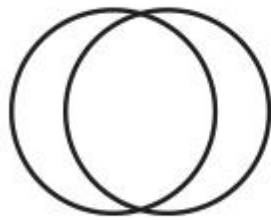


# A1.2 Report on SMEs readiness

Remote Management for SMEs

**Activity coordinator**

LDI



**Re.Ma**

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Remote Management  
for SMEs



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# Remote Management Readiness of SMEs in Partners' Regions

## Introduction

The adoption of remote work and management techniques has been considerably boosted by the COVID-19 epidemic throughout numerous industries. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) aren't exempt from this trend because they also want to take advantage of the advantages of remote management, like more flexibility, cost savings, and access to a global talent pool. In order to successfully implement a remote management plan, it is important to take into account a number of different aspects, such as the corporate culture, employee skills, and management procedures.

The Re.Ma project aims to promote the acquisition of competences of SME managers, in the adoption of remote management strategies and the use of related tools. Based on the review of existing practices, a survey was conducted for measuring the SME's readiness in adopting a remote management strategy, aiming at identifying missing skills needed for SME managers, to adopt a remote management strategy. By examining important indicators and offering suggestions for successful implementation, this report seeks to determine whether SMEs are prepared to embrace a remote management strategy.

To measure the readiness of SMEs in adopting a remote management strategy, a survey was conducted among SMEs to gather quantitative data on their current practices, technological capabilities, and attitudes towards remote work and management. The survey aimed to assess the current state of SMEs in partners' regions in terms of their industry, team structure, cultural readiness, technical readiness, and strategies for equipping and educating team members. The findings provide insights into the preparedness of SMEs for remote work and highlight areas for improvement.

## Major Findings

*Technological Infrastructure:* It was discovered that SMEs with a strong IT infrastructure—including dependable internet connectivity, cloud-based collaboration tools, and secure data storage—were more prepared for remote management.

Lack of the required technology infrastructure made it difficult for SMEs to offer a seamless remote working environment, which hindered productivity and caused communication problems.

*b. Organizational Culture:* SMEs with a culture that values autonomy, trust, and open communication have a higher chance of implementing remote management.

The implementation of remote management methods has been hampered by conventional hierarchical structures and a propensity for micromanagement because these approaches call for a change to performance evaluation that is outcome-oriented.

*c. Employee Skills and Training:* SMEs who spent in enhancing their staff members' knowledge of remote work technologies, communication, and time management showed greater readiness for remote management.

The absence of digital literacy and aversion to change were noted as obstacles to implementation success.

*d. Management Practices:* In SMEs that accepted remote management, effective communication, unambiguous expectations, and routine performance evaluation were critical management practices.

SMEs that had trouble with remote management frequently lacked appropriate channels for communication, tools for managing projects, and formalized feedback systems.

## Recommendations

*a. Invest in Technological Infrastructure:* To enable remote work and management, SMEs should evaluate their technological capabilities and make investments in dependable internet access, collaboration tools, and cybersecurity measures.

SMEs should encourage a culture of trust, autonomy, and open communication in order to empower staff to accept responsibility for their work and collaborate successfully.

*c. Provide Skills Development:* SMEs should provide training and assistance to improve staff members' digital literacy, abilities for remote teamwork, and time management skills.

*d. Modify Management Procedures:* To effectively manage remote teams, SMEs should build project tracking tools, create clear communication channels, and embrace outcome-oriented performance evaluation techniques.

**Conclusion** The COVID-19 epidemic has compelled SMEs to reevaluate their management tactics, with remote work and management techniques becoming more and more common. Evaluation of SME readiness for remote management adoption is essential for effective implementation. SMEs may improve their preparedness and successfully traverse the difficulties associated with remote management by

concentrating on technology infrastructure, organizational culture, personnel skills, and management practices. SMEs can use remote management tactics to spur growth, draw talent, and maintain competitiveness in a fast changing environment with careful planning and implementation.

## Survey analysis

### Methodology and Goals/Aims

#### Methodology

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire distributed to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the partners' regions. The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey was administered through email invitations, and participants were given a designated period to respond. The data collected from the survey was then analyzed to identify trends, patterns, and insights related to business readiness and remote management readiness of SMEs.

#### Goals/Aims

The survey had the following goals and aims:

**Assessing Industry Representation:** The survey aimed to identify the industry composition of SMEs in the partners' regions to understand the diversity of organizations participating in the survey.

**Examining Team Structure:** By gathering information on the current team structure and preferred team structure, the survey aimed to gain insights into the prevailing approaches to remote work among SMEs and the desired directions for future team structures.

**Evaluating Cultural Readiness:** The survey aimed to assess the cultural readiness of organizations for remote work in terms of transparency, trust, communication, and feedback gathering. This evaluation helped identify the strengths and weaknesses of organizations' cultural preparedness for remote work.

**Assessing Technical Readiness:** The survey aimed to evaluate the technical readiness of organizations for remote work in terms of digital communication tools, secure access to sensitive information, and remote IT infrastructure. This assessment provided an understanding of the technological capabilities and limitations of SMEs.

**Analyzing Strategies for Equipping and Educating Team Members:** The survey aimed to identify the strategies employed by organizations to equip and educate their team members for remote work. This analysis helped uncover effective practices and areas where organizations could improve their support for remote workers.

**Investigating Documentation of Remote Working Procedures:** The survey aimed to determine the extent to which organizations had documented procedures for remote working. This investigation provided insights into the level of preparedness and organizational structure in place for remote work.

**Exploring the Use of Project Management Platforms:** By examining the utilization of project management platforms, the survey aimed to understand the level of adoption of digital tools to facilitate remote work and collaboration among SMEs.

Overall, the goals and aims of the survey were to provide a comprehensive assessment of the business readiness and remote management readiness of SMEs in the partners' regions. The findings aimed to inform organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the current state of remote work preparedness and highlight areas where support and improvement are needed.

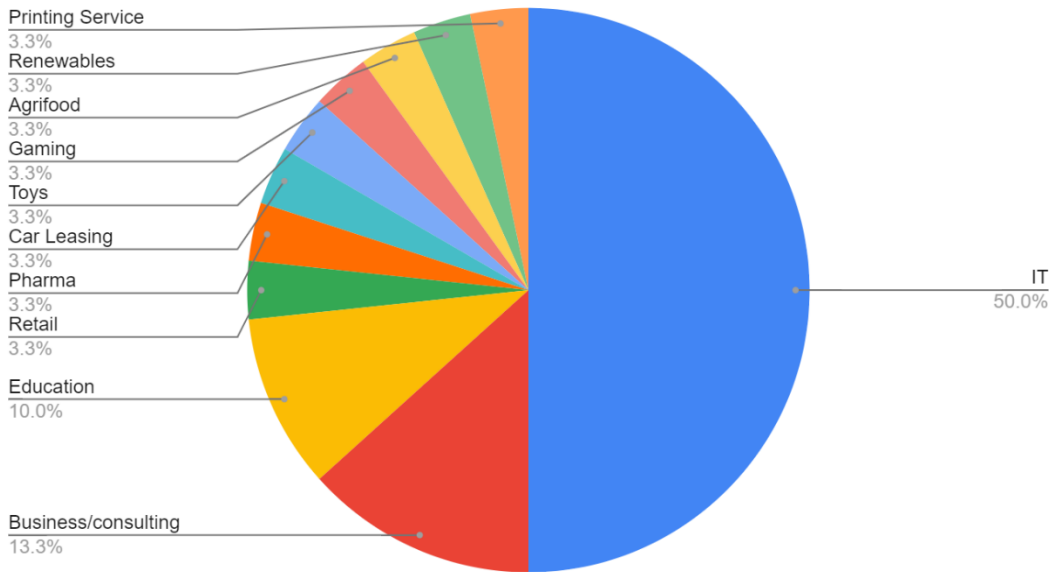
### Industry of Organizations

The survey participants represented a variety of industries. The IT sector was the most prominent, with 50% of the organizations identifying themselves as part of this industry. Other industries included business/consulting (13.3%) and education (10%) followed by a mix of other industries that totally compose the rest 16% and include retail, pharma, car leasing, toys & gaming, agrifood, renewables, and printing services.





### Industry

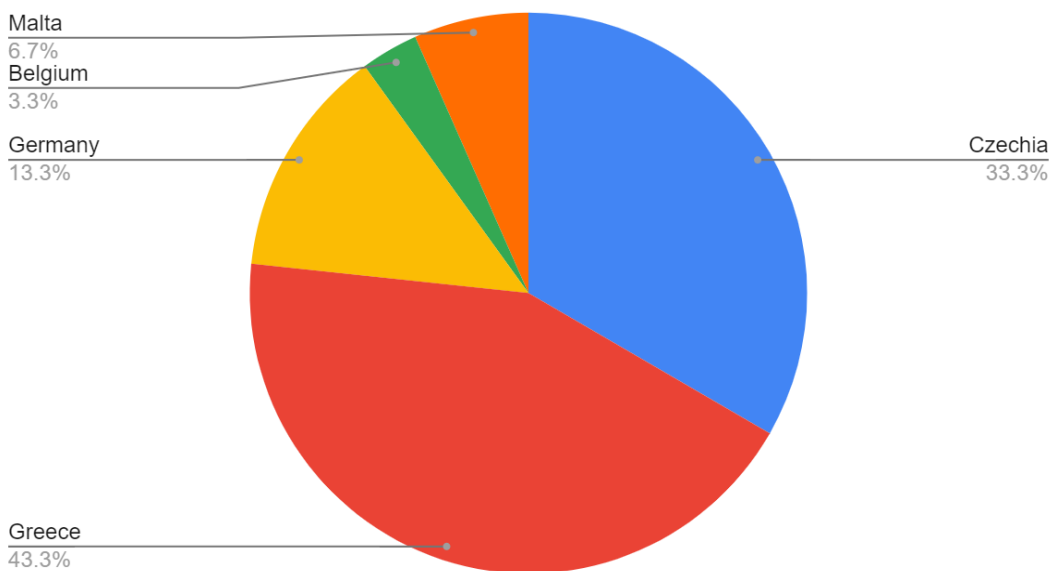


### Location of Organizations

The majority of organizations surveyed were located in Greece (43%), followed by Czechia (33%), Germany (13%), and other locations (10%) as Malta (7%) and Belgium (3%).

This distribution reflects the partners' regions involved in the survey.

### Location

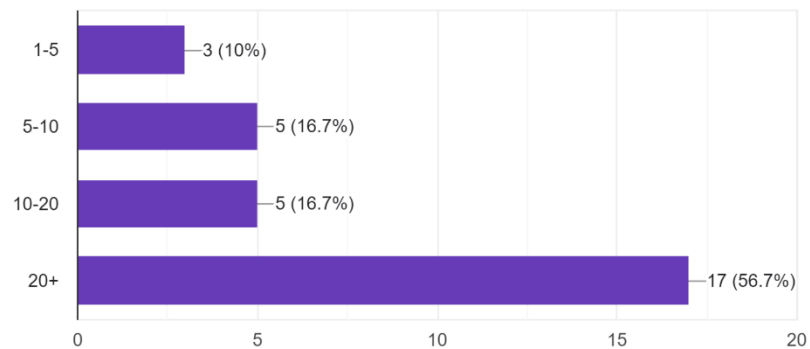


### Staff Size of Organizations

Regarding staff size, the surveyed organizations exhibited varying levels of workforce. The most common range was 20 or more employees, accounting for 57% of the responses. Organizations with 10-20 employees constituted 17% of the survey, as well as those with 5-10 employees that accounted for 17%. Lastly, organizations with 1-5 employees comprised 10% of the sample.

Please indicate the staff number of your organization

30 responses

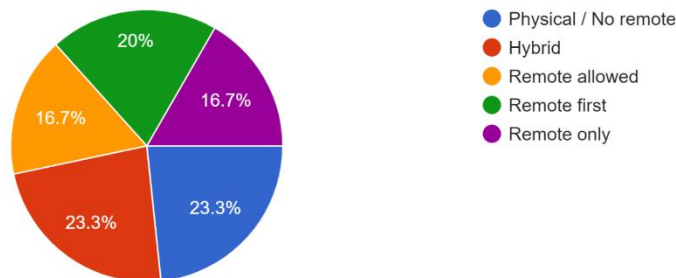


### Current Team Structure

When asked about their current team structure, the responses indicated diverse approaches. The most prevalent types of team structure reported were "Hybrid" (23%) and "Physical/No remote" (23%) followed by "Remote first" (20%), "Remote allowed" (17%) and "Remote only" (17%).

What is the current type of team structure of your company?

30 responses



### Preferred Team Structure

In terms of the preferred team structure, the majority of organizations (33%) expressed a preference for a "Hybrid" approach. This was followed by "Remote first"

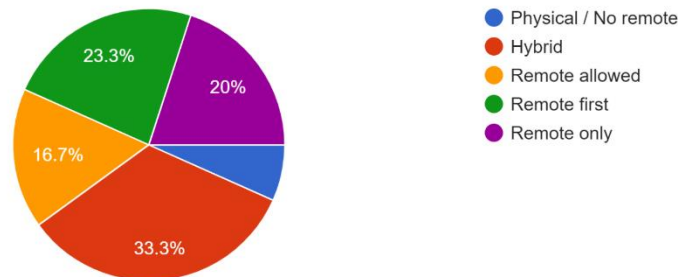


(23%), "Remote only" (20%), and "Remote allowed" (17%), while the least preferred approach is the "Physical/No remote" with less than 7%.

These preferences generally align with the current team structures reported by the organizations with the significant exception of the respondents that currently work in "Physical/No remote" setup where **more than 70%** of them believe that remote and hybrid setups would be more suitable for their organizations

What type of team structure do you believe would be best for your company?

30 responses

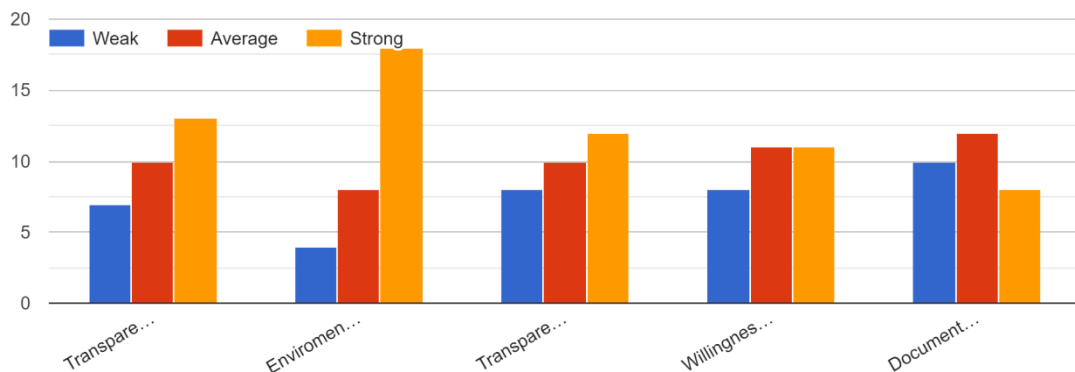


## Cultural Readiness for Remote Work

Participants were asked to characterize their organizations' cultural readiness for remote work across several dimensions. The responses were divided into four categories: transparency of management/ownership with their team, environment of trust, transparency in communication and documentation, and willingness of management/ownership to gather feedback from remote workers regarding their needs.

Across these dimensions, organizations reported varying levels of readiness. In terms of transparency of management/ownership, 43% of the organizations considered themselves strong, 23% weak, and 33% average. Regarding the environment of trust, 60% characterized their organizations as strong, 27% as average, and 13% as weak. When it came to transparency in communication and documentation, 40% perceived their organizations as strong, 33% as average, and 27% as weak. Lastly, regarding the willingness of management/ownership to gather feedback, 37% reported themselves as strong, 37% as average, and 27% as weak.

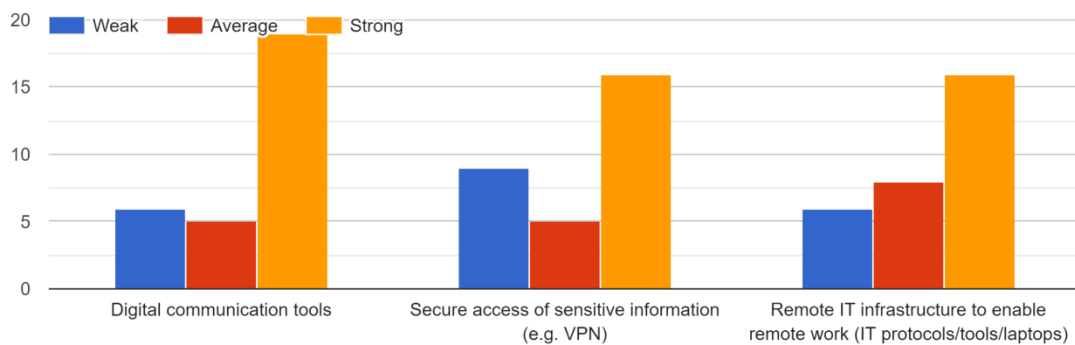
How would you characterize your organization in terms of its Cultural Readiness for Remote Work?



### Technical Readiness for Remote Work

The survey also assessed the organizations' technical readiness for remote work across three dimensions: digital communication tools, secure access to sensitive information, and remote IT infrastructure. In terms of digital communication tools, 64% of the organizations considered themselves strong, 20% weak, and 17% average. Regarding secure access to sensitive information, 54% reported strong readiness, 17% average, and 30% weak. In terms of remote IT infrastructure, 53% of the organizations characterized themselves as strong, 27% average, and 20% weak.

How would you characterize your organization in terms of its Technical Readiness for Remote Work?



### Equipping and Educating Team Members

Participants were asked about their strategies for equipping and educating team members for remote work.

The responses varied but included methods such as online calls, videos, documentation, hosting better virtual meetings, setting clear expectations and goals,

providing regular feedback, conducting effective training schedules, online orientation, regular check-ins or meetings, seminars, trainings, direct communication, access to digital collaboration tools, workshops, provision of hardware, bringing in external support, determining training needs based on team input, hands-on exercises, better documentation, face-to-face individual training, workshops, and investing in training time if allowed.

#### How would you equip and educate your team members?



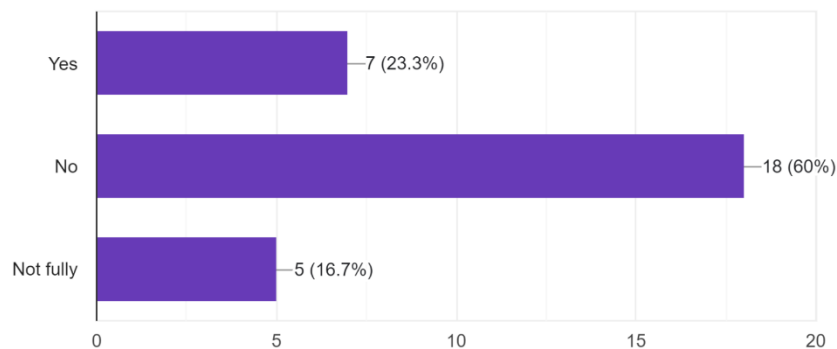
#### Documented Procedures for Remote Working

When asked about documented procedures for remote working only 23% of the organizations indicated that they had fully created such procedures, while 17% had not done so fully, and 60% had not created any procedures.

The combined 77% of the organizations have either no or not fully documented procedures regarding working remotely is very significant and concerning given the percentage of the organizations that implement remote friendly approaches and should be addressed in the curriculum that should be developed.

Have you created documented procedures about remote working in your company?

30 responses



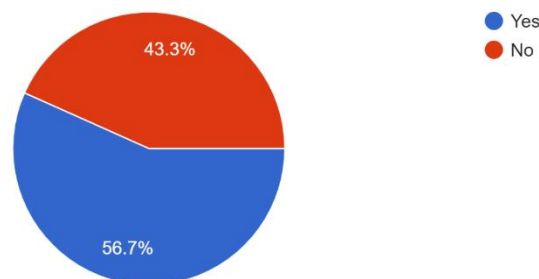
### Use of Project Management Platforms

Regarding the use of project management platforms for remote working, 57% of the organizations reported using them, while 43% did not.

Project Management Platforms can act as a virtual collaboration workspace that can boost productivity and keep teams aligned.

Do you use any project management platforms for remote working in your company?

30 responses



### Comparison of Major Locations: Greece, Czechia, Germany

In analyzing the survey data, a comparison was made between three major locations: Greece, Czechia, and Germany. These locations exhibited varying levels of response to the survey questions, providing insights into the business readiness and remote management readiness of SMEs in each region.

Industry Representation: Among the three locations, Greece had the highest representation of organizations in the survey, with 50% of the respondents coming

from Greece. Czechia followed with 37.5% representation, while Germany had the lowest representation at 12.5%. This indicates a higher level of participation and interest in remote work readiness assessment from organizations in Greece.

**Team Structure:** When it comes to the current team structure, Czechia had the highest percentage (57.5%) of organizations following a physical/no remote structure, indicating a preference for in-person work arrangements. In contrast, Greece had the highest percentage (35%) of organizations embracing a remote first structure, highlighting a greater inclination towards remote work. Germany showed a more balanced distribution, with a mix of hybrid and remote allowed structures.

**Cultural Readiness:** In terms of cultural readiness, Czechia had the highest percentage (52.5%) of organizations characterizing their transparency of management/ownership as weak, indicating potential challenges in fostering open communication and trust in remote work settings. Greece had the highest percentage (45%) of organizations characterizing their cultural readiness for remote work as strong, highlighting a positive environment of transparency, trust, and communication. Germany exhibited a more average distribution of responses in cultural readiness.

**Technical Readiness:** In terms of technical readiness, Germany had the highest percentage (50%) of organizations characterizing their technical readiness as strong across various aspects, including digital communication tools, secure access to sensitive information, and remote IT infrastructure. Czechia had a higher percentage (47.5%) of organizations characterizing their technical readiness as weak, indicating potential gaps in technological capabilities for remote work. Greece showed a more balanced distribution of responses in technical readiness.

The comparison of major locations provides insights into the varying levels of readiness and approaches to remote work among SMEs. Greece emerged as a leader in terms of embracing remote work structures and exhibiting strong cultural readiness, while Czechia and Germany showed more diverse responses, with differing preferences for team structures and varying levels of technical and cultural readiness. These findings emphasize the importance of considering regional context and differences when designing policies and support mechanisms to enhance remote work readiness among SMEs.

## Comparison of Major Industries: IT, Business/Consulting, Education, and Other

Analyzing the survey data, a comparison was made among the major industries represented in the responses: IT, Business/Consulting, Education, and Other. This



comparison sheds light on the business readiness and remote management readiness of SMEs in each industry.

**Team Structure:** The IT industry had the highest percentage (40%) of organizations following a remote first team structure, indicating a strong inclination towards remote work. The Business/Consulting industry showed a more diverse distribution, with organizations following remote first, remote allowed, and hybrid structures. The Education industry had a higher percentage (37.5%) of organizations embracing remote only structures, reflecting a sector that has successfully transitioned to remote work. The "Other" category exhibited a mix of team structures, including hybrid, remote allowed, and physical/no remote.

**Cultural Readiness:** In terms of cultural readiness, the IT industry had the highest percentage (42.5%) of organizations characterizing their cultural readiness for remote work as strong, indicating an environment of transparency, trust, and effective communication. The Business/Consulting industry showed a more balanced distribution across different levels of cultural readiness. The Education industry had a higher percentage (37.5%) of organizations characterizing their cultural readiness as average, indicating room for improvement in fostering transparency and trust. The "Other" category displayed a varied distribution of responses in cultural readiness.

**Technical Readiness:** The IT industry had the highest percentage (55%) of organizations characterizing their technical readiness as strong, demonstrating a robust infrastructure for remote work, including digital communication tools, secure access to sensitive information, and remote IT infrastructure. The Business/Consulting industry showed a mix of responses in technical readiness, with a significant portion characterizing their technical readiness as average. The Education industry had a higher percentage (37.5%) of organizations characterizing their technical readiness as weak, suggesting potential challenges in terms of technological capabilities. The "Other" category exhibited a diverse distribution of responses in technical readiness.

The comparison of major industries highlights the varying levels of readiness and approaches to remote work among SMEs. The IT industry stands out as a leader in terms of embracing remote work structures and demonstrating strong cultural and technical readiness. The Business/Consulting industry shows a more diverse landscape with organizations adopting different team structures and exhibiting a range of readiness levels. The Education industry faces specific challenges in terms of cultural and technical readiness, which may require targeted support to enhance remote work capabilities. The "Other" category represents a mix of industries, each with its unique characteristics and areas of focus.

These findings underscore the importance of considering industry-specific needs and challenges when developing strategies to enhance business readiness and remote management readiness. Tailored approaches and support mechanisms can enable



SMEs in each industry to navigate the transition to remote work more effectively and maximize their operational efficiency in a remote work environment.

## Conclusion

The survey analysis reveals that SMEs in the partners' regions exhibit a range of readiness levels for remote work. While a significant portion of organizations have embraced remote work structures and demonstrated cultural and technical readiness, there is room for improvement in areas such as transparency, trust, communication, documentation, and equipping team members. By addressing these areas, SMEs can enhance their preparedness and effectively adapt to remote work, ensuring the smooth operation of their businesses.

