising, timely preparation of a transfer, training, and exchange of good practices.

1998

Four years later, the Commission in its [Communication](#) reported on the member states' progress in implementing the 1994 Recommendation, that included, among others, the modification of fiscal treatment of transfers, notably through the reduction/exemption of inheritance and gift taxes, improvements in the area of company law and financial prospects of businesses when they were transferred. In general, it was concluded that the situation varies from country to country and that more efforts are needed to facilitate business transfers.

2006

Another milestone in the EU policy on business transfer was [the 2006 Commission's Communication on Transfer of Businesses - Continuity through a new beginning](#). In its essence, this Communication was a stock taking exercise and a reminder to member states to continue improving their legal, fiscal and administrative frameworks for business transfers while also looking at other measures that are crucial for preparation and carrying out a business transfer.

2008

In the [Small Business Act \(SBA\)](#) of 2008, member states were invited to review their fiscal policies and ensure that taxation does not unduly hamper business transfers, put in place schemes for matching transferable businesses with potential new owners and provide advice and support for business transfers.

2011

One of the key studies, looking also at business transfers, titled [Business Dynamics: Start-ups, Business Transfers and Bankruptcy](#), was conducted by the Commission as part of the Small Business Act (SBA) review carried out in 2011. Member states were specifically invited to: ensure a transfer-friendly fiscal and regulatory framework, to improve data collection on business transfers and to provide advisory and mentoring services for entrepreneurs who were due to transfer their business.

2013

The 2013 [Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2020: Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe](#) once again called on member states to make business transfers easier. The focus was on addressing the remaining challenges identified in the 2006 Communication and the 2011

study. Another important [evaluation of the progress made by member states since the 2006 Communication](#) concluded that they continue to make progress, particularly in the area of legal and regulatory frameworks, but overall the progress was considered insufficient in areas such as awareness raising about the need for early planning, the quality of advisory services, transparent online marketplaces for business transfers and the collection of descriptive and predictive data on business transfers across the EU. To address the identified shortcomings, in December 2013 the Commission launched three projects: on how to design awareness raising campaigns, train advisors in business transfer and develop quality standards for online matching platforms to effectively support sellers and buyers.

2017

In March 2017, the Commission, together with the Maltese Presidency, organised a conference on business transfer to discuss about the remaining obstacles for successful business transfers and to exchange best practices, with the aim of presenting the outcomes of this conference to the Competitiveness Council held on 29 May 2017. The main recommendations formulated during the conference and addressed to the member states were about the need to draft national and regional action plans on business transfers, and on improving skills and access to finance.

2020

In 2020, the Commission put forward [An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe](#) containing actions on facilitating business transfers and supporting member states in their efforts to improve the evidence base on business transfers and to create a transfer-friendly business environment. In this context, the Commission carried out a study on [Improving the evidence base on business transfers in Europe](#) that provided insights on the state of play in data collection in the member states and developed a common methodological approach to data collection with the aim to improve the reliability and comparability of predictive data collected in different member states.

2023

The [SME Relief Package](#) published in September 2023 contains the commitment to carry out together with the SME Envoys the assessment of framework conditions for business transfers in the member states. The work is ongoing, and the target date to complete the assessment is end of June 2024.

3. EU support to enhance business transfer ecosystems

3.1. Introduction

The Commission and the EU countries carried out multiple actions focused on developing, disseminating and promoting good practices in the area of business transfer. The approaches already tested and employed elsewhere in Europe may serve as inspiration and they can be, after some adaptation, successfully implemented in other countries and regions.

Furthermore, considering that EU countries are at a different level of maturity regarding business transfers, it is clear that there is a great potential for countries and regions to learn from each other, and for those who have been building business transfers support systems for decades to share their rich experience with others.

The national and regional authorities should take into account good practices and lessons learnt from other countries and regions when designing and implementing reforms/actions/support measures that would be the most appropriate/needed/useful in enhancing the effectiveness of their business transfer ecosystems, while also making sure that challenges related to business transfers are addressed in an integrated manner.

3.2. Supporting the development of national and regional action plans on business transfer

The Commission has been encouraging the development of comprehensive national/regional action plans on business transfer and the establishment of a governance mechanism (e.g. a forum on business transfer) and stakeholder engagement strategies to define, coordinate and monitor the implementation of actions aimed at enhancing business transfer ecosystems, including the boosting of communication capacity to engage with various national and regional stakeholders to generate the ownership of reforms/actions.

This challenge has been picked up by several EU funded projects that provided practical solutions that can be used by others to progress in their efforts to devise national/regional action plans.

Good practice: Integrated regional Action Plans on business transfers
Success Road project focuses on strengthening the capacity of national and regional authorities to devise actions aiming at developing new succession measures in their operational programmes so that SMEs can get better prepared to face the succession phase and to secure their future after a change of ownership. The project has developed four integrated regional Action Plans on business transfers for regions from Greece, Lithuania, Poland, and Spain. The project specifically addressed the challenges faced by manufacturing companies active in the textile, clothing and footwear sectors, and helped them preparing and managing their transfer, both in the context of intra-family succession and when selling a company to a third party.
More about the practice here .

3.3. Supporting family businesses in succession planning

It must be underlined that family businesses are increasingly recognising the importance of succession planning and good governance. Indeed, succession planning is a critical process for family businesses to secure their long-term sustainability and legacy. By addressing the challenges, acknowledging the benefits and adopting best practices, family businesses can successfully navigate the complexities of succession planning and implementation.

Succession planning should begin as early as possible, ideally a few years before the actual transition is projected. Starting early allows for thorough preparation, the identification of a suitable successor, leadership development, and the exploration of external talent, when needed. Strategic planning ensures that the succession plan aligns with the long-term goals of the business and the family.

Family businesses are facing unique challenges regarding succession as this process often involves a heavy emotional load in decision-making and requires family members to navigate complex dynamics and relationships. Therefore, engaging external advisors and experts in managing succession planning can bring valuable insights and objectivity to the process and can help navigate complex legal, financial, and operational aspects of succession planning.

Family businesses were assisted via different projects developed and implemented by various actors at national and regional level who developed customised solutions and tools to help families and family businesses in such transitions. These tools and good practices include elements of awareness raising, succession planning, family business governance, advisory services as well as identifying, training needs. Some of these practices focus also on community building and peer learning. Below, the example of a good practice of a comprehensive approach to family successions.

Good practice: Innovative programme combining training and consulting services to facilitate family business successions (SPRING)

The Training and Consultancy Programme has addressed the needs of family business owners, managers and successors and helps them with succession planning, creating a strategy for growth, building a strong governance structure, balancing intergenerational dynamics, motivating future successors and identifying training needs. It offered a complete package with the necessary training, mentoring, support and guidance in the areas: a) succession and business continuity, involving multidimensional factors (leadership, management, internal governance, legal issues), b) strategy for growth and internationalisation, built on innovation and regeneration; c) development of entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and interpreneurship across generations; promoting a start-up culture and innovation-based growth mindsets within family businesses, while considering other strategies besides succession (exit strategies, external investors coming in, etc.). The project involved nine countries (BE, CY, DE, ES, FR, IT, MT, PT, UK).

More about the practice [here](#).

3.4. Supporting actions to improve access to advisory services and online platforms

As transferring a company involves various matters (e.g. legal provisions related to transfer, taxation, due diligence before sale, company valuation), business owners who are preparing to transfer their company often need the assistance of professional advisers specialised in business transfer capable of covering the whole range of issues that arise throughout a transfer process, including the psychological aspects that may have a major impact on the overall outcome. Advisory services should be established close to those who need them, therefore it is very important that regional actors (e.g. regional (local) authorities/business support providers, advisers in business transfers) are actively involved in designing and providing such services.

Furthermore, there is a need to establish matchmaking services to bring together potential buyers and sellers in a neutral setting where knowledge gaps and information asymmetries could be bridged. In case the matchmaking is facilitated by an online platform, it is important to provide 'behind-the platform' services and have a neutral and trustworthy host organisation, e.g., a chamber of commerce. It is crucial to ensure anonymity of transferors, and if needed, to provide mediation services notably in relation to the perceived and the real value of the business, the issue which is one of the main deal breakers.

Numerous projects focused on improving access to advisory services for business transfers as well as on matching buyers and sellers were developed at both national and regional level, including via EU funded initiatives.

Good practice: *Southwest Finland Regional Business Transfer Platform, Etelä - Suomi (Finland)*

The Regional Business Transfer Platform set up in Southwest Finland, provides comprehensive support and advisory services for business transfers. It offers both buyers and sellers guidance and support along the whole process of a typical business transfer. The platform consolidates free of charge basic advice and access to services offered by a large network of specialised experts (in areas such as valuation, legal and tax consulting, etc). The platform also seeks to raise awareness and to promote business transfer as an alternative to starting a business from scratch. Matchmaking services were also provided to buyers and sellers.

More about the practice [here](#).

Below, the **Summary Table** of projects that developed different approaches, solutions, and best practices to improve the quality of business transfer ecosystems in European countries and regions.

EU funding for initiatives related to business transfers, including intra-family successions for the period 2013-2023 - Summary Table (per type of action)

Type of initiatives/activities	Name of the project/initiative	Project duration	EU source of funding	Funding in € (EU contribution only)
Supporting successions of family businesses – trainings/educational tools/succession planning	Coordinator of the transfer of business in Lapland (FI)	2021-2022	ERDF	137 014,00
	Developing a corporate trading culture in Northern Ostrobothnia (FI)	2021-2022	ERDF	99 041,50
	Accelerating continuity and growth in South Ostrobothnia (FI)	2020-2023	ERDF	89 032,00
	Enter To Business, South Savo (FI)	2019-2021	ERDF	255 009,00
	Transfer of ownership, Central Ostrobothnia (FI)	2020-2022	ERDF	88 095,00
	Boosting SME's Business Transfer Markets in South Karelia (FI)	2017-2019	ERDF	76 160,00
	Re-startup, Northern Ostrobothnia (FI)	2018-2019	ERDF	87 297,00
	Exit Business — Companies ready to sell (FI)	2017-2019	ERDF	84 196,00
	The water of life (IT)	2021-2022	ERDF	401 902,40
	Protocol for family business succession in Malaga (ES)	2018-2019	ERDF	8 000,00
	Protocol for family business succession in Province of Huelva (ES)	2017-2018	ERDF	14 024,27
	Protocol for family business succession in Sant' Olcese (IT)	2020-2021	ERDF	7 500,00
	Protocol for family business succession in Sevilla (ES)	2017-2020	ERDF	10 720,00
	Succession Coaching for family companies in Poland	2018-2021	ESF	387 349,00
	The Startti project (Start) in rural areas in South Savo (FI)	2015-2018	ESF	102 465,00
	Transformative preparation (IT)	2019-2021	ESF	41 873,00
	Succession in family businesses – Macroregion 5 (PL)	2018-2023		925 164,96
	Succession in family businesses – Macroregion 4 (PL)	2020-2023	ESF	755 002,61
	Succession with success, Macroregion 1 (PL)	2018-2023	ESF	620 071,90
	Interactive Succession Readiness Toolkit	2021-2024	Erasmus +	387 882,00
	Small steps to bigger success - succession in the family business SiFB	2021-2024	Erasmus +	211 526,00
	Succession in Family Businesses - SUFABU	2019-2021	Erasmus +	289 484,00
Vocational Education and Tools for Family enterprises, VESTA	2020-2022	Erasmus +	291 188,00	
Succession Planning and Regeneration - SPRING	2019-2021	Erasmus +	999 874,00	

	Facilitating Family Business Succession in Macedonia	2019-2022	Erasmus +	4 628, 00
	Families to perpetuate cultural Business Across generations	2016-2018	Erasmus +	272 558,99
	Innovative training for a sustainable succession in family businesses	2017-2020	Erasmus +	272 177,00
	FARM _SUCCESS: training FARMers for sustainable SUCCESSION	2015-2018	Erasmus +	372 958,00
	Making Family Business Transfers SUCCESSful trough education	2015-2017	Erasmus +	249 951,00
	Youth Employment through the Continuity of Family Business	2014-2017	Erasmus +	221.942,00
	Supporting Business Succession Planning for micro-SMEs	2014-2016	Erasmus +	240 008,75
	Assessment Procedure for MSMEs Successors in Tourism Industry	2014-2016	Erasmus +	282 027,00
	Subtotal: 8 286 122,38			
Developing regional actions plans for business transfers and online marketplaces	Success Road - enhance the competitiveness of SMEs through succession models	2021-2022	ERDF	827.271,00
	INBETS – Baltic Sea Region project	2017-2021	ERDF/ENI	1 950 000,00
	INBETS+ – Baltic Sea Region project	2019-2023	ERDF	360 000,00
	ENTER-transfer project	2017-2022	ERDF	1 704 331,00
	STOB regions project	2017-2021	ERDF	1.795.347,00
	C-TEMAIp project in Alpine Space areas	2015-2018	ERDF	1.540 447,00
	Transfer of the Ownership Project (FI)	2022-2023	ESF	141 691,00
	Wise transmitters of knowledge in Veneto region (IT)	2019- 2021	ESF	41 984,00
	SME transfers in Northern Ostrobothnia (FI)	2014-2017	ESF	190 344,00
	Prometheus: be ready to transfer and orient (IT)	2019-2021	ESF	48 294,00
	Awareness raising, online platforms and advisory services	2013-2015	COSME	700 000,00
Subtotal 9 299 709,00				
GRAND TOTAL 17 585 831,38				

More details about solutions tools and best practice cases presented in the above table can be found [here](#). This document contains descriptions of practical examples, solutions and case studies of how different elements of the business transfer ecosystem were established and improved in EU's countries and regions over the last decade.

3.5. Examples of EU actions to promote best practices in the area of business transfer

The Commission continuously promotes best practices developed with the aim to enhance business transfer ecosystems in the EU countries during EU level events, e.g., the SME Assembly organised annually by the Commission and the EU presidency. Recently, dedicated workshops on business transfers were organised during the 2019 SME Assembly held in Helsinki, followed by the 2021 SME Assembly in Portorož (Slovenia).

Furthermore, the transfer of business has been included in the 2025 flagship project 'Single Market and Competitiveness', under the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI), which provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU member states on designing and implementing different types of reforms. The support can take the form of, for example, strategic and legal advice, carrying out studies, providing trainings and organising expert visits on the ground. It can cover any phase in the reform process, from preparation and design to development and implementation. Member states can apply for a TSI⁸ customised support to address their concrete needs in the area of business transfer, while taking a full advantage of existing solutions that have been tested and proven to be efficient in other EU countries or regions.

4. Methodology and respondents

4.1. Methodological approach

The main tool used to collect information about the existing, 'desired' and new/planned measures related to business transfers in EU countries was a structured questionnaire.

The objective of the survey was primarily to establish the *status quo* regarding the existence of these measures in each EU country, and to identify recent or planned developments that are related to business transfer.

The survey also aimed to collect the opinions of respondents regarding the measures that according to them should be available in their country. This would allow for some comparisons between existent and 'desired' measures with the aim of identifying whether there are any significant discrepancies.

4.2. Structure and content of the survey

The survey was structured along the main provisions of the Commission's Recommendation on business transfer. It has also aimed to establish whether any other measure should be specifically looked at as potentially important element of the business transfer environment.

⁸ The deadline for the member states to apply for the TSI support under the 2025 flagship project 'Single Market and Competitiveness' is October 2024.

The questionnaire contained 39 questions in total, and was divided into the following parts:

- general information about the respondent,
- fiscal measures,
- legal and administrative measures,
- financial environment,
- ‘other’ (soft) support measures,
- collection of data on business transfers,
- perceptions regarding the importance of business transfers.

The survey contained single choice questions, multiple choice questions (related to existing and ‘desired’ measures), as well as open questions where respondents could provide any additional information about new/planned measures or any other topic if deemed appropriate in a descriptive manner.

The questionnaire that was used to collect data from the member states is attached in *Annex B*.

4.3. Respondents

The survey was addressed to representatives of national governments (different ministries, agencies with public functions etc.) in the member states. The objective was to assess the implementation of businesses transfer measures by reaching out directly to those who are in charge of designing fiscal, legislative and administrative procedures in their countries as well as other support measures. National experts in business transfer could also be called upon by Envoys to contribute to the completion of the survey. While different governmental actors could be consulted/involved in preparing the reply to the questionnaire, only one reply per country was submitted and analysed for the purpose of this report.

Overall, replies to the survey were received from 21 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. The remaining six countries did not participate in this exercise⁹.

Regarding the type of governmental institutions who provided replies, the situation is the following: in the case of 16 countries respondents represented/or acted on behalf of the Ministry of Economy/Entrepreneurship and SMEs. The remaining countries) reported differently:

- **Belgium** explained that the input was a coordinated effort and it had come from the Federal level, Flanders region, Walloon region and Brussels Capital region. Here, all measure existing at one or more of these levels had been listed. When additional measures where mentioned, it was stated at what level and where these measures were applied (this is also reflected in this report).
- The respondent from **Spain** has represented the Ministry of Industry and Tourism.
- The respondent from **Greece** has represented the Ministry of Development/General Secretariat for Industry

⁹ Six EU member states did not reply to the survey: Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Latvia, Romania and Sweden. However, Sweden has provided a written contribution about planned changes which is included in the part on new/planned measures that is included in the report.

- The respondent from **Poland** has replied ‘on behalf of the Polish SME Envoy but the reply included inputs from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice).
- The respondent from **Finland** has replied ‘on behalf of the Ministry of Economy/Entrepreneurship and SMEs, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice.

More information about the profile of respondents can be found in the tables below:

What type of governmental institution/administration/agency do you represent?	Number of answers	Ratio ¹⁰
Ministry of Economy/Entrepreneurship and SMEs	16	76,8%
Ministry of Finance	0	0%
Ministry of Justice	0	0%
Business Agency/organisation with a public function	0	0%
Other	5	24,0%

Do you answer this survey in your own capacity or on another institution'/person's behalf?	Number of answers	Ratio
In my own capacity	9	43,2%
On behalf of my in-line manager/hierarchical supervisor	2	9,6%
On behalf of my ministry/institution	8	38,4%
Other	2	9,6%

4.4. Reporting on the results

Analysis of survey results have been carried out following the logic of the questionnaire, and are organised into different parts. The report contains the aggregated data about the existing and ‘desired’ measures across the EU countries as well as results per country (compiled in tables), to allow for easy comparisons.

The short descriptions of new/planned measures (whenever such information is provided) are also included in this report.

4.5. Limitations related to the interpretation of survey results

It is important to underline that the interpretation of survey results must be done with significant caution, for the reasons listed below:

- Not all EU member states have replied to the survey (21 out of 27). In this context, it is not possible to get the full picture of the situation across the EU as data are missing from a number of countries (6). It is difficult at this point to speculate about the reasons for not replying to the survey, but it is interesting to note that some countries are very consistent in their approach (they had not taken part in previous evaluations either),
- Some inconsistencies have been detected between replies, pulling the reliability of information provided into question and suggesting the application of significant caution when interpreting results,

¹⁰ Ratios in this report have been rounded up, one answer is equal 4.8%. As a result, they do not add precisely to 100%.

- In some countries, especially federal ones (Austria, Belgium, Germany) or those where regions enjoy a certain level of autonomy (e.g., Spain) there can be differences between regions regarding the existence of measures to support business transfer – such regional differences, as stated in the next paragraph, were reported in the case of Austria and Belgium.

5. Overview of measures - survey results

5.1. Fiscal measures

Properly designed fiscal measures are likely to facilitate a transfer of a company to the next generation (family member or a third party). Countries were asked what fiscal measures they have in place to support business transfers, and what measures they would consider important and would like to have ('desired' measures). They have also reported plans for introducing new measures.

The table below provides the aggregated results regarding the existence of fiscal measures.

What fiscal measures are available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?	Number of answers	Ratio
Waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business	7	33,6%
Inheritance/gift tax do not apply to SME successions	3	14,4%
Exemptions on inheritance/gift tax exist for SME successions	13	62,4%
Deferring inheritance tax if a company is kept as a going concern	4	19,2%
Re-investment tax relief on the profits made on the sale of a business	4	19,2%
Retirement tax relief from added value or capital gains on the assets of a business in the event of sale	6	28,8%
Sale to employees tax relief on the capital gain from transfer of shares to employees	4	19,2%
Principle of tax neutrality for all operations regarding the preparation of a transfer (e.g. transfer of assets, mergers, divisions, exchange/transfer of shares)	6	28,8%
I don't know	1	4,8%
Other	8	38,4%

Over 60% of countries who responded to the survey (13 out of 21), reported the existence of exemptions on inheritance/gift taxes for SME successions. This measure is the most popular regarding fiscal exemptions and is followed by the 'waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business', which is available in one-third of the countries (7).

Almost one-third of the countries (6) had the following fiscal measures in place:

- Retirement tax relief from added value or capital gains on the assets of a business in the event of sale
- Principle of tax neutrality for all operations regarding the preparation of a transfer (e.g., transfer of assets, mergers, divisions, exchange/or transfer of shares).

About one-fifth of them (4) reported the existence of the following measures:

- Deferring inheritance tax if a company is kept as a ‘going concern’.
- Re-investment tax relief on the profits made on the sale of a business.
- Sale to employees’ tax relief on the capital gain from transfer of shares to employees

A small number of countries (3 out of 21) reported that they do not impose inheritance/gift tax in the case of SME successions (AT, LU, PT).

Eight countries (BE, EE, ES, GR, HU, IR, LT, PL) reported to have in place other measures that had not been listed in the survey, however not all of them provided details (EE). The measures for which additional information was provided are described below:

Country	Short description of measure
Belgium	<p>Brussels Capital region informed about the following reduced rates of taxes that are used in different cases.</p> <p>For inheritance and estate transfer taxes, the rate is reduced to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3% for direct descendants or partners. – 7% for all other individuals. <p>For gift taxes, the rates are exempt (0%), regardless of the degree of relationship between the donor and the recipient.</p> <p>Sale of a business by an independent individual (sole proprietor): in the event of complete and definitive cessation of professional activity by the seller: possible taxation at a rate of 16.5% or 33%, depending on what is transferred.</p>
Greece	<p>Law N. 4172 (Fek A' 167/23-07-2013) on income taxation and emergency measures for the implementation of Law 4046/2012, Law 4093/2012 and Law 4127/2013. It regulates income taxation for natural persons, legal persons and other types of legal entities. It also includes provisions such as ‘waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business’.</p> <p>Law 4935/2022 (Fek A 103/26.5.2022) contains provisions on tax incentives and benefits that consist of exemptions from corporate income tax, from tax on the revenue from value or capital gains and from capital gains from the transfer of fixed assets to a third party as well as exemption from stamp duty and other related fees.</p>
Lithuania	<p>Assets (including a company) are exempt from inheritance tax in the following cases: inheritance by one spouse on the death of the other spouse; inheritance by children, parents, guardians, wards, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters.</p>
Spain	<p>Exemptions on the capital gains tax.</p>
Hungary	<p>The following provisions are available in the country:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fee rules: <p><i>The Tax Act</i> does not specifically provide for tax exemptions or concessions that can be applied by SMEs under <i>the SME Act</i>. It is important, however, that several</p>

	<p>discount rules in the asset acquisition tax regulation can also be applied in the case of the transfer of entrepreneurial assets of SMEs, thereby contributing to the continued operation of the business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Personal income tax rules: <p>There are no personal income tax rules that would specifically facilitate the transfer of holdings. As a general rule, assets acquired by an individual through inheritance or tradition are exempt from personal income tax.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Corporate tax rules: <p>There are no direct reductions specifically for the transfer of business. The following provisions provide relief.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules related to preferential transformation, • Rules related to preferential asset transfer. 												
Ireland	<p>The following measures for business relief are applied in the case of transfer of business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Retirement relief: <p>Relief from Capital Gains Tax (CGT) may be claimed for when disposing of any part of business assets to a child or others after the age of 55. The threshold for the value on disposal to which relief will apply depends on whether the disposal is to a child or others, as well as the age at the time of disposal. The age limits for the thresholds will change on 1 January 2025. The table below summarises thresholds for the relief:</p> <p>Existing position for retirement relief up to 31 December 2024:</p> <table data-bbox="405 1249 1326 1406"> <tr> <td>Disposal to a child:</td> <td>no limit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age 55-65:</td> <td>€750,000 (subject to marginal relief)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>From 66 onward:</td> <td>€3,000,000 and €500,000 (subject to marginal relief)</td> </tr> </table> <p>From 1 January 2025:</p> <table data-bbox="405 1491 1326 1648"> <tr> <td>Disposal to a child:</td> <td>[not reported]</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age 55-69:</td> <td>€10,000,000 and €750,000 (subject to marginal relief)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>From 70 onward:</td> <td>€3,000,000 and €500,000 (subject to marginal relief)</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Revised Entrepreneur relief: <p>It provides for a reduced Capital Gains Tax (CGT) rate of 10% on gains arising from the disposal of qualifying business assets, compared to the normal rate of 33%. There is a lifetime limit of €1 million on the gains that relief can be claimed for.</p> <p>Qualifying business assets are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shares held by an individual in a trading company, • assets owned by a sole trader and used in their trade. 	Disposal to a child:	no limit	Age 55-65:	€750,000 (subject to marginal relief)	From 66 onward:	€3,000,000 and €500,000 (subject to marginal relief)	Disposal to a child:	[not reported]	Age 55-69:	€10,000,000 and €750,000 (subject to marginal relief)	From 70 onward:	€3,000,000 and €500,000 (subject to marginal relief)
Disposal to a child:	no limit												
Age 55-65:	€750,000 (subject to marginal relief)												
From 66 onward:	€3,000,000 and €500,000 (subject to marginal relief)												
Disposal to a child:	[not reported]												
Age 55-69:	€10,000,000 and €750,000 (subject to marginal relief)												
From 70 onward:	€3,000,000 and €500,000 (subject to marginal relief)												

	<p>A qualifying business is a business other than the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding of securities or other assets as investments, • holding of development land, • development or letting of land. <p>The individual claiming the relief must have owned at least 5% of the shares in the company for a continuous period of any three years prior to disposal in order to qualify. In addition, the person must have worked for 50% of the time in a managerial or technical capacity in the business for 3 years out of a 5-year period before disposal.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">– Business Relief:</p> <p>Capital acquisition tax (inheritance and gift tax) to facilitate transfer, including intra-family successions. Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT) business relief operates by reducing the market value of qualifying business property by 90% for CAT purposes.</p> <p>The primary policy rationale for CAT business relief is to promote the intergenerational transfer of family businesses and ensure those business continue to contribute to the economy.</p> <p>To ensure that CAT business relief is appropriately targeted at genuine cases of business successions, the legislation provides for the relief to be “clawed back” where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the business ceases to trade within six years of the date of the gift or inheritance, • the relevant business property is sold, redeemed, or compulsorily acquired within six years of the date of the gift or inheritance. (If this property is replaced within one year, the relief will not be withdrawn.) or: • the relevant business property comprises development land and is disposed of within ten years of the date of the gift or inheritance.
<p>Poland</p>	<p>Family foundation was established under <i>The Family Foundations Act</i>, which entered into force on 22 May 2023. Family foundation is a new legal entity designed for collecting property and managing assets in accordance with the founder’s will and paying benefits to beneficiaries. The founder sets up family foundation and defines its particular goal in the statute. The founder may only be a natural person and the beneficiary of a family foundation may be a natural person or a non-governmental organization acting under the Act of 24 April 2003 on <i>Public Benefit and Volunteer Work</i>, conducting public benefit activity.</p> <p>The family foundation’s purpose is also to minimize the risk of succession failure and to guarantee the continuation of business activity. Transfer of family property to family foundation protects assets against division and enables to multiply family</p>

	<p>wealth and consequently to derive benefits to cover costs of living of persons indicated by the founder.</p> <p>The law grants the family foundation an exemption from Corporate Income Tax (CIT). Family foundation may only conduct an economic activity enumerated in the Family Foundations Act (the income is as a rule exempted from CIT). Family foundation conducting other business activities (not enumerated in the act) is obliged to pay corporate income tax (the applicable corporate tax rate is 25%).</p> <p>Family foundation is subject to a lump-sum tax, regardless of the type of economic activities conducted. The rate is 15% of tax base. The tax base includes benefits paid by the family foundation for related entities as well as the value of transferred property and 'so called' hidden profits.</p> <p>Additional measures available, also in the framework of the newly established <i>Family Foundations Act</i>, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special fiscal measures that allow the business to continue its operations from the tax perspective in the interim period following death of a partner in a partnership or of a sole business owner, until successors decide whether to take over a business or sell it, • certain exemptions from both inheritance/gift tax and income tax applied in the case of intra-family successions, • tax neutrality is granted for some general operations regarding the preparation of a transfer (such as mergers, divisions, exchange of shares, contributions in kind), but not for all of them. Neutrality regarding transfer tax is limited. <p>The Family Foundations Act:</p> <p>Polish version: https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20230000326,</p> <p>English version: https://www.gov.pl/web/rozwoj-technologie/english-version.</p>
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The respondents have also expressed their opinions on the fiscal measures that they would like to have available in their countries. The table below provides the aggregated results:

In your opinion, what fiscal measures should be available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?	Measures that should be available		Measures currently existing	
	Number of answers	Ratio	Number of answers	Ratio
Waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business	4	19,2%	7	33,6%
Inheritance/gift tax do not apply to SME successions.	3	14,4%	3	14,4%
Exemptions on inheritance/gift tax exist for SME successions.	5	24%	13	62,4%

Deferring inheritance tax if a company is kept as a going concern.	4	19,2%	4	19,2%
Re-investment tax relief on the profits made on the sale of a business.	6	28,8%	4	19,2%
Retirement tax relief from added value or capital gains on the assets of a business in the event of sale.	3	14.4%	6	28,8%
Sale to employees tax relief on the capital gain from transfer of shares to employees.	4	19,2%	4	19,2%
Principle of tax neutrality for all operations regarding the preparation of a transfer (e.g. transfer of assets, mergers, divisions, exchange/transfer of shares,).	5	24%	6	28,2%
I don't know	5	24%	1	4,8%
Other	4	19,2%	8	38,4%

Remarkably, there are no measures that were mentioned by more than six countries and no measures that were mentioned by less than three countries.

When comparing the fiscal measures already existing with the measures 'desired', significant discrepancies can be observed. For instance, in the case of the measure related to exemptions on inheritance/gift tax for SME successions, 13 countries reported to have this measure in place, while only five countries mentioned that this measure should be available. Concerning the measure on 'waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business', seven countries reported its existence, while only four would like to have it in place.

At the same time, the measure on 'the re-investment tax relief on the profits made from the sale of a business would be 'desired' by six countries while only four countries previously reported to have it in place.

Hungary mentioned that apart from the measures listed in the survey, other measures are already in place, and expressed the opinion that considering the broad exemption rules that are currently applicable in relation to the business assets of SMEs, no further concessions in property acquisition taxes are justified in their country. Details on the particular exemption rules in Hungary were already provided in the previous table.

The table below presents the comparison between existent and desired fiscal measures in the participating EU countries:

Fiscal measures existing and 'desired' - comparison table		
Support measures / tools mentioned:	Fiscal measures currently in place	Fiscal measures that should be available (opinions):
<i>Question asked:</i>	<i>"What fiscal measures are available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?"</i>	<i>"In your opinion, what fiscal measures should be available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?"</i>
	(Marked in bold are countries that currently have the listed measure in	(Marked in bold are countries that currently do not have the listed measure

	place but would not consider it necessary/beneficial:)	in place but would consider it necessary/beneficial:)
Waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business	Austria, Belgium, Greece, Ireland, France, Netherlands, Spain	Austria, Luxembourg, Slovakia , Netherlands
Inheritance/gift tax do not apply to SME successions	Austria Luxembourg, Portugal	Bulgaria, Croatia, Malta
Exemptions on inheritance/gift tax exist for SME successions	Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain	Croatia, Slovakia , Malta, Netherlands, Poland
Deferring inheritance tax if a company is kept as a going concern	Belgium, France, Germany, Spain	Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, Malta
Re-investment tax relief on the profits made on the sale of a business	Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain,	Austria, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovenia
Retirement tax relief from added value or capital gains on the assets of a business in the event of sale	Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland Netherlands	Austria, Belgium, Netherlands
Sale to employees' tax relief on the capital gain from transfer of shares to employees	Belgium, France, Netherlands, Spain,	Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia
Principle of tax neutrality for all operations regarding the preparation of a transfer (e.g. transfer of assets, mergers, divisions, exchange/transfer of shares)	Austria, Finland, France, Hungary, Poland Spain	Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Luxembourg, Slovenia
Other	Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Spain , Hungary	Hungary, Poland
I don't know	Croatia	Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain

All in all, the countries indicated to have 47 measures related to the fiscal environment in place. In the case of 37 measures the countries that already have them in place would not necessarily like to keep them while in the case of remaining 10 measures that are in place, they are also considered beneficial/ 'desired'.

On the other hand, the countries indicated overall 35 measures that they would like to have available. Out of these 35 measures, 25 were not yet available while 10 of them were already in place.

Regarding the plans of introducing new fiscal measures, the aggregated results are presented in the table below:

Do you plan any new fiscal measure(s) that would impact business transfers environment in your country?	Number of answers	Ratio
Yes	3	14,4%
No	9	43.2%

I don't know	9	43,2%
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The results show that only three out of 21 countries listed in the table below plan to have new measures:

Country	Short description of measure
Austria	The <i>Grace Period Act</i> aims, among others, to create legal certainty in the area of taxes for companies in the event of a family transfer.
Greece	Foresees the modification of the <i>Income Tax Code</i> with the overall objective to make the legislative framework governing transfers simpler and more user-friendly, to allow for smoother transitions (e.g., by introducing tax exemptions for early retirement, etc.)
Slovenia	Plans for a tax reform which will include both a company-related and a personal income-related frameworks. It is expected to impact the business transfer environment in the country (no other details were provided).

The results regarding fiscal measures available in the EU countries are illustrated in the summary table below (results per country):

Framework conditions for business transfers in the Member States – SME Envoys report
Fiscal measures – Summary table

	Waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a	Inheritance/gift tax do not exist/apply to SMEs	Exemptions /reductions on inheritance /gift tax for SMEs	Deferring inheritance tax	Re-investment tax relief	Retirement tax relief	Sale to employees ' tax relief	Tax neutral restructuring to prepare a transfer	Total + (out of 8)
2024									
Austria	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	4
Belgium	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	6
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Czechia									
Denmark									
Germany	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	3
Estonia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Greece	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Spain	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	6
France	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	6
Croatia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Ireland	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	3
Italy	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	1
Cyprus									
Latvia									
Lithuania	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	1
Luxembourg	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hungary	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	2
Malta	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	1
Netherlands	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	4
Poland	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	2
Portugal	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	3
Romania									
Slovenia	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	1
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Finland	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	2
Sweden									
Total EU	7	3	13	4	4	6	4	6	47

Legend:

+	Measure existent	-	Measure non-existent
N/A	Countries that did not provide information/did not answer the question		Countries that did not reply to the survey

5.2. Legal and administrative measures

This chapter provides an overview of existing legal and administrative measures that facilitate the transfer of a company ownership e.g., by allowing the change of a company's legal form. The table below presents the aggregated results.

What legal/administrative measures are available in your country to facilitate business transfer, including intra-family successions?	Number of answers	Ratio
Possibility to change from one legal form to another legal entity without the need to wind up a company	17	81,6%
Legal principle of continuity of partnerships and sole proprietorships in the case of death of the partner or business owner	16	76,8%
Principle that unanimity rule for decisions within the joint ownership do not prevent a company from being kept as a going concern	4	19,2%
Principle that the partnership agreement shall take precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners	8	38,4%
Principle of neutrality for other transfer related fees (e.g. stamp duties, documents and registration fees and other similar duties)	2	9,6%
Other	4	19,2%
I don't know	0	0

The survey results show the following:

- More than four-fifths of the countries (17 out of 21) have in place the 'possibility to change a company's legal form without needing to wind up a company'.
- Less than four-fifths (16 out of 21) adopted the 'legal principle of continuity of partnerships and sole proprietorships in the case of death of the partner or business owner'.
- Over one-third of the countries (8 out of 21) apply the principle that the 'partnership agreement takes precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners'.
- About one-fifth of the countries (4 out of 21) have as a principle that 'unanimity rule for decisions within the joint ownership does not prevent a company from being kept as a going concern'.
- Only two countries out of the 21 adopted the 'principle of neutrality regarding other transfer related fees (e.g., stamp duties, documents and registration fees and other similar duties)'.

The following five countries provided additional information related to this topic:

Country	Short description of measure
Greece	Presidential Decree 178/2002 (Fek 162/A' 12.7.2002 includes measures establishing the protection of workers' rights in the event of the transfer of business. It is harmonized with the Council Directive 98/50/EC, which aims to ensure the protection of employees' rights during business transfers. This reform seeks to simplify the legal framework while maintaining adequate protection for workers.
Finland	Details about the provisions related to the possibility of changing from one legal form to another without the need to wind up a company are provided for in the

	<p><i>Limited Liability Companies Act</i>, Chapter 19, the <i>Cooperatives Act</i>, Chapter 22 and the <i>Partnerships Act</i>, Chapter 8.</p> <p>Unofficial English translations of the said Acts available at: https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2006/en20060624_20220660.pdf</p>
Ireland	<p><i>Stamp duties in relation to the transfer of business</i></p> <p>Where there is a transfer of property on sale, stamp duty is levied on the consideration paid. However, where there is a transfer of property for less than full consideration (e.g., by the way of a gift), stamp duty is levied on the market value of the property transferred. There is no stamp duty levied on transfers of property inherited under a will or on intestacy.</p> <p>Rates of stamp duty vary and are set out in Schedule 1 to the <i>Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999</i>. The main stamp duty rates are published on Revenue website at real property, insurances and leases and stocks and marketable securities.</p> <p>Where a charge to stamp duty arises on a transfer of property, an exemption or relief from that charge may be available. In the case of business transfers and intra-family successions, the below exemptions and reliefs may be particularly relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Section 79 – Associated Companies Relief – Section 80 – Relief for amalgamations, reconstructions or mergers – Section 81AA – Young Trained Farmers – Section 81C – Farm Consolidation Relief – Section 81D – Relief for certain leases of farmland – Section 83B – Relief on transfers of family farms – Section 96 – Transfers between spouses and civil partners – Section 97 – Transfers between spouses and civil partners following the dissolution of a marriage or a civil partnership – Section 97A – Transfers between cohabitants under the <i>Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act, 2010</i> – Schedule 1 SDCA 1999 – Consanguinity Relief (intra-family transfers of land) that reduces the rate to 1% from 7.5% <p>Further information on the stamp duty exemptions and reliefs is available on the Revenue website, as follows: https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/legislation/notes-for-guidance/stamp-duty-2023.aspx https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tdm/stamp-duty/stamp-duty-manual/index.aspx</p>
Poland	<p>Succession management takes care of practical problems related to the death of an entrepreneur and the fate of his enterprise. The succession management is a temporary solution (in principle, up to two years) that ensures that at a critical moment after the entrepreneur's death there is a person who will deal with the most important matters related to the functioning of a business, including, among others, the implementation of deliveries, customer service or tax settlements.</p>

	<p>The act on succession management of a single proprietorship and other facilities regarding the succession of enterprises can be accessed via the following link (Polish version: https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20180001629).</p> <p>The family foundation is a legal entity designed for collecting property and managing assets in accordance with the founder's will and paying benefits to beneficiaries. Family foundations allow business owners to secure both continuity of their businesses and particular interests of their successors.</p> <p>The legal principle of continuity of 'sole proprietorships' in the case of death of the business owner is in place. Similar principle does not automatically apply to partnerships and should be generally addressed in the partnership agreement. Depending on the type of partnership, partners need to allow the partnership to continue operating or allow successors to take the deceased partner's place. More flexible rules apply in case of death of limited-liability partners (or stockholders in the joint-stock partnership).</p>
Sweden¹¹	<p>In 2023, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth was reviewing and making available the information about ownership and generational changes. They are published on the internet platform <i>verksamt.se</i> that informs entrepreneurs about rules and regulations related to 'doing business'. The aim of this revision was to simplify and facilitate changes of ownership so that the continuity of viable companies is ensured.</p> <p>The Swedish government has a plan to facilitate changes of ownership and to improve access to capital for investment-intensive parts of agriculture. An investigation has started in 2023 to review certain provisions in the <i>Land Acquisition Act</i> which currently provides that agricultural properties cannot normally be transferred from an individual to a company. The objective is to give farmers who are faced with large capital investments, the opportunity to transfer some agricultural land to limited companies in order to get better financing opportunities.</p>

The respondents were also asked about their opinions on the legal and administrative measures that they would like to have available in their countries.

¹¹ Sweden provided this information in a written contribution but did not reply to the survey.

The table below illustrates the aggregated results:

In your opinion, what legal/administrative measures should be available in your country to facilitate business transfer, including intra-family successions?			Existing measures	
	Number of answers	Ratio	Number of answers	Ratio
Possibility to change from one legal form to another legal entity without the need to wind up a company.	9	43,2%	17	81,6%
Legal principle of continuity of partnerships and sole proprietorships in the case of death of the partner or business owner.	7	33,6%	16	76,8%
Principle that unanimity rule for decisions within the joint ownership do not prevent a company from being kept as a going concern.	3	14,4%	4	19,2%
Principle that the partnership agreement shall take precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners.	3	14,4%	8	38,4%
Principle of neutrality for other transfer related fees (e.g. stamp duties, documents and registration fees and other similar duties).	8	38,4%	2	9,6%
Other	3	14,4%	4	19,2%
I don't know	5	24%	0	0

First of all, it is useful to underline those five countries that had previously reported having specific measures in place, indicated here that they did not know what opinion to express regarding the need to have them available in their country.

The biggest discrepancy between existent and 'desired' measures can be observed in the case of three measures: 'the possibility to change from one legal form to another legal entity without the need to wind up a company' and the 'Legal principle of continuity of partnerships and sole proprietorships in the case of death of the partner or business owner', and the 'principle that the partnership agreement shall take precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners', respectively (17 existent versus 9 desired; 16 existent versus 7 'desired'; and 8 existent versus 3 'desired').

At the aggregated level, almost no discrepancy was recorded in the case of one measure: 'Principle that unanimity rule for decisions within the joint ownership do not prevent a company from being kept as a going concern' (four existent versus three 'desired').

Only in the case of one measure: 'Principle of neutrality for other transfer related fees (e.g., stamp duties, documents and registration fees and other similar duties)', more countries would like to have it available than this is currently the case (two existent versus eight 'desired').

The available results show a lack of coherence between existent and 'desired' measures in a significant number of countries.

The table below shows the legal and administrative measures existent and 'desired' by the different countries:

Legal and administrative measures existing and 'desired' - comparison table		
Legal and administrative measures	Legal and administrative measures currently in place	Legal and administrative measures that should be available (opinions)
<i>Question asked:</i>	<i>"What legal/administrative measures are available in your country to facilitate business transfer, including intra-family successions?"</i>	<i>"In your opinion, what legal/administrative measures should be available in your country to facilitate business transfer, including intra-family successions?"</i>
	(Marked in bold are countries that currently have the listed measure in place but would not consider it necessary/beneficial:)	(Marked in bold are countries that currently do not have the listed measure in place but would consider it necessary/beneficial:)
Possibility to change from one legal form to another legal entity without the need to wind up a company	Austria , Belgium, Croatia, Estonia , Finland, France , Germany , Hungary, Italy , Lithuania, Luxembourg , Netherlands, Poland, Portugal Slovenia , Slovakia , Spain	Belgium, Croatia, Greece , Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta , Netherlands, Poland
Legal principle of continuity of partnerships and sole proprietorships in the case of death of the partner or business owner	Austria , Belgium, Estonia , Finland, France , Greece , Hungary, Italy , Luxembourg , Malta , Netherlands, Poland, Portugal , Slovenia , Slovakia , Spain	Belgium, Bulgaria , Croatia , Finland, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland
Principle that unanimity rule for decisions within the joint ownership do not prevent a company from being kept as a going concern	Hungary, Italy , Poland, Slovakia	Hungary, Luxembourg , Poland
Principle that the partnership agreement shall take precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners	Estonia , Finland, France , Germany , Hungary, Italy , Malta , Poland	Belgium , Finland, Hungary
Principle of neutrality for other transfer related fees (e.g. stamp duties, documents and registration fees and other similar duties)	Spain , Ireland	Estonia , Italy , Lithuania , Luxembourg , Malta , Poland , Portugal , Slovenia
Other	Greece , Finland, Ireland, Poland	Finland, Ireland, Poland
I don't know	-	Austria , France , Germany , Slovakia , Spain

Altogether, the countries indicated to have 47 measures related to the legal and administrative environment in place. In the case of 30 measures the countries that already have them in place would not necessarily like to keep them while in the case of remaining 17 measures that are in place, they are also considered beneficial/ 'desired'.

At the same time, the countries indicated overall 30 measures that they would like to have available. Out of these 30 measures, 14 were not yet available while 16 of them were already in place.

The table below shows that the majority of the countries (11 out of 21) do not intend to propose new measures to facilitate business transfers.

Do you plan any new legal/administrative measure(s) that would impact business transfers environment in your country?	Number of answers	Ratio
Yes	2	9,6%
No	11	52,8%
I don't know	8	38,4%

Only two countries provided an additional explanation of how the legal acts will also address, directly or indirectly, some issues related to business transfers while eight countries stated that they do not know about any new developments.

Country	Short description of measure
Austria	The <i>Grace Period Act</i> aims, among others, to create legal certainty in the area of taxes for family businesses in the event of a family transfer.
Finland	additionally explained that while there are no ongoing law-drafting plans directly related to matters referred to in this question, a partial revision of <i>the Companies Act</i> and <i>The Cooperatives Act</i> may have an indirect beneficial effect on business transfers.

The results regarding legal and administrative measures available in EU countries are illustrated in the summary table below (results per country):

**Framework conditions for business transfers in the Member States – SME Envoys report
Legal and administrative measures – Summary table**

Country	Change of legal form possible without winding up a business	Legal principle of continuity in the case of death of the owner	Unanimity rule for decisions not required	Partnership agreement takes precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners	Exemption on stamp/ registration /documents fees/duties	Total + (out of 5)
2024						
Austria	+	+	-	-	-	2
Belgium	+	+	-	-	-	2
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-	0
Czechia						
Denmark						
Germany	+	-	-	+	-	2
Estonia	+	+	-	+	-	3
Greece	-	+	-	-	-	1
Spain	+	+	-	-	+	3
France	+	+	-	+	-	3
Croatia	+	-	-	-	-	1
Ireland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	+	1
Italy	+	+	+	+	-	4
Cyprus						
Latvia						
Lithuania	+	-	-	-	-	1
Luxembourg	+	+	-	-	-	2
Hungary	+	+	+	+	-	4
Malta	-	+	-	+	-	2
Netherlands	+	+	-	-	-	2
Poland	+	+	+	+	-	4
Portugal	+	+	-	-	-	2
Romania						
Slovenia	+	+	-	-	-	2
Slovakia	+	+	+	-	-	3
Finland	+	+	-	+	-	3
Sweden						
Total EU	17	16	4	8	2	47

Legend:

+	Measure existent	-	Measure non-existent
N/A	Countries that did not provide information/did not answer the question		Countries that did not reply to the survey

5.3. Measures related to the financial environment

This chapter presents the existent and ‘desired’ measures related to the financial environment that countries have already established or would like to have available, with the aim to support business transfers. The plans to introduce new measures in this area are also described here.

The table below shows the aggregated results on existing measures related to the financial environment:

How does the financial environment for business transfers look like in your country?	Number of answers	Ratio
There is a dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company	8	38,4%
There is a specialised financial institution to provide finance for acquiring a company	4	19,2%
General financial instruments for all businesses related purposes exist but there is no impediment to accessing finance also for acquiring a company	14	67,2%
Public guarantee scheme available for business transfers	6	28,8%
Incentives/dedicated financial products for specific groups (e.g. woman, young people) to acquire a company	5	24%
Other	4	19,2%
I don't know	1	4,8%

The analysis of the survey results shows the following trends:

- Over two-thirds of the countries (14 out of 21) reported only having a ‘general financial instrument for all business-related purposes, without any impediments to access finance for acquiring a company’’,
- Over one-third of the countries (8 out of 21) mentioned the existence of a ‘dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company’,
- Over one-quarter of the countries (6 out of 21) reported having a ‘public guarantee scheme available for business transfers’,
- About one-quarter (5 out of 21) mentioned the ‘incentives/dedicated financial products to help specific groups (e.g., woman, young people) to acquire a company’ while less than one-fifth of the countries (4 out of 21) reported the existence of a ‘specialised financial institution to provide finance for acquiring a company’.

It is worth mentioning that a ‘general financial instrument for all business-related purposes that makes funds available for acquiring a company’ can be very efficient as it allows for a dynamic use of available resources.

Two countries provided additional information related to this topic:

Country	Short description of measure
Austria	Reported to have a <i>takeover bonus</i> for craft businesses in the Tyrol region
Belgium	Informed that in the Walloon region there is a possibility to get a loan from individuals to finance an acquisition, which is then coupled with a tax deduction for the lender (in French: <i>Prêt Coup de Pouce</i>).
Slovenia	Reported to have <i>vouchers</i> related to business transfers for three types of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting owners to prepare the exit, • carrying out an administrative and registry-driven procedure related to business transfer • upskilling of successors. A voucher, each worth up to €3.000, was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (Cohesion Policy).

The table below shows the aggregated results concerning existing and ‘desired’ measures related to the financial environment:

In your opinion, how should the financial environment for business transfers look like in your country?	Existing measures			
	Number of answers	Ratio		
			Number of answers	Ratio
A dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company should be created.	4	19,2%	8	38,4%
A specialised financial institution to provide finance for acquiring a company should be established	3	14,4%	4	19,2%
Only general financial instruments for all businesses related purposes should exist but with no impediment to accessing finance also for acquiring a company.	4	19,2%	14	67,2%
Public guarantee scheme should be available for business transfers.	10	48%	6	28,8%
Incentives/dedicated financial products should be made available for specific groups (e.g. women, young people) to acquire a company.	7	33,6%	5	24%
Other	2	9,6%	4	19,2%
I don't know	4	19,2%	0	0%

The aggregated survey results show the following trends:

- Almost half of the countries (10 out of 21) expressed the opinion that a ‘public guarantee scheme should be available for business transfers’, whilst currently only 6 countries have reported having this measure in place,
- About one-fifth of the countries (4 out of 21) was of the opinion that ‘only general financial instruments for all business-related purposes should exist, with no impediment to accessing finance for acquiring a company’ versus two-thirds of the countries (14 out of 21) reporting having such general financial instrument in place,
- About one-fifth of the countries (4 out of 21) expressed the opinion that a ‘dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company’ should be in place, while over one-third of the countries (8 out of 21) have such a dedicated instrument in place.
- One-third of the countries (7 out of 21) mentioned that ‘incentives/dedicated financial products should be made available for specific groups (e.g., women, young people) to acquire a company’ whereas around one-quarter of the countries (5 out of 21) reported to have it in place.
- Three countries have expressed the opinion that a specialised financial institution should be available to provide finance for the acquisition of a business, whereas four countries indicated that such an institution existed in their country.

The table below shows the comparison between financial measures in place and those ‘desired’ for by the participating countries:

Financial measures existing and ‘desired’ - comparison table		
<i>Financial measures</i>	<i>Financial measures currently in place</i>	<i>Financial measures that should be available</i>
<i>Question asked</i>	<i>“How does the financial environment for business transfers look like in your country?”</i>	<i>“In your opinion, how should the financial environment for business transfers look like in your country?”</i>
	Marked in bold are countries that currently have the listed measure in place but would not consider it necessary/beneficial	(Marked in bold are countries that currently do not have the listed measure in place but would consider it necessary/beneficial
A dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company should be created	Belgium, Finland, France , Germany, Hungary, Italy , Portugal , Slovenia	Austria , Croatia , Germany, Hungary
A specialised financial institution to provide finance for acquiring a company	Belgium , France , Italy , Luxembourg	Greece , Portugal , Slovakia
General financial instruments for all businesses related purposes but with no impediment to accessing finance also for acquiring a company	Austria , Belgium, Croatia , Estonia , Greece , Finland , France , Italy , Lithuania , Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia , Spain	Belgium, Malta, Netherlands, Poland
Public guarantee scheme available for business transfers	Austria, Belgium , Finland , Germany, Portugal, Spain	Austria , Croatia , Estonia , Greece , Germany, Italy , Luxembourg , Poland, Portugal, Slovenia

Incentives/dedicated financial products for specific groups (e.g, woman, young people) to acquire a company	Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Slovenia	Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia
Other	Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Slovenia	Finland, Greece
I don't know	-	France, Ireland, Lithuania, Spain

At the aggregated level, the countries reported to have 37 measures related to financial environment in place. However, in the case of 24 measures the countries that already have them in place would not necessarily like to keep them while in the case of remaining 13 measures that are in place, they are also considered beneficial/ 'desired'.

At the same time, the countries indicated overall 28 measures that they would like to have available. Out of these 28 measures, 18 were not yet available while 10 of them were already in place.

Over one-third of the countries do not have plans to introduce new financial measures, while less than one-fifth of them intends to do so.

Do you plan any new measure(s) that would facilitate access to finance for acquiring a company in your country?	Number of answers	Ratio
Yes	4	19,2%
No	8	38,4%
I don't know	9	43,2%

The table below presents additional information about planned measures, as reported by the countries.

Country	Description of measure
Austria	Informed about the financial schemes for funding business transfers in rural areas, as part of the Austrian CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) Strategic Plan 2023-2027. It has to be noted that these schemes will not directly support the costs of acquisition of a company, but rather the investment costs arising in the course of a takeover.
Belgium (Walloon region)	Plans to search for additional funds lead by public financial institutions.
Hungary	Plans to establish a coordination mechanism for services supporting the transfer of business, including the financing schemes. Plans to have more dedicated financial instruments for the transfer of business.
Slovenia	The Export and Development Bank (SID Banka) is planning to introduce a quasi-equity product which will provide finance for the successor/buyer to acquire a part or the totality of an enterprise. Maximum €100.000 per transaction, co-financed by the European Investment Fund is foreseen under this scheme. The decision on the

	ratio between SID Banka and EIF (50:50, 40:60, 30:70) is still in negotiation.
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The results regarding financial measures available in the EU countries are illustrated in the summary table below (results per country):

Framework conditions for business transfers in the Member States – SME Envoys report						
Financial measures – Summary table						
Country	Dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company	Specilised financial instintution to provide finance for acquirers	General financial instruments /funds for all businesses	Public guarantee scheme available for business transfers	Incentives/dedicated financial products for specific groups	Total + (out of 5)
2024						
Austria	-	-	+	+	+	3
Belgium	+	+	+	+	+	5
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-	0
Czechia						
Denmark						
Germany	+	-	-	+	-	2
Estonia	-	-	+	-	-	1
Greece	-	-	+	-	-	1
Spain	-	-	+	+	-	2
France	+	+	+	-	+	4
Croatia	-	-	+	-	-	1
Ireland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Italy	+	+	+	-	+	4
Cyprus						
Latvia						
Lithuania	-	-	+	-	-	1
Luxembourg	-	+	-	-	-	1
Hungary	++	-	-	-	-	1
Malta	-	-	+	-	-	1
Netherlands	-	-	+	-	-	1
Poland	-	-	+	-	-	1
Portugal	+	-	-	+	-	2
Romania						
Slovenia	+	-	-	-	+	2
Slovakia	-	-	+	-	-	1
Finland	+	-	+	+	-	3
Sweden						
EU Total	8	4	14	6	5	37

Legend:

+	Measure existent	-	Measure non-existent
++	Countries that plan to introduce new measures		Countries that did not reply to the survey
N/A	Countries that did not provide information/did not answer the question		

5.4. Other support measures

Measures grouped under the term ‘other’ support measures are one of the key elements of the transfer of business ecosystems in terms of tools and services for entrepreneurs who are due to transfer the ownership of their companies. These measures are complementary to the fiscal, legal and administrative environment, and they are developed and delivered by different actors, both public and private. Among others, these measures also include the organisation of online platforms, valuation and negotiation services as well as an educational component such as trainings for buyers and sellers and/or advisory and mentoring services.

The focus of this section will primarily be to establish what ‘other’ support measures are currently in place in participating countries, and then to verify whether measures available are the same as those considered useful/beneficial, and if not, to detect the discrepancies. Furthermore, plans of introducing new measures in this area will be presented.

The table below illustrates the aggregated results regarding the existence of ‘other’ support measures in the participating countries.

What support measures/tools are available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?	Number of answers	Ratio
Easily available public information (online) on the steps to be taken by an entrepreneur who wants to transfer a business.	11	52,8%
Online diagnostic tools for entrepreneurs to help them understand the complexity of transfer process and assess their own level of preparation/readiness for a transfer.	8	38,4%
Awareness raising actions related to the need for early preparation of a transfer.	10	48%
Advisory/mentoring services, including psychological/emotional aspects, on how to prepare for a transfer of a company prior to the sale/succession.	12	57,6%
Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers, e.g. developed by different EU and national projects.	10	48%
National online platforms to advertise a business for sale.	7	33,6%
International/cross-border online platforms (hubs of national platforms) to advertise a business for sale.	2	9,6%
Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers related to the pricing of a company.	8	38,4%
Dedicated national body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers.	5	24%
Regional/national actions on business transfer.	8	38,4%
Peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views / information/ solutions on encountered problems before, during and in post/transfer phase, e.g periodic meetings with peers organised by local/ regional/national business organisations.	8	38,4%
I don't know	1	4,8%
Other	2	9,6%

Results of the survey show that more than half of the countries (12 or 11 out of 21) have the following support measures in place:

- Advisory/mentoring services, including psychological/emotional aspects, on how to prepare for a transfer of a company prior to the sale/succession,
- Easily available public information (online) on the steps to be taken by an entrepreneur who wants to transfer a business.

Almost half of the countries (10 out of 21) reported the existence of:

- Awareness raising actions related to the need for early preparation of a transfer,
- Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers, e.g., developed by different EU and national projects.

Over one-third of the countries (8 or 7 out of 21) mentioned having the following measures in place:

- Online diagnostic tools for entrepreneurs to help them understand the complexity of the transfer process and assess their own level of preparation/readiness for a transfer,
- Regional/national actions on business transfer,
- Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers related to the pricing of a company,
- Peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views / information/ solutions on encountered problems before, during and in post/transfer phase, e.g., periodic meetings with peers organised by local/regional/national business organisations,
- National online platforms to advertise a business for sale.

Over one-quarter of the countries (5 out of 21) have in place a ‘dedicated national body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers.

Only two countries (BE and SI) reported having ‘international/cross-border online platforms (hubs of national platforms) to advertise a business for sale’.

Additional information in relation to this topic were provided by the following countries:

Country	Short description of measure
Estonia	Informed that services to support business transfers are provided by the private sector (consultants) and so far, there is no public sector initiatives in this area.
Lithuania	Clarified that although they do not have any dedicated measures/tools to facilitate businesses transfers, they do offer general mentoring services, online diagnostic tools, etc. which can also be used for business transfers.
Belgium (Walloon region)	Informed about the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a mechanism for public intervention regarding costs of services by private experts in business transfers (in French: ‘<i>Cheques Entreprises</i>’), – certification of the quality and professionalism of private experts active in business transfers (by an Ethical Committee), – post-acquisition mentoring with experienced entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked about their opinions on the measures they would like to have available in their countries.

The aggregated results about ‘other’ support measures that participating countries would like to have available are presented in the table below (compared with the existing measures in place).

In your opinion, what support measures/tools should be available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?			Existing measures	
	Number of answers	Ratio	Number of answers	Ratio
Easily available public information (online) on the steps to be taken by an entrepreneur who wants to transfer a business.	13	62,4%	11	52,8%
Online diagnostic tools for entrepreneurs to help them understand the complexity of transfer process and assess their own level of preparation/readiness for a transfer.	11	52,8%	8	38,4%
Awareness raising actions related to the need for early preparation of a transfer.	9	43,2%	10	48%
Advisory/mentoring services, including psychological/emotional aspects, on how to prepare for a transfer of a company prior to the sale/succession.	10	48%	12	57,6%
Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers, e.g. developed by different EU and national projects.	7	33,6%	10	48%
National online platforms to advertise a business for sale.	10	48%	7	33,6%
International/cross-border online platforms (hubs of national platforms) to advertise a business for sale.	7	33,6%	2	9,6%
Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers related to the pricing of a company.	9	43,2%	8	38,4%
Dedicated national body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers.	11	52,8%	5	24%
Regional/national actions on business transfer.	9	43,2%	8	38,4%
Peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views/information/solutions on encountered problems before, during and in post/transfer phase, e.g. periodic meetings with peers organised by local/ regional/national business organisations.	10	48%	8	38,4%
Other ¹²	1	4,8%	4	19,2%
I don't know	3	14,4%	1	4,8%

Overall, the survey results indicate that the three measures listed below are the most desired:

- About two-thirds of the countries (13 out of 21) expressed the wish for ‘easily available public information (online) on the steps to be taken by an entrepreneur who wants to transfer a business’,

¹² Finland reported to have a well-functioning set of measures in place. In this report these measures were also counted in the measures they would like to have available (although they did not explicitly tick those boxes when replying to that question).

- Over half of the countries (11 out of 21) would like to have in place ‘online diagnostic tools for entrepreneurs to help them understand the complexity of the transfer process and assess their own level of preparation/readiness for a transfer’ and a ‘dedicated national body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers’,

Almost half of the countries (10 out of 21) would like to have in place ‘advisory/mentoring services, including psychological/emotional aspects, on how to prepare for a transfer’, ‘national online platforms to advertise a business for sale, as well as ‘peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views/information/solutions on encountered problems.

These are followed by measures that are ‘desired’ by less than half of the participating countries (9 out of 21), namely:

- Awareness raising actions related to the need for early preparation of a transfer,
- Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers related to the pricing of a company,
- Regional/national actions on business transfer.

One-third of the countries (7 out of 21) would like to have the following measures in place:

- Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers, e.g., developed by different EU and national projects,
- International/cross-border online platforms (hubs of national platforms) to advertise a business for sale.

The table below presents the results per country about ‘other support measures’ that participating countries would like to have, compared with existing measures.

‘Other’ support measures existing and ‘desired’ - comparison table		
<i>Support measures / tools</i>	<i>Support measures currently in place</i>	<i>Support measures that should be available</i>
<i>Question asked:</i>	<i>“What support measures/tools are available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?”</i>	<i>“In your opinion, what support measures/tools should be available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?”</i>
	(Marked in bold are countries that currently have the listed measure in place but would not consider it necessary/beneficial)	(Marked in bold are countries that currently do not have the listed measure in place but would consider it necessary/beneficial)
<i>Easily available public information (online) on the steps to be taken by an entrepreneur who wants to transfer a business</i>	Austria , Belgium, Finland, France , Germany, Italy , Luxembourg , Netherlands, Portugal , Slovenia , Spain	Belgium, Bulgaria , Croatia , Estonia , Finland, Germany, Greece , Hungary , Lithuania , Malta , Netherlands, Poland , Slovakia
<i>Online diagnostic tools for entrepreneurs to help them understand the complexity of transfer process and assess their own level of preparation/readiness for a transfer</i>	Belgium, Finland, France , Germany, Hungary, Italy , Slovenia , Spain	Belgium, Croatia , Estonia , Finland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania , Luxembourg , Poland , Portugal , Slovakia
<i>Awareness raising actions related to the need for early preparation of a transfer</i>	Austria , Belgium, Croatia , Finland, Germany, Italy , Luxembourg , Malta , Portugal , Slovenia	Belgium, Estonia , Finland, Germany, Greece , Hungary , Lithuania , Poland , Spain
<i>Advisory/mentoring services, including psychological/emotional aspects, on how to prepare for a transfer of a company prior to the sale/succession</i>	Austria , Belgium, Finland, France , Germany, Hungary, Italy , Luxembourg , Malta , Poland, Slovakia , Slovenia	Belgium, Estonia , Finland, Croatia , Germany, Hungary, Lithuania , Poland, Portugal , Spain
<i>Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers, e.g. developed by different EU and national projects</i>	Belgium , Bulgaria , Finland, France , Germany, Greece , Hungary, Malta , Slovakia , Slovenia	Estonia , Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy , Luxembourg , Poland
<i>National online platforms to advertise a business for sale</i>	Austria , Belgium, Finland, France , Germany, Luxembourg , Spain	Belgium, Bulgaria , Croatia , Estonia , Finland, Germany, Italy , Lithuania , Malta , Poland
<i>International/cross-border online platforms (hubs of national</i>	Belgium, Slovenia	Belgium, Estonia , Hungary, Italy , Lithuania , Malta , Poland

<i>platforms) to advertise a business for sale</i>		
<i>Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers related to the pricing of a company</i>	Austria, Belgium , Finland, France , Germany, Italy , Malta , Portugal	Austria, Estonia , Finland, Germany, Hungary , Luxembourg , Poland , Slovakia , Spain
<i>Dedicated national body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers</i>	Belgium, Finland, Germany, Malta, Slovenia	Belgium, Bulgaria , Estonia , Finland, France , Germany, Greece , Italy , Malta, Poland , Slovakia
<i>Regional/national actions on business transfer</i>	Belgium , Finland, France , Germany, Greece , Italy , Luxembourg , Slovenia	Bulgaria , Estonia , Finland, Germany, Hungary , Malta , Poland , Slovakia , Spain
<i>Peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views/information/solutions on encountered problems before, during and in post/transfer phase, e.g periodic meetings with peers organised by local/regional/national business organisations</i>	Belgium, Croatia , Finland, France , Germany, Italy , Malta , Slovenia	Austria , Belgium, Estonia , Finland, Germany, Hungary , Luxembourg , Poland , Spain , Portugal
<i>Other</i>	Estonia , Belgium	Finland
<i>I don't know</i>	Ireland	Ireland, Slovenia

At the aggregated level, the countries reported to have 89 'other' support measures in place. However, only in the case of 54 measures, the countries who had mentioned to have them in place would not want to keep them while the case of the remaining 35 measures existing are also considered beneficial/ are 'desired'.

On the other hand, when it comes to the 'other' support measures, the countries indicated 106 measures that they would like to have available. Out of these 106 measures, 71 were not yet available while 35 of them were already in place.

The table below illustrates the situation regarding plans to introduce new measures supporting business transfers:

Do you plan any new support measure(s) that would impact business transfers environment in your country?	Number of answers	Ratio
Yes	5	24%
No	8	38,4%
I don't know	8	38,4%

The replies to this question confirm that almost 40% of the participating countries (8 out of 21) do not plan new measures in the near future.

Only five countries (AT, EE, GR, HU, SI) have the intention to introduce new measures, while eight countries (BG, DE, ES, FI, HR, IR, LU, LT,) do not plan new measures at this point. Nine countries (BE, GR, FR, IT, NL, MT, PL, PT, SK) did not express their opinion.

The short descriptions of the planned measures are provided in the table below.

Country	Short description of measure
Estonia	Informed that the country is currently establishing the early warning tools that might have indirect positive impact on the business transfer environment.
Greece	Informed about the Center of Business Excellence for successions/transfers that will provide guidance to companies facing the ownership transfer, in particular on how to address issues associated with the change of management and leadership. The main task of the Center will be the preparation and the implementation of a comprehensive Action Plan to support successors and buyers (outside the family).
Hungary	Reported about its plans to establish an organisational structure that would help the transfer of company ownership and to design business services related to the generational change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for transferring a business – awareness raising actions. • Preparing relevant informational and training materials for transferors and successors • Providing expert support for determining company value and conducting company transfer processes.
Austria	Informed about carrying out a feasibility study to analyse the [possible] implementation of new measures related to business transfer (“Nachfolgestrategie”).
Slovenia	Reported about its plans to establish a National Business Transfer Task Force, consisting of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

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'Other' support measures – Summary table**

Country	Easily available public information (online) on how to transfer a business	Online diagnostic tools to assess the level of preparation/readiness	Awareness raising actions on the need for early preparation	Advisory/mentoring services related to business transfers	Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers	National online platforms to advertise a business for sale	International/cross-border online platforms	Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers	National body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers	Regional/national actions on business transfer	Peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views between those who transferred their business and	Total + (out of 11)
2024												
Austria	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	5
Belgium	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	11
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Czechia												
Denmark												
Germany	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	10
Estonia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Greece	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	2
Spain	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	3
France	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	8
Croatia	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	2
Ireland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Italy	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	7
Cyprus												
Latvia												
Lithuania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Luxembourg	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	5
Hungary		+		+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Malta	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	6
Netherlands	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Poland	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Portugal	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	3
Romania												
Slovenia	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	9
Slovakia	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Finland	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	10
Sweden												
Total EU	11	8	10	12	10	7	2	8	5	8	8	89

Legend:

+	Measure existent	-	Measure non-existent
N/A	Countries that did not provide information		Countries that did not reply to the survey

5.5. Evidence base - data collection

This chapter deals with the topics of business transfer data availability and of data collection methods. Respondents have also been asked to express their opinion on the importance of collecting data on business transfer in their country.

The table below presents the aggregated results regarding the collection of data/statistics on business transfer in the participating countries:

Are data/statistics on business transfers collected in your country?	Number of answers	Ratio
Statistical data on realised business transfers are collected on an annual basis.	4	19,2%
Statistical data on realised business transfers are collected only periodically (e.g. every 2-3 years).	1	4,8%
No statistical data on realised business transfers are collected.	7	33,6%
Surveys on planned transfers are conducted among business owners annually.	2	9,6%
Surveys on planned transfers are conducted among business owners periodically (e.g., every 2-3 years).	2	9,6%
No surveys on planned business transfers are conducted among business owners.	6	28,8%
We already have digital business registers/are in the process of the digitization of business registers that will facilitate access to data on realised transfers in near future.	5	24%
We did not yet start the digitization of business registers.	3	14,4%
Other	6	28,8%
I don't know	3	14,4%

Regarding the collection of statistical data on realised business transfers, the survey results show that one-third of the countries (7 out of 21) stated that no statistical data on realised business transfers are collected in their countries. Only about one-fifth of the participating countries (4 out of 21) collect such data on an annual basis while one country reported the collection of such data on a different interval (e.g., every 2-3 years).

Six countries listed below mentioned the use of other methods to gather such statistics:

Country	Short description of measure/additional information
Belgium	Although generally no statistics on business transfer are produced in the country, in the Walloon region some statistical data are collected by private experts in business transfer on an annual basis. This is done on a voluntary basis.
Estonia	The digital business register exists in the country, and it allows to make queries on ownership changes.
Italy	The digital business register contains data relevant to business transfers, but it has currently no institutional function to extract and analyse data on realised business transfers.
Finland	Currently, experimental statistics on business transfers and statistical data are generated by the Finland-based Business Forum. The continuity of this action depends on the continuation of the funding for this project.
Malta	The Malta Business Registry may generate instantly statistical data on business transfer through the register's records ¹³ .
Spain	The information about the number of offers to sell companies and the number of offers to buy companies are collected annually by a digital platform, but there are no data available on the number of transactions (actually realised transfers).

Regarding surveys on planned business transfers, the results show that only two countries (DE, NL) are conducting such surveys on an annual basis, and two other countries (BE, FR) are doing it in other intervals (e.g., every 2-3 years). Almost one-third of the countries (6 out of 21) reported that surveys on planned transfers are currently not conducted.

It is expected that the digitalisation of business registers will facilitate access to information on realised transfers, therefore countries have been asked to provide information about the advancement of this process. Only four out of 21 countries (EE, IT, MT, NL) confirmed that digital business registers are in place in their countries, while one country (DE) mentioned that it was in the process of digitalising its business register. Three countries (BE, BG, HR) mentioned that the process of digitisation of business registers has not yet started.

In addition to the information about currently collected data on realised and planned transfers, countries were also asked about their opinion on the kind of data on business transfers that should be collected and how such collection of data should be organised.

In your opinion, which data/statistics on business transfers should be collected in your country?	Data/statistics that should be collected		Data/statistics currently collected	
	Number of answers	Ratio	Number of answers	Ratio
Statistical data on realised transfers business collected on an annual basis.	11	52,8%	4	19,2%

¹³ This solution was not counted in the number of replies referring to the data collection on an annual basis or other periodical data collection.

Statistical data on realised business transfers collected only periodically (e.g., every 2-3 years).	3	14,4%	1	4,8%
No statistical data on realised business transfers should be collected.	0	0%	7	33,6%
Surveys on planned transfers should be conducted among business owners annually.	6	28,8%	2	9,6%
Surveys on planned transfers should be conducted among business owners periodically (e.g. every 2-3 years).	3	14,4%	2	9,6%
No surveys on planned business transfers should be conducted among business owners.	2	9,6%	6	28,8%
We already have digital business registers/are in the process of the digitization of business registers that will facilitate access to data on realised transfers in near future.	4	19,2%	4	19,2%
We did not yet start the digitization of business registers.	-	-	3	14,4%
Other	-	-	6	28,8%
I don't know	2	9,6%	3	14,4%

Regarding the statistical data on realised transfers and collection methods that should be put in place, more than half of the countries (11 out of 21) highlighted that data should preferably be collected annually, while only three countries out of 21 (HR, IT, LU) mentioned they would prefer to collect them less often (e.g., every 2-3 years).

No country indicated that they would prefer not to collect any statistical data on realised business transfers. Seven countries which currently do not collect such data (BE, BG, HR, HU, IT, LU, SI) would prefer to collect them either annually or in other intervals, e.g., every 2-3 years.

When it comes to the surveys of business owners on planned transfers, almost one-third of the countries (6 out of 21) would like to have such data generated on an annual basis (BE, DE, ES, HU, NL, PT). Only three countries out of 21 (HR, FI, PL) would prefer to collect such data less frequently (e.g., every 2-3 years), while other two countries (AT, EE) were of the opinion that there is no need to collect predictive data on business transfers.

In general, it has to be noted that most of the countries which currently do not conduct surveys on planned transfers would like to do so in the future (annually or in less frequent intervals).

At the same time, countries which are already conducting such surveys would like to continue doing so. Two countries out of 21 (IR, LT) did not answer this question.

When reporting about the digitalisation of business registers, four countries stated that they would like to proceed with the digitisation (BE, DE, FR, PT).

The table below shows the comparison between existent and 'desired' measures regarding collection of data/ statistics' on business transfers, as reported by the participating countries:

'Collection of data / statistics' existing and desired - comparison table		
Support measures / tools	Support measures currently in place	Support measures that should be available
<i>Question asked:</i>	<i>"Are data/statistics on business transfers collected in your country?"</i>	<i>"In your opinion, which data/statistics on business transfers should be collected in your country?"</i>
	Marked in bold are countries that currently have the listed measure in place but would not consider it necessary/beneficial	Marked in bold are countries that currently do not have the listed measure in place but would consider it necessary/beneficial
Statistical data on realised business transfers are collected on an annual basis	Austria , Germany, Netherlands, Portugal	Belgium, Bulgaria, France , Germany, Greece, Hungary, Malta , Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia
Statistical data on realised business transfers collected only periodically (e.g., every 2-3 years)	France	Croatia, Italy, Luxembourg
No statistical data on realised business transfers are collected	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia	-
Surveys on planned transfers are / should be conducted among business owners annually	Germany, Netherlands	Belgium , Germany, Hungary , Netherlands, Portugal, Spain
Surveys on planned transfers are / should be conducted among business owners periodically (e.g., every 2-3 years)	Belgium, France	Croatia, Finland, Poland
No surveys on planned business transfers are / should be conducted among business owners	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg	Austria, Estonia
We have digital business registers/ or are in the process of the digitization of business registers that will facilitate access to data on realised transfers in near future	Estonia, Germany, Italy, Malta, Netherlands	Germany, Belgium, France, Portugal
We did not yet start the digitization of business registers	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia	-
Other	Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Malta, Netherlands, Spain	-
I don't know	Greece, Ireland, Poland	Ireland, Lithuania

Altogether, the countries indicated to have 14 measures related to data collection in place. In the case of 5 measures the countries that already have them in place would not necessarily like to keep them while in the case of remaining 9 measures that are in place, they are also considered beneficial/ 'desired'.

At the same time, the countries indicated overall 27 measures that they would like to have available. Out of these 27 measures, 22 were not yet available while 5 of them were already in place.

In general, results of the survey show a significant discrepancy between the existing and 'desired' measures' to facilitate business transfers in almost all countries and across all sets of measures that were analysed in the report. At this point, there is no certainty as to the reasons for such inconsistencies, therefore any interpretation of the results must be made with a significant degree of caution.

New measures to improve data collection were reported by one country only (SI). The country has introduced via a new *Act on the Register of Companies* a possibility to include in the business register the year of birth of current business owners. By filtering out the register entries by age of owners, a list of companies whose owners would be retiring soon can be generated. This list can also be used as a baseline for further data collection on realised business transfers.

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Data collection – Summary table

Country	Statistical data on realised business transfers are collected on an annual	Statistical data on realised transfers are collected periodically (e.g., every 2-3 years)	No statistical data on realised business transfers are collected	Surveys on planned transfers are conducted annually	Surveys on planned transfers are conducted periodically (e.g., every 2-3 years)	No surveys on planned transfers are conducted	Digitization of business registers is /is being implemented	Digitization of business registers has not yet started	Total + (out of 8)
2024									
Austria	+	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	1
Belgium	-	-	~	-	+	~	-	~	1
Bulgaria	-	-	~	-	-	~	-	~	0
Czechia									
Denmark									
Germany	+	^	-	+	^	-	+	-	3 (2^)
Estonia	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	^	1 (1^)*
Greece	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Spain	-	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	*
France	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	2
Croatia	-	-	~	-	-	~	-	~	0
Ireland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Italy	-	-	~	-	-	+	+	^	1 (1^)*
Cyprus									
Latvia									
Lithuania	-	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	0
Luxembourg	-	-	~	-	-	~	N/A	N/A	0
Hungary	-	-	~	-	-	~	N/A	N/A	0
Malta	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	+	^	1 (1^)*
Netherlands	+	^	-	+	^	-	+	^	3 (3^)
Poland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Portugal	+	^	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (1^)
Romania									
Slovenia	-	-	~	-	-	~	N/A	N/A	0
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	0
Finland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*
Sweden									
Total EU	4	1 (3^)	0 (7~)	2	2 (2^)	0 (6~)	5	0 (4^) (3~)	14 (9^)

Legend:

+	Measure existent	-	Measure non-existent
N/A	Countries that did not provide information/did not answer the question	~	Countries that did not reply to the survey
~	No data on business transfers are collected (neither on realised nor on planned transfers), no digital registers available. These are not counted as an implemented measures in the table.	^	More advanced measures are already in place (annual data collection instead of periodical (e.g., every 2-3 years). They are not counted as implemented measures in the table.
*	<p>Other measures</p> <p>Estonia – the digital business register exists, and it allows for making queries about the ownership changes.</p> <p>Italy – the digital business register contains data on business transfers, but it has currently no institutional function to extract and analyse data on business transfers.</p> <p>Malta – the business register generates statistics (no information about planned transfers).</p> <p>Finland – implements experimental statistics project in place (no info on type of data collected).</p> <p>Spain – developed online platform where offers of buyers and sellers are available, but no information on the number of finalised transfers.</p>		

6. Revoked measures

In order to determine whether any changes to the business transfer environment have been made, the respondents were asked to indicate any type of measures facilitating business transfer that have been revoked within the last 5 years.

The survey results shows that no country has reported revoking previously existing measures aiming at facilitating business transfers.

7. Importance of business transfers

One of the objectives of the survey was to explore the perception of the importance of business transfer in the participating countries.

This information is crucial as it can help to determine the level of maturity when it comes to the expected volume of business transfers in different countries.

When policy makers are recognising the importance of business transfer and their role in improving the framework conditions to make it more successful, it may result in initiating actions that may positively impact the business transfer environment.

The table below illustrates the aggregated results of respondents' perceptions regarding the importance of business transfers.

What is your perception of the importance of business transfers in your country?	Number of answers	Ratio
It is important as significant number of companies will need to be transferred to the next generation in near future.	17	81,6%
It is important, and a government should improve the conditions for business transfer to make it more successful.	14	67,2%
It is important but the main responsibility for a successful transfer of a company is in the hands of the owner.	5	24%
It is not very important; we do not expect that a significant number of companies will have to be transferred to the next generation in near future.	0	0%
It is not very important; we do not expect that a significant number of companies will have problems with transferring their company to the next generation.	1	4,8%
Other	0	0%
I don't know	2	9,6%

The large majority of the countries (17 out of 21) considered business transfer important, recognising that many companies will have to change the owners in the near future while two-thirds of the countries (14 out of 21) were of the opinion that government should improve the conditions for business transfer to make it more successful.

Five countries out of 21 countries (BE, EE, ES, NL, PT) have also emphasized that the main responsibility to ensure a successful transfer of their companies is in the hands of the owner.

No country has stated that business transfers are not important because of no significant number of business transfers being expected in the near future.

Only one country (MT) did not consider business transfers very important at this point but only because they do not expect a significant number of companies to have problems with changing ownership.

Overall, the large number of upcoming transfers in almost all EU member states suggests that additional actions by governments would be required to create more favorable framework conditions, especially in countries that do not report having relevant measures in place. In the case of countries indicating the existence of relevant measures, the assumption could be that they consider existing measures sufficient to address the challenge of upcoming transfers.

The table below presents the results per country:

Framworks conditions for busienss tranfers in the Member States – SME Envoys Report						
Importance of busienss transfers – Summary table						
Country	It is important as significant number of companies will need to be transferred to the next generation in near future.	It is important, and a government should improve the conditions for business transfer to make it more successful.	It is important but the main responsibility for a successful transfer of a company is in the hands of the owner.	It is not very important; we do not expect that a significant number of companies will have to be transferred to the next generation in near future.	It is not very important; we do not expect that a significant number of companies will have problems with transferring their company to the next generation.	Total + (out of 5)
2024						
Austria	+	-	-	-	-	1
Belgium	+	+	+	-	-	3
Bulgaria	+	+	-	-	-	2
Czechia						
Denmark						
Germany	+	+	-	-	-	2
Estonia	-	+	+	-	-	2
Greece	-	+	-	-	-	1
Spain	+	+	+	-	-	3
France	+	+	-	-	-	2
Croatia	+	+	-	-	-	2
Ireland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Italy	+	+	-	-	-	2
Cyprus						
Latvia						
Lithuania	+	+	-	-	-	2
Luxembourg	+	+	-	-	-	2
Hungary	+	+	-	-	-	2
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	0
Netherlands	+	+	+	-	-	3
Poland	+	-	-	-	-	1
Portugal	+	-	+	-	-	2
Romania						
Slovenia	+	-	-	-	-	1
Slovakia	+	+	-	-	-	2
Finland	+	-	-	-	-	1
Sweden						
EU Total	17	14	5	0	0	36

8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1. Conclusions – summary of findings

Before drawing any conclusions, it must be underlined once more that due to a fragmented data input (21 out of 27 of EU member states participated in the survey), the legitimacy of findings and related analysis are limited.

One of the main findings of this assessment is that a large majority of the participating countries (over 80%) recognised that facilitating business transfer is important as a growing number of companies will have to change owners in the near future. This is mostly due to the aging of current business owners who belong to the ‘baby boomers’ generation but also to other reasons, e.g., career change.

The review of EU policy milestones, solutions and tools developed to support the implementation of the business transfer policy in member states shows that many good practices and examples of how they can be used to improve their business transfer ecosystems exist and are available for further application by other EU countries and regions.

Findings on the level of implementation of different sets of measures analysed in this report show that the business transfer ecosystems of the countries participating in the assessment demonstrate different stages of maturity and readiness to support business owners who need to transfer their company in whatever form (e.g., intra-family succession, selling to a third party or transferring to the employees).

Based exclusively on the number of implemented measures reviewed for the purpose of this report, countries have been grouped in the following clusters:

- high scoring countries,
- average scoring countries,
- low scoring countries.

Type of measures	High scoring countries	Average scoring countries	Low scoring countries	Total No of measures per type	Total No of measures implemented across the EU
Fiscal measures	BE, ES, FR (6) AT, NL (4)	DE, IR, PT (3) FI, HU, PL, (2)	GR, IT, LT, LU, MT, SI (1) BG, EE, HR, SK (0)	8	47
<i>No of measures</i>	26	15	6		
Legal/administrative measures	IT, HU, PL (4) EE, FI, FR, ES, SK (3)	AT, BE, DE, LU, MT, NL, PT, SI (2)	GR, HR, IR, LT (1) BG (0)	5	47
<i>No of measures</i>	27	16	4		
Financial measures	BE (5) FR, IT (4)	AT, FI (3) DE, ES, PT, SI (2)	EE, GR, HR, HU, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, SK (1) BG, IR (0)	5	37
<i>No of measures</i>	13	14	10		

Other support measures	BE (11) DE, FI (10) SI (9)	FR (8) IT (7) MT (6) AT, LU (5)	ES, HU, PT (3) GR, HR, SK (2) BG, NL, PL (1) EE, LT (0)	11	89
<i>No of measures</i>	40	31	18		
Data collection measures	NL [3 +(3 [^])] DE [(3 +(2 [^])] FR (2)	EE, IT, MT, PT (1 +(1 [^]) AT, BE (1)	BG, HR, HU, IR, LT, GR, IR, LU, PL, SI (0)	8	14 +(9 [^])
<i>No of measures</i>	8 (5 [^])	6 (4 [^])	0		
Grand Total	114	82	38	37	234 (9 [^])

Legend

^	More advanced measures are already in place (annual data collection instead of periodical (e.g., every 2-3 years))
	Maximum number of measures per set of measures that could be implemented (they are not part of any calculation)
Countries that have provided answers 'other' or 'I don't know' are not listed in this table.	

As reported by participating countries, the total number of implemented measures across the EU is 234. The evidence shows differences between countries when it comes to the level of advancement in the implementation of various types of measures. The relatively low level of implementation can be observed in the area of data collection, followed by financial measures. The average level of implementation can be observed in the area of legal/administrative measures and fiscal measures, while the highest level of implementation appears to be in the area of 'other' support measures that covers different types of advisory/mentoring services, trainings, online matching platforms, availability of information/awareness raising tools, etc.

The data in the table above show that the cluster of best performing countries is responsible on average for the implementation of almost 50% of all measures that were implemented across the EU while the cluster of least performing countries managed to reach around 16%.

It has to be underlined that the report focused on a quantitative assessment, pointing out only the number of existing measures without entering into the qualitative analysis of their effectiveness or efficiency. The same measures can have a slightly different effect in a different country as their real impact will depend on the overall regulatory, institutional, administrative environment and the business culture.

For instance, when it comes to fiscal measures, five countries (AT, BE, FR, ES and NL) are responsible for the implementation of over 55% of all fiscal measures applied by participating countries. This does not automatically mean however that in these countries the fiscal environment for business transfer is the most transfer conducive. Based on the example of tax measures, this is relatively easy to explain: a high number of implemented tax related measures/exemptions may simply be the way for governments to mitigate relatively severe tax system, while in other situations, a relatively low number of fiscal measures may mean a complete exemption for small companies from paying taxes (or certain type of taxes) when transferring a business.

Significant discrepancies between existing and desired measures to facilitate business transfer were observed in each country.

The reasons for these discrepancies cannot be plainly explained as identifying the rationale behind the choices made by respondents when replying to these questions was not part of the survey. Some of these differences might be explained by different policy contexts and/or policy preferences in given countries, but these are only assumptions.

Finding out the reasons for such discrepancies could become a topic for internal discussions regarding the current state of business transfer environment in each country. These could result in a decision by national governments to carry out a review of existing measures, as a follow-up to this report. Learning from other countries could also be useful in that respect.

Furthermore, one of the aims of the survey was also to find out whether countries are planning to introduce new measures to support business transfers.

The table below presents findings regarding new measures planned.

Country	Type of measure
Austria, Greece, Slovenia	Fiscal measures
Austria, Slovenia	Legal and administrative measures
Austria, Belgium (Walloon region), Hungary, Slovenia	Financial measures
Austria, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia	'Other' support measures
Slovenia, Slovakia	Data collection

These results show that seven countries (AT, BE, GR, EE, HU, SI, SK) are currently in the process of improving their business transfer ecosystems by introducing new measures.

No country has reported the revoking of any previously existing measures aimed at facilitating business transfers.

The contributions from business organisations, that are observers to the Network of SME Envoys, and from Transeo contain useful information and observations related to the different elements of the business transfer process. They are attached to the report in *Annex C*. However, as they were mostly of a general character and not country specific, they were not included in the analysis and reporting of the results.

The table below presents the summary of results per country and per set of measures:

Framework conditions for business transfers in the Member States – SME Envoys report						
Results per country and per set of measures – Summary table						
Country	Fiscal measures Total (out of 8)	Legal and administrative measures Total (out of 5)	Financial measures Total (out of 5)	Other support measures Total (out of 11)	Data collection Total (out of 8)	Grand Total per country
2024						
Austria	4	2	3	5	1	15
Belgium	6	2	5	11	1	25
Bulgaria	0	0	0	1	0	1
Czechia						
Denmark						
Germany	3	2	2	10	3 (2 [^])	20 (2 [^])
Estonia	0	3	1	0	1 (1 [^])*	5 (1 [^])
Greece	1	1	1	2	N/A	5
Spain	6	3	2	3	*	14
France	6	3	4	8	2	23
Croatia	N/A	1	1	2	0	4
Ireland	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	4
Italy	1	4	4	7	1 (1 [^])*	17 (1 [^])
Cyprus						
Latvia						
Lithuania	1	1	1	0	0	3
Luxembourg	1	2	1	5	0	9
Hungary	2	4	1	3	0	10
Malta	1	2	1	6	1 (1 [^])*	11 (1 [^])
Netherlands	4	2	1	1	3+ (3 [^])	11 (3 [^])
Poland	2	4	1	1	N/A	8
Portugal	3	2	2	3	1 (1 [^])	11 (1 [^])
Romania						
Slovenia	1	2	2	9	0	14
Slovakia	0	3	1	2	0	6
Finland	2	3	3	10	*	18
Sweden						
EU Total	47	47	37	89	14 (9[^])	234 (9[^])

Legend:

^	More advanced measures are already in place (annual data collection instead of periodical (e.g., every 2-3 years). They are not counted as implemented measures.	*	Other measures exist	<p>Estonia – the digital business register allows for making queries about the ownership changes.</p> <p>Italy – the digital business register contains data on business transfers, but it has currently no function to extract and analyse data on business transfers.</p> <p>Malta – the business register generates statistics (no information about planned transfers).</p> <p>Finland – experimental statistics project in place (no information on the type of data collected).</p> <p>Spain – developed online platform where offers of buyers and sellers are available, but no information about the number of finalised transactions.</p>
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8.2. Recommendations

Based on the results of this assessment, the following recommendations are proposed for the member states to consider:

1. Establishing a national focal point/forum on business transfer to ensure the proper identification of potential issues and coordination of activities focused on improving a national business transfer ecosystem that could result in developing national action plans on business transfer.
2. Reviewing the current fiscal, legal and administrative environment in a country with a view to make sure that it is fit for purpose or redesign it, if needed.
3. Identifying the sources of finance available for businesses and making sure that the existing financial instruments/products do not impede in any way on access to finance for business takeovers. The need for new solutions to facilitate access to finance could also be explored.
4. Building up the broad partnerships between national/regional administrations and business support organisations as well as educational institutions to design and implement 'soft' measures to facilitate business transfers such as e.g., advisory/mentoring services, trainings, online matching platforms, availability of information/awareness raising tools, while also benefiting from the existing solutions and good practices developed by different EU funded projects.
5. Progressing in the digitalisation of business registers as they can help generate data on realised business transfers, thus contributing to evidence-based policy making.
6. Establishing a partnership with business associations and/or academia to coordinate collections of data on upcoming transfers that is usually done via surveys among business owners.
7. Benefiting from the existing solutions and good practices presented in this report to design/improve the environment for business transfers that are readily available and tested in other EU countries and regions. The assistance of the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI), providing tailor-made technical expertise to EU member states, could be used to design and implement the necessary reforms/support systems.

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Annex B. Questionnaire – assessment of framework conditions for business transfer

Questionnaire used by the SME Envoy reporting team to collect information about the different measures (currently available and desired) in the member states

Framework conditions for business transfers in the Member States – SME Envoy report

Disclaimer

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Introduction

As announced in the SME Relief Package adopted on 12 September 2023, an assessment of framework conditions for business transfers in Member States will be performed together with the network of SME Envoys. This issue was presented and discussed with the SME Envoys during the meeting held on 29 of September 2023.

The purpose of this exercise is to assess the development/progress in implementing measures facilitating business transfer in the Member States, as provided for in the Commission's [Recommendation on the transfer of small and medium-sized enterprises](#) and followed up in the [Communication on Transfer of Businesses - Continuity through a new beginning](#). The aim is also to establish whether any new measures were introduced by the Member States or are planned in near future, and whether any measures, that were previously in place, were revoked.

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introductory questions/Information about the respondent

1. * Which EU member state do you represent?

AT - Austria	HR - Croatia	DK - Denmark	FR - France	HU - Hungary	LV - Latvia	MT - Malta	PT - Portugal	SI - Slovenia
BE - Belgium	CY - Cyprus	EE - Estonia	DE - Germany	IE - Ireland	LT - Lithuania	NL - Netherlands	RO - Romania	ES - Spain
BG - Bulgaria	CZ - Czechia	FI - Finland	EL - Greece	IT - Italy	LU - Luxembourg	PL - Poland	SK - Slovak Republic	SE - Sweden

2. * What type of governmental institution/administration/agency do you represent?

Ministry of Economy/Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of Justice

Business Agency/organisation with a public function

Other

3. If Other, please specify : ...

4. * What is your position in the governmental institution/administration/agency?

5. * Do you answer this survey in your own capacity or on another person's behalf?

In my own capacity

On behalf of my in-line manager/hierarchical supervisor

On behalf of my ministry/institution

Other

6. If Other, please specify : ...

Fiscal / legal / administrative measures

7. * What fiscal measures are available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?

Waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business.	Re-investment tax relief on the profits made on the sale of a business	I don't know
Inheritance/gift tax do not apply to SME successions.	Retirement tax relief from added value or capital gains on the assets of a business in the event of sale	Other
Exemptions on inheritance/gift tax exist for SME successions.	Sale to employees tax relief on the capital gain from transfer of shares to employees.	
Deferring inheritance tax if a company is kept as a going concern.	Principle of tax neutrality for all operations regarding the preparation of a transfer (e.g. transfer of assets, mergers, divisions, exchange/transfer of shares).	

8. If Other, please specify : ...

9. * In your opinion, what fiscal measures should be available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?

Waiving tax on the revenue from value or capital gains in the event of sale of a business.	Re-investment tax relief on the profits made on the sale of a business	I don't know
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Inheritance/gift tax do not apply to SME successions.	Retirement tax relief from added value or capital gains on the assets of a business in the event of sale	Other
Exemptions on inheritance/gift tax exist for SME successions.	Sale to employees tax relief on the capital gain from transfer of shares to employees.	
Deferring inheritance tax if a company is kept as a going concern.	Principle of tax neutrality for all operations regarding the preparation of a transfer (e.g. transfer of assets, mergers, divisions, exchange/transfer of shares).	

10. If Other, please specify : ...

11. * Do you plan any new fiscal measure(s) that would impact business transfers environment in your country?

Yes

No

I don't know

12. Please provide the short description of the planned measure : ...

13. *What legal/administrative measures are available in your country to facilitate business transfer, including intra-family successions?

Possibility to change from one legal form to another legal entity without the need to wind up a company.	Principle that the partnership agreement shall take precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners.
Legal principle of continuity of partnerships and sole proprietorships in the case of death of the partner or business owner.	Principle of neutrality for other transfer related fees (e.g. stamp duties, documents and registration fees and other similar duties).
Principle that unanimity rule for decisions within the joint ownership do not prevent a company from being kept as a going concern	Other

14. If Other, please specify : ...

15. *In your opinion, what legal/administrative measures should be available in your country to facilitate business transfer, including intra-family successions?

Possibility to change from one legal form to another legal entity without the need to wind up a company.	Principle that the partnership agreement shall take precedence over the unilateral actions of one of the partners.
Legal principle of continuity of partnerships and sole proprietorships in the case of death of the partner or business owner.	Principle of neutrality for other transfer related fees (e.g. stamp duties, documents and registration fees and other similar duties).
Principle that unanimity rule for decisions within the joint ownership do not prevent a company	Other

from being kept as a going concern	
------------------------------------	--

16. If Other, please specify : ...

17. * Do you plan any new legal/administrative measure(s) that would impact business transfers environment in your country?

Yes

No

I don't know

18. Please provide the short description of the planned measure : ...

Financial environment

19. *How does the financial environment for business transfers look like in your country?

There is a dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company.	Public guarantee scheme available for business transfers.
There is a specialised financial institution to provide finance for acquiring a company.	Incentives/dedicated financial products for specific groups (e.g, woman, young people) to acquire a company.
Only general financial instruments for all businesses related purposes exist but there is no impediment to accessing finance also for acquiring a company	Other

20. If Other, please specify : ...

21. * In your opinion, how should the financial environment for business transfers look like in your country?

A dedicated financial instrument for acquiring a company should be created.	Incentives/dedicated financial products should be made available for specific groups (e.g, woman, young people) to acquire a company.
A specialised financial institution to provide finance for acquiring a company should be established	I do not know
Only general financial instruments for all businesses related purposes should exist but with no impediment to accessing finance also for acquiring a company.	Other
Public guarantee scheme should be available for business transfers.	

22. If Other, please specify : ...

23. * Do you plan any new measure(s) that would facilitate access to finance for acquiring a company in your country?

Yes

No

I don't
know

24. Please provide the short description of the planned measure : ...

Other support measures

25. *What support measures/tools are available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?

Easily available public information (online) on the steps to be taken by an entrepreneur who wants to transfer a business.	Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers, e.g. developed by different EU and national projects.	Dedicated national body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers.
Online diagnostic tools for entrepreneurs to help them understand the complexity of transfer process and assess their own level of preparation/readiness for a transfer.	National online platforms to advertise a business for sale	Regional/national actions on business transfer.
Awareness raising actions related to the need for early preparation of a transfer.	International/cross-border online platforms (hubs of national platforms) to advertise a business for sale.	Peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views / information/ solutions on encountered problems before, during and in post/transfer phase, e.g periodic meetings with peers organised by local/ regional/national business organisations.
Advisory/mentoring services, including psychological/emotional aspects, on how to prepare for a transfer of a company prior to the sale/succession.	Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers related to the pricing of a company.	I don't know
Other		

26. If Other, please specify : ...

27. * In your opinion, what support measures/tools should be available in your country to facilitate transfer of business, including intra-family successions?

Easily available public information (online) on the steps to be taken by an entrepreneur who wants to transfer a business.	Trainings/educational tools for buyers and sellers, e.g. developed by different EU and national projects.	Dedicated national body/forum to coordinate actions on business transfers.
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Online diagnostic tools for entrepreneurs to help them understand the complexity of transfer process and assess their own level of preparation/readiness for a transfer.	National online platforms to advertise a business for sale	Regional/national actions on business transfer.
Awareness raising actions related to the need for early preparation of a transfer.	International/cross-border online platforms (hubs of national platforms) to advertise a business for sale.	Peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of views / information/ solutions on encountered problems before, during and in post/transfer phase, e.g periodic meetings with peers organised by local/ regional/national business organisations.
Advisory/mentoring services, including psychological/emotional aspects, on how to prepare for a transfer of a company prior to the sale/succession.	Valuation and mediation services for buyers and sellers related to the pricing of a company.	I don't know
Other		

28. If Other, please specify : ...

29. *Do you plan any new support measure(s) that would impact business transfers environment in your country?

Yes

No

I don't know

30. Please provide the short description of the planned measure : ...

Data on business transfers

31. *Are data/statistics on business transfers collected in your country?

Statistical data on realised business transfers are collected on an annual basis.	No surveys on planned business transfers are conducted among business owners.
Statistical data on realised business transfers are collected only periodically (e.g. every 2-3 years).	We are in the process of the digitization of business registers that will facilitate access to data on realised transfers in near future.
No statistical data on realised business transfers are collected.	We did not yet start the digitization of business registers.
Surveys on planned transfers are conducted among business owners annually.	Other

Surveys on planned transfers are conducted among business owners periodically (e.g. every 2-3 years).	I don't know
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32. If Other, please specify : ...

33. *In your opinion, which data/statistics on business transfers should be collected in your country?

Statistical data on realised transfers business collected on an annual basis.	Surveys on planned transfers should be conducted among business owners periodically (e.g. every 2-3 years).
Statistical data on realised business transfers collected only periodically (e.g. every 2-3 years).	No surveys on planned business transfers should be conducted among business owners.
No statistical data on realised business transfers should be collected.	We are in the process of the digitization of business registers and this will facilitate access to data on realised transfers in near future.
Surveys on planned transfers should be conducted among business owners annually.	I don't know

34. *Do you plan new measure(s) that would improve collection of data on business transfers in your country?

Yes

No

I don't know

35. Please provide the short description of the planned measure : ...

36. *Are you aware of the situation where previously existing measure(s) facilitating business transfer were revoked in your country within the last 5 years?

Yes

No

I don't know

37. Please provide the short description of the revoked measure : ...

38. *What is your perception as regards the importance of business transfers in your country?

It is important as significant number of companies will need to be transferred to the next generation in near future.	It is not very important; we do not expect that a significant number of companies will have to be transferred to the next generation in near future.
It is important, and a government should improve the conditions for business transfer to make it more successful.	It is not very important; we do not expect that a significant number of companies will have problems with transferring their company to the next generation.

It is important but the main responsibility for a successful transfer of a company is in hands of the owner.	I do not know
Other	

39. If Other, please specify : ...

Annex C. Written contributions/related documents from Stakeholders

Contribution from observers to the Network of SME Envoys

1. The European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives (CECOP) - *Report from CECOP's conference, Workers Buyouts, 29/11/2023- what is the cooperative key to success?*
https://www.cecop.coop/uploads/file/CECOP_WBO_report.pdf
2. The European Family Businesses

Notice from the editors: page references in this statement have shifted due to the formatting of the final report.



European Family Businesses comments and feedback for the report on *Framework Conditions for Business Transfers in the EU Member States, Overview of Measures to Facilitate Transfer of Business*.

Below you will find the comments from European Family Businesses (EFB) on the report on *Framework conditions for business transfers in the EU member states, Overview of measures to facilitate transfer of business* that the SME Envoys of Belgium and Luxembourg are working on.

EFB would like to thank the SME Envoy Network for looking at the issue of business transfers. We agree that EU countries are at different levels of maturity regarding this issue, and that best practises and learning are still ongoing. We are pleased that a large majority of the countries that replied to the survey identified business transfers as important, and that *'...(9 out of 16) stated that the government should get involved and take action to improve framework conditions for business transfers'*. However, EFB regrets that not all Member States contributed to this important piece of research which is key to mapping out the state of play in the EU regarding business transfers.

The issue of business transfers is multifaceted. It is a crucial element of any business' life cycle, but in particular for family businesses. Hence, we are pleased to be given the opportunity to communicate our feedback below.

With regards to the fiscal measures existing and desired found in the comparison table on pages 25 and 26 of the report, we feel it would be important to further elaborate as to why Member States either do not consider the existing measures in their country as necessary/beneficial or why they do and why they desire certain measures. This explanation would help to shape the report further.

Moreover, due to the Single Market, Europe's businesses often operate in multiple Member States. Therefore, we are of the opinion that the report should highlight the challenges faced by family businesses and non-family businesses alike when it comes to transfer of business in a cross-border setting within the EU. To this end, we also think that encouraging the inclusion of (family) business representatives in the policymaking process would help to apply a practical and grounded approach to policies.

While different case studies are included in the beginning of the report, we feel it would be beneficial to include case studies showcasing successful (family) business transfers within the EU to highlight best practices and lessons learned.

We are pleased that the paper presented a balanced approach to the Business Transfer topic, covering both intra-family succession, and transfer to third parties equally. However, what comes out clearly from the report is that there is a distinct lack of hard data on this topic. Indeed, this is symptomatic of how this issue has been addressed at the national level for decades. It is critical that Member States start to collect data on this issue. Without doing so, policy makers will not be able to formulate support measures effectively and comprehensively. Perhaps, in the future, it would be mutually beneficial to hold regular consultations with family business stakeholders to gather insights and feedback on the transfer of business issues they face in their respective countries.

Furthermore, detailed data collection on (family) businesses covering their economic contributions, transfer success rates, and common challenges will give policymakers a more complete image of the state of play. In addition, enriching business statistics with ownership data to depict the percentage of companies that are family-owned, private equity owned, listed, state-owned, cooperatives, etc. would supplement our collective understanding of the economic landscape across the EU and thereby lead to a more nuanced approach to business transfers.

While certain long term elements of business transfers have been mentioned in the report, it is important to ensure that there is an emphasis on long-term strategic planning in (family) business transfers, focusing on sustainability and resilience over short-term gains. Moreover, the report should encourage support for initiatives that promote long-term stability and growth for family businesses.

We believe that the aforementioned feedback will help to ensure that the report addresses the business transfer issues in a way that includes a more complete understanding of the challenges faced by family businesses on this matter.

We thank you for taking the time to consider our feedback, and we remain available to discuss any of these points further.

Contribution from other stakeholders – specialised organisations

Transeo, an association bringing together experts in transfers and acquisitions of small and medium-sized businesses from Europe & beyond.



Feedback Transeo

Deadline too short – to be provided later (deadline to be defined)

Feedback Transeo Board Member Finnish Federation of Enterprises

Deadline too short – to be provided later (deadline to be defined)

Feedback Transeo Board Member - Mirela Alpeza

Framework conditions for business transfers in the EU member states

- Gathered responses from only 17 countries is **lower response rate** than expected. Additionally, not all of the countries provided answers to all of the questions. Interviewees had to invest effort to get real insight and provide up-to-dated answers, since the questionnaire required information about different aspects of business transfer and **interdisciplinary approach** to the topic.
- In the beginning of the report (p.9.) the relevance of business transfer was illustrated by taking as example countries like Germany, France and Austria with long tradition of entrepreneurial activities and private ownership of businesses. It would be useful if some country from **CEE region** is mentioned here while those countries have a huge wave of transition from the founders' generations, and in most of the countries business transfer ecosystem is undeveloped (confirmed by the results of EU funded project BTAR and TRANSEO working group).

Here is information for Croatia:

In Croatia, like other post-transition economies, majority of business were established in 1990-ies and the share of enterprises with company owner in his / her retirement age is 30% (16,500 companies with around 180,000 employees). One third of those businesses represent the risk group whose owners underestimate the complexity and length of duration of the business transfer process ([Business Transfer Barometer Croatia, 2015](#)).

- On p.11. it is mentioned: „The Commission has been encouraging the development of comprehensive **national/regional action plans** on business transfer and the establishment of a **governance mechanism** (e.g. a transfer of business forum)“ Here some of the **examples of good European practices** should be mentioned, e.g. Finnish Business Transfer Forum.
- Very good and useful overview of the **implemented EU projects** related to business transfer and allocated EU funds on p. 13-15.
- Regarding analysis of the answers – there is a lot of information there and it is rather complex task to go deeper and provide conclusions and recommendations based on the comparison between

countries based on a regulatory framework, by taking one single measure at the time. Each country has a whole set (package) of regulations that influence business transfer environment. It would be useful to make **country profiles related to business transfer** and present results in that way, to understand how business transfer is regulated in each country, what is the infrastructure, etc. That would also make very transparent what countries did provide data and cooperated on this assignment. Business Transfer Ecosystem model could be used here (Figure 1).

- It should be recommended to conduct this kind of research bi-annually by EC, and published in a form of **Business Transfer Fact Sheet**, inspired by the model of SME Fact Sheet (Figure 2). Requirements for the information should be set beforehand, and data should be presented in form of countries profiles. **Transeo could be contracted for that purpose.**

Figure 1: Business Transfer Ecosystem model

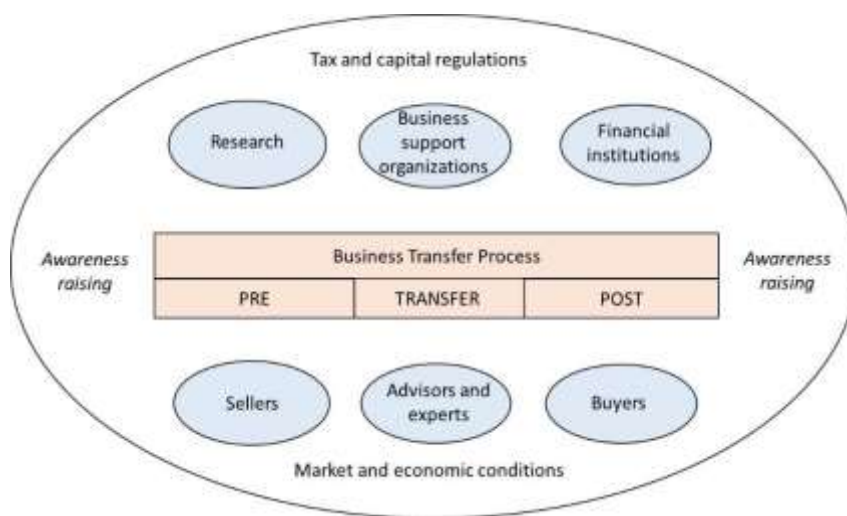


Figure 2: SME Fact Sheet

