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GREENE 4.0

D.2.6.2 - E-newsletters

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Contents

A. Executive summary

Project overview

The GREENE 4.0 project aims at facilitating and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector in the adoption and use of green production methods and digital technologies.

Activity 2.6 plays a key role in ensuring the effective promotion and visibility of project outputs and results. The objective of this activity is to develop and implement a dedicated communication package supporting the dissemination of the project achievements. Dedicated e-newsletter template was developed in cooperation between PP6 and PP7 to ensure consistent and professional communication. Monthly e-newsletters were disseminated via project-dedicated social media channels PP8 established and managed the project's social media account to strengthen outreach and engagement with stakeholders. The newsletters contributed to raising awareness among SMEs, stakeholders, and partner networks regarding key project milestones, including the development of the User Acceptance Model and the launch of the B2GreenHub platform.

Scope of the document

The document outlines the implementation of Activity 2.6 under WP2, covering the preparation and distribution of the project's e-newsletters. The appendix contains all newsletters issued during the project period, compiled and presented in chronological order.

Audience

The intended audience of this document is the consortium of the GREENE 4.0 project partners. It is an internal document prepared to summarise the project team's work related to the development of newsletters distributed to individuals potentially interested in the project. The document may also be used by the Lead Partner (LP) and supporting institutions to monitor progress and introduce any necessary adjustments.

B. Introduction

In line with the assumptions set out in the application form, PP8 created a dedicated project account on social media. Following consultations with the project lead, a decision was taken to choose LinkedIn as the project's main communication channel. This choice was driven by the nature of the platform: it is oriented towards professionals, emphasises knowledge-sharing on business practices and trends, and brings together experts involved in the green and digital transformation of enterprises. Establishing a presence on LinkedIn therefore offered the strongest opportunity to reach individuals, companies, and institutions potentially interested in the project and the ongoing green transition.

Over the course of the project, 17 newsletters were published in total. The first newsletter was released on 22 August 2024, and the final issue – summarising the project – was published on 25 February 2026.

The newsletters covered the most important project progress and milestones, including the development of the User Acceptance Model and the launch of the B2GreenHub platform. In addition, they addressed topics aligned with the project's scope, such as challenges and opportunities related to the green transition of enterprises, ESG implementation, and sustainability-oriented innovation. This approach supported the gradual building of an engaged audience. Throughout the series, the

communication maintained a professional tone, consistent with LinkedIn's context and expectations. The average length of each article was approximately 3,600 characters (including spaces).

The table below summarises the publication dates and themes of each newsletter.

No.	Date	Title
1	22.08.2024	*Hello from Greene 4.0!*
2	30.09.2024	*Green and Digital Innovations – Where to Start?*
3	31.10.2024	*Circular economy: a key to a sustainable future*
4	29.11.2024	*The role of innovation in strengthening resilience*
5	23.12.2024	*Empowering SMEs for the digital and green transition with User Acceptance Model*
6	7.02.2025	*Sustainable innovations transforming industry*
7	6.03.2025	*CSRD: a challenge or a competitive advantage?*
8	14.04.2025	*Smart manufacturing for SMEs: digital twins and practical alternatives*
9	21.05.2025	*The 4 pitfalls that stop sustainability strategies from succeeding – and how SMEs can avoid them*
10	24.06.2025	*Investor types for green manufacturing: choosing capital that supports sustainability*
11	8.08.2025	*Open manufacturing: sharing tools, sharing know-how*
12	8.09.2025	*From ideas to impact: the power of innovation contests in sustainability*
13	22.10.2025	*Greening the supply chain: how SMEs can drive sustainable procurement*
14	1.12.2025	*B2GreenHub is live – your green & digital hub*
15	31.12.2025	*Keeping sustainability operational: a lightweight dashboard idea*
16	28.01.2026	*Six sustainability myths in manufacturing — and what to do instead*
17	25.02.2026	*Greene 4.0: a journey of discovery, collaboration and transformation*

Table 1: List of newsletters

Care was taken to ensure the newsletter's visual identity remained consistent with the overall project branding, and a dedicated graphic template was developed for this purpose.

Figure 1: Sample newsletter graphic

As of the date of this report, the total number of subscribers is 174. The highest number of views (392) was recorded for Newsletter no. 7, titled *CSRD: a challenge or a competitive advantage?*. All newsletters were also published on the official Greene 4.0 project website to ensure wider dissemination and accessibility.

The appendix includes all newsletters issued during the project period.

C. Appendix

Newsletter #1

Hello from Greene 4.0!

Welcome to the first edition of our LinkedIn newsletter, where you'll find the latest insights on green transformation and updates on Greene 4.0 - a project dedicated to supporting manufacturing companies in piloting new value chains and co-designing innovative products and services through open innovation approaches. Each month, we aim to provide you with valuable knowledge and news tailored for business owners, green and digital transformation specialists, and anyone interested in the green revolution.

Greene 4.0 Transnational Conference 2024

We are excited to announce the Greene 4.0 Transnational Conference, scheduled for September 5th 2024, in Portorož, Slovenia. The event, co-organized with the TBMCE (Technologies and Business Models for Circular Economy) 2024 conference, will be held at the Grand Hotel Bernardin. It will gather around 150 participants from businesses, research institutions, and educational organizations.

The conference will feature renowned speakers discussing technological advancements and society's role in transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, and from a linear to a circular economy.

Join us to network, explore trends, and gain the latest insights on technologies, business models, and successful projects. For more information and the agenda, please visit the TBMCE website.

Registration deadline: August 25, 2024.

User Acceptance Model

The Greene 4.0 User Acceptance Model (UAM) is a critical initiative aimed at understanding what motivates or hinders manufacturing SMEs in adopting digital and sustainable practices. Through extensive research, including surveys of 422 companies and in-depth interviews with 50 more, we have mapped out the key barriers and enablers in the green and digital transition. These findings are being used to develop practical tools, such as customized transition plans and training modules, which will help SMEs integrate new technologies more effectively into their business processes.

The UAM will also support the creation of a matchmaking platform that connects solution providers with businesses seeking to enhance their sustainability efforts. By identifying the specific needs and challenges of SMEs, the UAM offers tailored strategies that address their unique circumstances, ultimately facilitating a smoother transition to more sustainable practices.

B2GreenHub

B2GreenHub is an initiative that complements our efforts by helping businesses navigate the complexities of the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). This initiative provides valuable resources, including technological solutions, expert guidance, and personalized roadmaps, all designed to help companies turn regulatory challenges into growth opportunities. With the support of over 100 EU institutions and a team of specialists, B2GreenHub is a comprehensive program aimed at bolstering the green and digital transformation of manufacturing companies.

Manufacturers in sectors such as Electronics, Food & Beverage, and Machinery & Equipment can greatly benefit from joining B2GreenHub. The program offers access to state-of-the-art testing facilities and over 200 technological solutions, ensuring that participating companies are well-equipped to meet both regulatory demands and market expectations.

You can apply here: https://lnkd.in/dAmdreJz Early application is recommended to secure a spot in pilot activities that offer firsthand experience in implementing these solutions.

Final deadline for applications: June 30, 2025.

Newsletter #2

Green and Digital Innovations – Where to Start?

During the research conducted as part of the Greene 4.0 4.0 project across seven European countries (Italy, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, and Hungary), a total of 422 entrepreneurs were asked to rate their agreement with several statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree”:

- 4.3 – The cost of transitioning to sustainable production is too high
- 3.8 – The effort required for green transformation is too substantial
- 4.0 – Implementing digital technologies would be too complicated for our employees

Managers tend to view green transformation as a challenging and complex process. When asked about specific obstacles to adopting green and digital innovations, they pointed to a lack of funding, unclear regulations, and insufficient time to focus on new projects. These factors can indeed significantly limit - or even entirely halt - a company’s ability to adopt new technologies.

However, beyond these external factors - money, time, and regulations - an equally fundamental element is awareness of one’s own needs. Company leaders often aren’t sure which areas of their business need change. It may sound like a cliché, but change really must start from within.

So, where should they begin? Start at the beginning, which means:

1. **Analysis: Build a Clear Picture of Your Company's Current State** Start by gathering as much data as possible to get a comprehensive view of your company's situation. Go beyond just numbers – consider employee feedback, stakeholder expectations, and customer insights. What are the recurring problems? How does your energy consumption compare to industry standards? The goal is to create a thorough snapshot of the present state, as it will serve as a foundation for future decisions.

2. **Definition: Transform Problems into Opportunities**. With detailed data in hand, you can identify and define key challenges. Move from general observations, like "high energy costs," to more specific issues, such as "outdated machinery consuming too much energy." This helps narrow down intervention areas and set a clear direction for change.

3. **Solution Exploration: Find What Works for Your Company**. Not every innovation will be suitable for your organization, and that's okay. Evaluate different options considering your company's size, resources, and industry context. If your goal is to optimize energy usage, explore energy management systems designed for industrial settings or tools for tracking and reducing CO2 emissions. It's also worth looking at solutions from startups and smaller enterprises, as they often provide niche, highly effective technologies. Look for information in public sources—technology parks and other organizations frequently publish reports and directories of innovative companies.

4. **Prototyping and Pilot Testing**: Bring Ideas to Life. Start with a prototype, whether it's a new process, software, or a small-scale pilot project. Collect feedback, refine the solution, and repeat. This hands-on approach helps identify potential barriers early and prepares the ground for broader implementation.

Greene 4.0 facilitators can be invaluable in helping companies clearly define their needs and explore innovative solutions. Experts from both the digital and green sectors can offer fresh perspectives, while study visits provide the opportunity to see best practices and technologies in action, which might otherwise seem abstract. The emerging B2GreenHub platform will also be an invaluable source of tools, resources, and frameworks.

Strategic guidance and structured methodologies can help businesses make this transition successfully.

Newsletter #3

Circular economy: a key to a sustainable future

The circular economy isn't just a trend; it's a strategic approach for sustainable growth through responsible resource management. Moving beyond the conventional "take-make-dispose" model, which strains resources and generates waste, the circular model emphasizes continuous reuse, taking cues from nature's cycles, where every resource finds a purpose.

Why focus on the circular economy?

Circular economy practices meet urgent environmental and economic needs by making systems more efficient, adaptable, and less reliant on new resources. Here's how it benefits both businesses and consumers:

1. **Economic resilience** – Circular practices stabilize operations by reducing reliance on unpredictable raw materials. By emphasizing recycling and reuse, companies can gain greater control over resources, avoiding supply chain risks and lowering costs. This approach helps businesses adapt more easily to regulations on resource use.

2. **Building customer loyalty** – Today's consumers value brands committed to environmental responsibility. By offering options like repair services, recycling programs, or take-backs, companies resonate with consumer values, reducing waste while strengthening customer relationships. Embracing circular principles can become a key differentiator, building loyalty in a market that values sustainability.

3. **Lowering environmental impact** – Circular models significantly reduce waste and emissions by transforming resources into a continuous cycle. Rather than discarding byproducts, companies can repurpose them, aligning operations with environmental goals. Practices like composting, recycling, and repurposing minimize waste, helping create a healthier planet.
4. **Encouraging new business models** – Circular principles open doors to resource-efficient business models, like leasing, sharing, and repair services. These models allow companies to provide products without consuming new resources, appealing to eco-conscious consumers and reducing costs. For instance, leasing durable products that can be refurbished extends product lifecycles and cuts down on frequent replacements.
5. **Taking inspiration from nature** – At its core, the circular economy treats materials as assets, reintegrating them into production cycles. This mirrors natural ecosystems, where waste serves as a resource for new growth. By adopting this approach, companies support a low-waste economy that eases environmental strain and preserves resources for future generations.

Beware of greenwashing

As sustainable practices grow in importance, transparency is essential. Companies must back environmental claims with genuine action, avoiding greenwashing—the practice of promoting eco-responsibility without concrete steps. Transparency in circular practices not only builds trust but also assures consumers of a company's authentic commitment to environmental goals.

Circular audits for small and medium enterprises

The circular economy benefits not only large corporations but also small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Circular audits help SMEs find ways to reuse materials, optimize waste management, and reduce their reliance on new resources. These audits reveal opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and build resilience. For example, a small electronics repair business might refurbish parts instead of discarding them, cutting waste and expenses while contributing to the circular economy.

EU support for circular economy

In Europe, regulatory frameworks are being established to support sustainable production practices from design to end-use. In March 2020, the European Commission adopted the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), aimed at introducing eco-design requirements to make products more durable, easier to repair, and suited for reuse. It also promotes the use of recycled materials in industry and encourages a 'repair rather than discard' philosophy. By implementing circularity at every stage of the product lifecycle, the EU is building a sustainable economy that encourages businesses to innovate in resource-efficient practices.

Newsletter #4

The role of innovation in strengthening resilience

In an era defined by rapid change and complex crises, innovation stands out as a cornerstone of corporate resilience. Recent research conducted by GREENE 4.0 project partners FH Kufstein Tirol, led by researchers Mario Situm and Matthias Möllers, highlights that organizations prioritizing innovation not only enhance their adaptability but also strengthen their ability to thrive amidst uncertainty. This alignment of resilience and innovation provides valuable insights for companies pursuing green and digital transformation.

Innovation: the catalyst for resilience

Innovation, as defined by leading studies, involves creating or improving products, processes, or business models to meet unmet needs and adapt to emerging challenges. Whether through product innovation or business model transformation, innovation bolsters a company's position by fostering differentiation, efficiency, and market agility. For example:

- product innovation enables companies to diversify their offerings, reducing dependency on single markets
- process innovation improves operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness, enhancing agility
- business model and distribution innovations extend market reach and mitigate localized risks

These strategies empower businesses to "bounce back" from disruptions, ensuring their long-term viability and competitiveness.

Beyond survival: a holistic view of resilience

The study underscores that resilience is more than financial stability; it encompasses sustainability, employee engagement, and social responsibility. Resilient companies exhibit:

- adaptability through flexible structures and proactive planning
- employee commitment, which is critical for collectively navigating challenges
- sustainable practices, which build trust and long-term stakeholder relationships

This comprehensive perspective aligns seamlessly with GREENE 4.0's objectives, emphasizing a green and innovative approach to resilience.

Lessons for digital and green transformation:

1. invest in innovation: foster a culture that values continuous improvement and experimentation. For GREENE 4.0, this involves supporting technologies and strategies that drive both environmental and operational sustainability.
2. focus on diversification: reduce dependence on specific markets or resources. GREENE 4.0 encourages businesses to explore alternative pathways for growth.
3. promote employee engagement: resilient organizations prioritize their workforce. GREENE 4.0 highlights human-centric innovation strategies.
4. leverage sustainability: align innovation with environmental goals to enhance both resilience and market credibility.

A path forward

Innovation and resilience are inseparable on the journey toward long-term stability and growth. GREENE 4.0 provides a unique platform to amplify these findings, enabling companies to not only weather crises but emerge stronger. By integrating these principles into its initiatives, GREENE 4.0 sets a benchmark for sustainable, resilient innovation across industries.
This synergy between innovation and resilience not only protects businesses against uncertainty but also propels them toward a future of sustainable excellence.

Full article (in German): Link to the article

The text was prepared by Selina-Maria Schiller.

Newsletter #5

Empowering SMEs for the digital and green transition with User Acceptance Model

In today's rapidly evolving industrial landscape, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are at a crossroads: adapt to digitalization and sustainability, or risk falling behind. The User Acceptance Model (UAM), developed under the GREENE 4.0 initiative, is a transformative tool designed to empower SMEs to thrive in this new era of opportunity.

What is the User Acceptance Model

UAM is a comprehensive framework that helps manufacturing SMEs evaluate their current readiness, pinpoint areas for improvement, and craft actionable strategies for success. By blending cutting-edge digital tools with sustainable practices, UAM ensures that businesses not only keep up but lead the way.
Key features of the UAM include:

- self-assessment: a straightforward, guided process to benchmark your company's current state.
- results analysis: a clear picture of your strengths and areas that need attention.
- action plan development: tailored, practical steps to bridge gaps and seize opportunities.
- support and monitoring: Long-term guidance to keep your business on track.

Key insights from UAM testing and analysis

What did real-world testing of UAM reveal? Here are the standout findings:

1. assessment of readiness: companies vary widely in their digital and green maturity, with advanced technologies like IoT and AI often underutilized.
2. sustainability practices: while many firms recognize the value of eco-friendly methods, inconsistent adoption underscores the need for targeted support.
3. challenges and enablers: cultural resistance, regulatory complexities, and resource constraints remain hurdles—but financial incentives and clear goals are game-changers.

Why UAM matters

In a world where consumers demand transparency and governments tighten regulations, staying competitive means staying ahead. Here's how UAM can make a difference:

- boost competitiveness: stand out with efficient, sustainable operations.
- unlock opportunities: identify untapped areas for innovation and growth.
- stay aligned: meet the demands of evolving markets and legislation.
- focus strategically: direct resources to initiatives that deliver the biggest impact.

Industries potentially benefiting from UAM

The potential of UAM spans a variety of industries:

- metal fabrication
- food and beverages
- electronics
- machinery and equipment
- pharmaceutical and chemical
- plastics and rubber
- building materials and furniture

Whether you're looking to modernize your operations or pioneer green solutions, UAM offers the tools to transform your industry.

The role of human factors

Transformation isn't just about technology – it's about people. UAM addresses the human element, helping businesses overcome employee resistance, foster a culture of innovation, and align organizational values with sustainability goals. It's not just a transition; it's a mindset shift.

Take the lead in your transformation

The future is green and digital. The User Acceptance Model is a chance to turn challenges into opportunities.

You can join the B2GreenHub ecosystem by filling out the form at https://lnkd.in/dAmdreJz. For more details, reach out at info@b2greenhub.eu.

A video tutorial about the User Acceptance Model is available: https://youtu.be/8R1yPO-PQUI. Let's build a sustainable tomorrow, together!

Newsletter #6

Sustainable innovations transforming industry

As industries worldwide focus on sustainability, several initiatives are demonstrating how circular economy practices can be effectively integrated into business operations. From packaging and food production to industrial efficiency, these approaches illustrate the shift toward more resource-conscious models.

PL One example comes from **Swapp!**, a Polish startup working on retail packaging waste management. Through its **Refill and Pasta Stations**, the company has partnered with major retailers to introduce reusable packaging systems that help reduce single-use plastic waste. By allowing consumers to refill their own containers with dry goods and other food products, Swapp! has eliminated thousands of plastic packages within just a year. With ongoing expansion plans, this model could influence packaging practices in the retail sector.

AT Meanwhile, in **Austria**, WOLF NUDELN GmbH has adopted fully recyclable paper-based packaging for its pasta products. Developed in collaboration with Bosch and BillerudKorsnäs, this alternative to plastic packaging contributes to reducing waste. Additionally, Wolf Nudeln uses eggs from its own farms and biogas for energy, incorporating more sustainable practices into its production.

HU In **Hungary**, Respray is addressing the issue of single-use aerosol cans in the cosmetics industry. By introducing **refillable deodorant stations** in Rossmann stores, the company offers customers the option to refill their deodorant bottles rather than purchasing new ones. This reduces the number of metal cans entering the waste stream and provides an example of how consumer goods can transition toward circular business models.

CZ The industrial sector is also exploring ways to optimize resources. In **Czechia**, **AGRO Kadaň** has implemented a system that repurposes **waste heat from a power plant** to warm greenhouses where fresh produce is grown. This integration of energy and agriculture helps lower carbon emissions while supporting local food production. Additionally, the company employs hydroponic farming techniques, reducing water consumption.

SI In **Slovenia**, CIRCI project has developed a digital platform that connects businesses looking to repurpose industrial waste. By creating a database of post-production materials available for reuse, CIRCI facilitates partnerships between manufacturers, reducing waste and lowering material costs. This initiative promotes the reintegration of materials into production processes rather than their disposal.

IT Finally, in **Italy**, a bio-based materials initiative is reshaping the construction industry. A collaboration between research institutions and manufacturers has led to the development of **hemp-based concrete**, an alternative building material that not only reduces carbon emissions but also improves insulation and durability. By utilizing agricultural waste and renewable resources, this initiative showcases how

sustainable materials can replace conventional construction components while enhancing energy efficiency in buildings.

These examples show how businesses across different industries are implementing circular economy solutions. As companies continue to refine their strategies, such initiatives demonstrate the potential for more sustainable resource use and waste reduction.

This text is based on the brochure *SMART-CIRCUIT Circular Success Stories*, available at https://tiny.pl/kxnt238k, prepared by SMART CIRCUIT. We present just a few of the 120 success stories featured in this publication.

Newsletter #7

CSRD: a challenge or a competitive advantage?

The **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)** is changing how companies report their impact on the environment, society, and governance (ESG). While it may seem like just another reporting requirement, it can actually help businesses **streamline operations, improve transparency, and gain a competitive edge**.

Let's break down **who needs to comply, how CSRD can benefit businesses, and what changes the EU is considering**.

What is CSRD, and who needs to comply?
CSRD replaces the **Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD)** and introduces stricter **ESG reporting requirements**. Reports must follow the **European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS)** and will be **verified by external auditors**.
Who needs to report and when?
2025 (for the year 2024):

- **large listed companies** with **500+ employees** and exceeding either: **€50M in revenue €25M in total assets**

2026 (for the year 2025):

- **large listed and non-listed companies** meeting **two out of three criteria**: **250+ employees €50M+ revenue €25M+ total assets**

2027 (for the year 2026):

- **listed SMEs** meeting **two out of three criteria**: **10+ employees €900K+ revenue €450K+ total assets**

Exemptions:

- **non-listed SMEs** are generally exempt unless they are **part of a large corporate group** or **operate in the supply chain of a reporting company**.

CSRD as a business opportunity
While CSRD requires companies to **collect and structure ESG data**, it also provides valuable benefits:

- data-driven improvements – tracking energy use, emissions, and supply chain impact helps identify inefficiencies and savings
- stronger corporate reputation – transparent ESG reporting builds trust with investors, customers, and regulators
- competitive advantage – many procurement processes favor companies with strong ESG credentials
- better access to capital – banks and investors prioritize ESG-compliant companies

- risk management – ESG data helps companies prepare for future regulatory and market changes

While compliance may seem complex, businesses can **use ESG data to optimize operations and gain market advantages**.

Proposed changes: making CSRD easier
To reduce reporting burdens, the **European Commission is considering changes**:
higher reporting thresholds – CSRD may apply only to firms with **1,000+ employees, €25M+ assets or €50M+ revenue** - this could **exempt up to 80% of previously included companies**

- **delayed deadlines** – Some companies **may start reporting in 2027 instead of 2025**.
- **Voluntary ESG reporting for SMEs** – A **simplified framework** may allow smaller firms to disclose ESG data **without excessive complexity**
- **less complex ESG data requirements** – The EU is working on **simplifying the ESRS framework**

These changes aim to **balance transparency with business feasibility**. Companies should **stay updated** on final decisions.
What should companies do now?

- **start tracking ESG data** now to avoid last-minute complications
- **use ESG management tools** to automate reporting
- **engage all relevant departments** - ESG reporting involves **finance, HR, supply chain, and operations**
- **follow regulatory updates** to adjust reporting strategies as needed

CSRD is more than a legal requirement—it is an **opportunity to improve business processes, strengthen market position, and prepare for the future**.

Newsletter #8

Smart manufacturing for SMEs: digital twins and practical alternatives

Why digital transformation matters

Digital transformation is no longer a luxury—it's becoming essential, even for small and medium-sized manufacturers. Faced with growing pressure to **increase efficiency, cut waste, and lower operating costs**, many SMEs are turning to emerging technologies to stay competitive. Among these, **digital twins** are often viewed as one of the most powerful tools available.

What is a digital twin?

A **digital twin** is a dynamic virtual model of a physical machine, process, or production line. By connecting real-time data from IoT sensors with AI-based analytics, it allows companies to **simulate changes, detect problems early, and optimize performance** without interrupting ongoing operations. For SMEs, this means the potential to **reduce material waste, save energy, and minimize downtime** while improving decision-making on the production floor.

The challenges of implementation

However, the path to implementing digital twins is rarely straightforward. Many SMEs struggle with **high initial investment costs**, especially when considering the infrastructure required to install sensors, connect systems, and manage cloud-based analytics platforms. The **technical complexity of integration**, **data security risks**, and **limited in-house expertise** often pose additional barriers.

More accessible starting points

Fortunately, embracing digital innovation **doesn't have to begin with a full-scale digital twin**. There are **more accessible alternatives** that can still deliver meaningful improvements in productivity and sustainability.

- **Cloud-based platforms** offer flexible tools for data management and process optimization without large upfront investments. These services are **easy to scale** and often include **built-in security features** and **automatic updates**, reducing the technical burden for smaller teams.
- However, companies must consider **dependence on internet connectivity** and **data privacy concerns** when using third-party providers.
- **Modular automation systems is** another practical approach. These allow manufacturers to **upgrade operations gradually** by adding functional units as needed. This flexibility makes it easier to **adapt to changing production needs** without major disruptions. While this path still requires some investment and technical integration, it often provides a **more manageable entry point** for SMEs looking to modernize step by step.

Choose the path that fits

Digital twins remain a compelling vision of the future—but they are not the only option. By exploring more practical solutions like cloud tools or modular automation, SMEs can move toward **smarter, more sustainable manufacturing** in ways that match their **resources, capabilities, and long-term goals**.

Newsletter #9

The 4 pitfalls that stop sustainability strategies from succeeding – and how SMEs can avoid them

More and more SMEs are committing to sustainability. They develop strategies, publish roadmaps, and set long-term goals. But somewhere between the planning stage and daily operations, many of these ambitions lose momentum.

A strategy, on its own, doesn't reduce emissions or improve efficiency. Without structure and engagement, even the most thoughtful plan remains a document – not a transformation tool. Below, we explore four common reasons why implementation fails, along with practical ways to prevent them.

1. No clear ownership

One of the main reasons strategies don't move forward is that **no one truly owns them**. Sustainability often starts as a project led by one person or team, with little connection to the rest of the organisation. When responsibility isn't clearly defined, action becomes optional – and results remain vague. **Assigning ownership** at the department level ensures that **goals are shared, not outsourced**. Whether it's energy management in production or supplier selection in procurement, every area can contribute meaningfully – but only if people know they're expected to. Ownership gives sustainability a place in the structure, not just in the strategy.

2. Poor organisational integration

It's not unusual for sustainability to operate in a silo. A company might commit to lowering emissions or increasing circularity, while other processes – purchasing, budgeting, product development – remain unchanged. **Without integration, goals lack the support systems** that turn intention into impact. For strategy to become reality, sustainability must be **built into how the business runs**. That means linking goals with operational targets, planning cycles, and internal communication. It also means ensuring that people in different roles understand how their work connects to the company's broader environmental ambitions. **Sustainability** cannot succeed as a parallel project – it **has to become part of the core**.

3. Vague or unrealistic targets

General statements like "go green" or "improve sustainability" **rarely lead to measurable change**. Meanwhile, overly ambitious goals can backfire if they lack a realistic foundation – especially in smaller companies with limited time, data, or capacity to monitor progress. **Start small**, **stay focused**, and **be specific**. For example, aim to "reduce packaging waste in product line X by 15% over 12 months." Clear metrics help teams track progress, identify problems early, and make meaningful adjustments. Once that's in place, more complex and far-reaching targets become easier to pursue with confidence.

4. Limited employee engagement

Sustainability is often **introduced from the top**, **without involving the people** who will be most affected by it. When employees aren't consulted or trained, they may not understand what's changing – or why it matters. In the worst cases, initiatives are seen as disconnected from reality or misaligned with day-to-day priorities. **Real transformation depends on people**. That means taking time to explain the purpose behind initiatives, encouraging staff feedback, and recognising everyday contributions. Small gestures – like sharing results, highlighting internal improvements, or acting on team suggestions – build trust and momentum. Culture matters as much as tools.

Making strategy work

A good sustainability strategy is not only about where a company wants to go – it's about how it gets there. **Clarity**, **coordination**, and **consistency** are essential. But above all, **companies need to treat strategy as a living process**: something that evolves with experience, adapts to real-world conditions, and grows stronger with every step taken.

The most successful strategies are not those with the biggest ambitions, but those that become part of how the company works – today, not just tomorrow.

Newsletter #10

Investor types for green manufacturing: choosing capital that supports sustainability

For manufacturing SMEs aiming to scale sustainably, capital is more than a financial resource – it's a strategic tool. The right investor can accelerate your path to decarbonisation, circular innovation, and competitive advantage. But funding comes in many forms, and not all are created equal when it comes to supporting sustainable growth.
This edition looks at two key types of investors – traditional and angel – and how to decide which is right for your company. The guidance shared here is based in part on an investment readiness course developed within the **Green Path Academy** – a learning space that will be part of the **B2GreenHub** ecosystem.

Traditional investors: large capital, limited involvement

Traditional investors – such as private equity firms or investment funds – typically focus on established companies with proven growth models. Their involvement is mostly financial, not operational. Key info:

- **when they fit:** your business has a clear growth trajectory, requires substantial capital, and can demonstrate strong financial returns
- **sustainability view:** many are increasingly drawn to ESG-aligned companies that manage environmental risks and improve long-term resilience
- **key benefit:** access to large-scale investment for infrastructure, production upgrades, or market expansion

Angel investors: early-stage support with active input

Angel investors are individuals who fund early-stage businesses and often contribute experience, guidance, and industry contacts. Key info:

- **when they fit:** you're in an early development phase and need support refining your green business model or entering new markets
- **sustainability view:** many angel investors are motivated by long-term impact and actively seek ventures with climate or circularity goals
- **key benefit:** strategic support alongside capital – especially valuable when testing new technologies or approaches

Preparing to engage with investors

Funding follows clarity. Before reaching out to investors, manufacturers should be prepared to demonstrate not just financial logic, but environmental relevance. Recommended steps include:

- defining your **funding gap** and how new capital will close it
- articulating a **scalable business model** with revenue logic and environmental value
- identifying **operational risks** – including supply chain, regulatory, and resource exposure – and showing how you plan to manage them
- clarifying your **legal and governance structure** to streamline due diligence
- framing your **sustainability impact** in terms of measurable outcomes, not just ambitions

A structured approach improves credibility – and signals that you understand how growth, risk, and responsibility intersect.

Rethinking capital for a green economy

As the manufacturing sector evolves, so do investor expectations. Funding is no longer just about projected returns; it's also about alignment – with climate goals, supply chain transparency, and resource efficiency. SMEs that are able to tell a clear, grounded story – of how their work supports environmental and economic transition – will be better positioned to attract support and scale their solutions responsibly.

Newsletter #11

Open manufacturing: sharing tools, sharing know-how

In most production environments, designs are protected, machines are locked behind safety doors, and product development happens in isolation. But a growing movement is rethinking this approach – and it's gaining ground across Europe.

Open manufacturing brings together people, tools, and ideas in a more transparent, collaborative way. It's not just about sharing blueprints, it's about lowering the barriers to innovation, testing ideas earlier, and building products that are more adaptable, repairable, and sustainable.

The idea isn't new. In fact, the roots of open manufacturing go back to community-driven workshops and the early days of FabLabs. What is new, however, is the way this approach is now influencing real companies – especially SMEs and startups looking for lean, flexible pathways to market.

What "open" really means

Open manufacturing is often misunderstood. It doesn't mean giving everything away for free. It's about **sharing just enough** to accelerate development, **inviting feedback** from peers or users, and using **modular, documented tools** that others can replicate or improve.
In practice, that might mean:

- publishing a hardware design under a permissive license
- building with standard, off-the-shelf components
- using shared prototyping labs to test quickly
- collaborating with external developers or makerspaces
- designing for disassembly and repair

The result? Products that are easier to maintain, adapt, and scale – without long waits or vendor lock-in.

Why it works

Let's say you're a small company working on a new modular air filtration unit. Instead of developing everything from scratch, you adapt an existing open-source enclosure, build your electronics around commonly available components, and test your setup in a local FabLab before investing in tooling. You publish your control software with basic documentation, and soon other teams are contributing patches or adapting your code for different use cases.
You're not just saving time. You're learning faster, reducing costs, and building trust through transparency.
This model aligns very well with the goals of **green transformation**. It reduces waste, promotes reuse, and encourages local, small-scale production – especially relevant for companies navigating tight budgets or fragmented supply chains.

How open manufacturing can support small innovators

For small manufacturers and solution providers, open manufacturing offers a practical alternative to traditional product development. With limited access to capital or in-house R&D, sharing tools and ideas – even partially – can speed up experimentation and reduce risk.
The ability to prototype in shared labs, use off-the-shelf components, or build on existing designs is particularly valuable for early-stage innovators working on green and digital solutions. It allows them to move faster without committing to expensive infrastructure, and to collaborate beyond their immediate ecosystem.
While not all companies are ready to embrace openness fully, even small steps like publishing documentation or testing in open environments can make a measurable difference.

Where to go from here

Open manufacturing isn't a silver bullet and it's not for every product or company. But for those willing to rethink how innovation happens, it opens doors: to faster testing, better products, and more resilient ecosystems.

Whether you're working on modular robotics, low-impact sensors, or even repairable home appliances, you don't have to start from zero. There's a growing network of platforms, labs, and partners willing to build with you, not just for you.

If that sounds like your kind of future, stay connected. The Greene 4.0 project continues to support founders and innovators who see **sharing not as a risk, but as a resource**.

Sources:
https://fabfoundation.org

https://oshwa.org/resources/open-source-hardware-definition/

Newsletter #12

From ideas to impact: the power of innovation contests in sustainability

Competitions have always been a way to spark creativity, but in the field of sustainability they take on an even greater role. Innovation contests are becoming an important tool for identifying promising ideas, accelerating their development, and connecting them with the industries that need them most.

Opportunities for startups and SMEs

For many young companies, breaking into the market is difficult. Limited resources, lack of visibility, and the challenge of finding the right partners can hold back even the most promising solutions. Contests provide a platform where startups and SMEs can present their ideas, compare them with others, and receive structured feedback. The competitive element pushes teams to refine their concepts, while deadlines create momentum that often leads to faster progress than in everyday operations.

Benefits for participants

The most direct benefit for participants is visibility. Entering a contest puts a company on the radar of potential clients, investors, and collaborators. Many competitions also offer mentoring or technical support, giving innovators the chance to stress-test their business models and strengthen their technology with expert input. Even those who do not win often leave with clearer strategies and valuable connections that help them move forward.

Impact on the economy

On a broader scale, contests help align entrepreneurial energy with pressing environmental and social needs. By framing challenges around issues such as waste reduction, resource efficiency, or clean energy, they direct talent towards solving real problems rather than hypothetical ones. The result is not only a flow of new ideas but also a culture where sustainability becomes a natural part of the innovation process.

A growing movement

Across Europe, sustainability-focused competitions are multiplying, from local hackathons to international calls for green manufacturing solutions. They reflect a growing consensus that climate goals cannot be achieved without engaging entrepreneurs, and that structured competitions are one of the fastest ways to mobilize them. Importantly, they also highlight solutions that might otherwise remain unnoticed, giving smaller innovators the chance to compete on equal terms with better-resourced players. This is also the path followed within Greene 4.0, where innovation contest encourage startups to bring forward new approaches to circularity and digital transformation.

Innovation contests are not a substitute for long-term funding, supportive regulation, or strategic partnerships. But as a complement, they are powerful. They inject urgency, attract diverse participants, and create a space where sustainability is measured not by declarations but by concrete ideas. For companies, they are a proving ground. For the wider economy, they are a signal that sustainable transformation is not just theory but something that can be designed, tested, and scaled today.

Newsletter #13

Greening the supply chain: how SMEs can drive sustainable procurement

Sustainability doesn't stop at the factory gate. Even companies that have optimized their production or energy use often find that the biggest share of their environmental impact lies elsewhere – in their supply chains. Raw materials, packaging, and logistics together shape a footprint that is difficult to see but essential to address. For small and medium-sized enterprises, it may seem beyond control. In reality, it's one of the most powerful areas for meaningful change.

Why sustainable procurement matters

Suppliers can account for up to 80% of a manufacturer's carbon footprint. The source of materials, the energy used in their production, and the routes they travel determine the true impact of any product. Choosing partners based not only on cost but also on environmental and social performance helps reduce emissions and increase resilience.
Beyond climate benefits, this approach prepares companies for what's coming. The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) requires firms to disclose emissions across their entire value chain. Those that start early will not only comply more easily but gain an edge in markets where transparency is fast becoming a standard.

Where to start?

1. **Map your suppliers**: identify the 10–20 suppliers that represent the largest share of your spending or material flow
2. **Set clear criteria**: add environmental and social standards to purchasing decisions, such as renewable energy use, waste reduction, or recycled content.
3. **Engage, don't impose**: work with suppliers to build joint improvement plans instead of enforcing rigid rules. Collaboration ensures progress and continuity
4. **Use data wisely**: even simple tracking tools or supplier self-assessments can help pinpoint weak spots and monitor change over time

The business case

Sustainable procurement is not only an ethical choice – it's strategic. Companies that integrate circular principles often gain lower risks from resource shortages or price swings, stronger relationships with clients who value responsibility and better results in tenders that include ESG criteria.
Collaboration also sparks innovation. Joint projects to cut packaging waste, reuse materials, or optimize transport frequently reveal savings that benefit all sides. By asking practical questions: *Where do our materials come from? How are they made? Can they be reused or recycled?*, SMEs can turn procurement from a routine process into a source of progress.

A shift in mindset

Sustainability is no longer limited to what happens inside the company. The next frontier is cooperation with suppliers, logistics partners, and customers. For SMEs, this doesn't require big budgets or complex systems; it starts with transparency and dialogue.

Those who take the lead today will not only meet new expectations but help redefine responsible manufacturing. Because a truly green supply chain is built not on declarations, but on everyday decisions and shared responsibility.

Newsletter #14

B2GreenHub is live – your green & digital hub

After months of joint work by project teams and partners across the Europe, the B2GreenHub b platform is now open. The idea behind it is simple: many manufacturing SMEs want to go green and digital, but the market of services and solutions is fragmented. B2GreenHub brings everything and everyone together in one place.

B2GreenHub connects MANUFACTURERS, SOLUTION PROVIDERS & EXPERTS

At its core, B2GreenHub is a space where three groups finally meet in a structured way:

- **manufacturing companies** looking for concrete support,

- **technology and service providers** offering tools and solutions,
- **experts and researchers** who can guide the transition.

Through the Marketplace and partner profiles, production companies can search for specific services – from energy efficiency and circular design to robotics, digital twins or data analytics – and find providers from across Europe, not just from their local network. For technology firms, consultancies and research organisations, B2GreenHub acts as a European showcase: a place to present their offer clearly, reach new clients and build long-term collaborations.

B2GreenHub gives you KNOWLEDGE

The Green Path Academy offers online training that turns big concepts into practical skills. Managers and engineers can explore topics such as smart manufacturing, digitalisation, green technologies and investment readiness, and then apply what they learn in their own factories. The goal is simple: help companies build an internal competence base, so that discussions about AI, data or sustainability become part of everyday business decisions.

B2GreenHub helps you PLAN

Change needs a roadmap. B2GreenHub provides key tools to structure the journey:

- **The Toolbox** – a step-by-step guide to designing and implementing a sustainability programme, from self-assessment and stakeholder mapping to concrete actions and reporting.
- **The Business Model Generator** – a tool that helps you rethink how your company creates value, where green and digital elements can be added, and how to turn them into a competitive advantage.

Together, they help turn “we should transform” into a realistic, time-bound plan.

B2GreenHub lets you TEST & IMPLEMENT

Before investing in new equipment or software, companies can use B2GreenHub to explore options and lower risk. Through its network of pilot sites and testing facilities, the platform supports “test before you invest” approaches – for example, trying out energy-efficient technologies, circular production solutions or advanced digital tools in controlled environments. This is especially important for SMEs, which often cannot afford costly trial-and-error experiments.

B2GreenHub helps you FIND FUNDING

Under the Get Funded section, companies can navigate public and private funding opportunities that support green and digital projects. A dedicated help centre points users towards relevant calls and instruments and helps them understand what kind of projects can be financed and how to prepare.
B2GreenHub is the result of long-term collaboration between partners who share one goal: make the green and digital transition easier, more structured and more accessible for manufacturing SMEs.
The platform is ready for both companies seeking support and providers who want to reach new clients.

Register and explore the platform here: https://www.b2greenhub.eu.

Newsletter #15

Keeping sustainability operational: a lightweight dashboard idea

In many SMEs, sustainability starts as a project: a new initiative, a workshop, a short-term plan. The intention is usually strong. What often proves difficult is keeping the topic visible once daily priorities take over.

One point worth considering is that sustainability tends to remain “alive” in organisations when it can be reviewed in a similar way to quality, output, or lead time: regularly, with clear ownership, and in a format that supports everyday decisions. Not necessarily a large reporting structure – sometimes just a small set of indicators that helps people notice trends early.

A common issue: dashboards that look good but don’t get used

A frequent pattern is that companies build sustainability dashboards that are comprehensive, but not practical. They contain too many metrics, rely on data that is hard to collect, and appear mainly when reporting deadlines approach. In that setup, sustainability can start to feel like administration rather than management.
A different approach – at least as a starting point – could be to focus on a smaller dashboard that is simple enough to review consistently, even if it is not “perfect” from a reporting perspective.

A proposal: six numbers that might be enough to start

If the goal is to keep sustainability connected to operations, an initial dashboard could be built around a small set of manufacturing-relevant signals. For many SMEs, the following categories may be a reasonable starting point:

1. **Energy cost per month** (cost can be easier to discuss than kWh)
2. **Energy intensity per unit** (a basic “how much energy per product” view)
3. **Scrap rate** (ideally visible beyond a single company-wide average)
4. **Waste cost per month** (including handling and treatment, not only disposal)
5. **Share of waste recycled or reused** (even if approximate at the beginning)
6. **One stability indicator** that reflects process health (e.g., rework, downtime, late-stage rejects)

This is not meant as a definitive ESG model, it is simply a suggestion for an operational baseline that might help identify where losses and risks concentrate.

Why this might be useful

One reason this approach can be attractive is that it reframes sustainability as something measurable and reviewable, not only reportable. For example, if scrap or rework rises, this is not just a “waste” topic – it may signal process instability, quality variation, or maintenance issues. In that sense, even a small ESG dashboard can sometimes act as an early-warning system for operational performance.

A practical point to consider

If an SME tries this approach for a short period (for example, a few months), it may become clearer whether the indicators are meaningful, whether the organisation can own the data, and whether the review rhythm is realistic. Only then does it make sense to decide whether the dashboard should be expanded – towards supply chain topics, product footprint, or formal reporting requirements.

Newsletter #16

Six sustainability myths in manufacturing – and what to do instead

In manufacturing, sustainability is often discussed in extremes. Some people treat it as a paperwork exercise. Others see it as a cost that “nice companies” can afford, but SMEs cannot. Both views block progress – and they miss the point. For most manufacturing firms, sustainability is simply a practical way to reduce loss, control risk, and respond to customer expectations with confidence. Let’s challenge six common myths and replace them with actions you can start this quarter.

Myth 1: Sustainability is mainly about reporting

Reporting is the output, not the work. The real work is understanding where your company loses money and where it is exposed. Start with two lists: biggest losses (scrap, rework, downtime, energy waste) and biggest exposures (energy prices, key materials, supplier reliability, customer requirements). Pick three priorities and track them every month.

Myth 2: You need big investments to make a difference

Many improvements come from better control, not new machines. A simple 30-day "no-investment sprint" can deliver surprising results: fix compressed air leaks, adjust pressure settings, reduce idle time, standardise start-up and shutdown routines, review setpoints, and strengthen preventive maintenance to reduce scrap. Small actions, fast feedback.

Myth 3: Green always means higher cost

Often "green" just means "less loss." Translate sustainability into numbers your teams already respect: cost of scrap per week, hours spent on rework, cost of unplanned stops, energy per unit. When people see the money and the stability benefits, the topic stops sounding like a slogan.

Myth 4: Only large corporations can handle this

SMEs can move faster because they have fewer layers. You don't need a perfect system to start. Choose one product line or one process, define a clear goal, appoint one owner who can make decisions, and use one simple dashboard with 5–10 metrics. Scale only after you see results.

Myth 5: We can't act until we have perfect data

Waiting for perfect data is a trap. You can improve a lot using the information you already have. Start with what is easiest to measure and hardest to argue with: material use, scrap, rework, and energy per unit. Then look at purchasing: which materials and components drive the biggest cost and the biggest risk? Even a rough ranking is enough to choose where to focus. You don't need a perfect footprint to make smarter decisions, you need a clear target and basic discipline.

Myth 6: It's the sustainability manager's job

In manufacturing, results come from production, maintenance, quality, and purchasing. Make ownership simple: production tracks scrap and energy per unit; maintenance reduces leaks, downtime and instability; quality reduces defect drivers and rework; purchasing improves material choices and supplier reliability. Sustainability becomes real when it has owners, routines, and targets.

If you want a practical starting point, choose the myth you hear most often in your company. Then pick one small change you can test in the next four weeks – and measure the result. Real progress is rarely dramatic. It is usually a sequence of practical decisions that reduce waste and increase control.

Newsletter #17

Greene 4.0: a journey of discovery, collaboration & transformation

It began as an ambitious idea – what if we could help manufacturing SMEs not just talk about green and digital transition, but actually make it happen? Over three years, our international team traversed **seven countries**, hosted transnational workshops, met with SMEs, innovation intermediaries, pilot partners, and researchers, and together we uncovered insights that no theory alone could have provided.
This newsletter celebrates that journey – its challenges, inspirations, and what we leave behind for European manufacturers ready to change.

The heartbeat of Greene 4.0: listening to SMEs
Before building tools, we listened. In a large transnational survey, more than **400 manufacturing SMEs** from across Central Europe shared their realities – from cautious optimism about digitalisation to pressing

concerns about costs, skills, and practical support. This wasn't just data; it was the pulse of industry telling us where the real bottlenecks and opportunities lie.
These voices shaped our roadmap and reminded the consortium that transformation isn't a one-size-fits-all journey – it is deeply contextual, human, and iterative.

From insight to practice: the User Acceptance Model

Early in the project, Greene 4.0 partners realised that SMEs needed more than inspiration – they needed a **framework to make sense of their green and digital readiness.**

Enter the **User Acceptance Model (UAM)** – a practical maturity assessment approach that helps companies evaluate where they are now, and where to focus next.
Rather than abstract indexes, the UAM guides SMEs through both **green** and **digital dimensions** – from operations and HR to strategy and enabling conditions – and helps translate assessment into actionable steps. Testing included workshops and pilot engagement with companies across partner regions.

To make the UAM truly accessible, the project also released user-friendly materials – brochures and a video tutorial – walking SMEs through the how and the why.

B2GreenHub: where the ecosystem comes alive

Perhaps the most visible outcome of our collective work is **B2GreenHub** – a digital ecosystem designed to bring coherence to what had been a scattered landscape of tools, services, networks, and opportunities.
Rather than being "just a website," B2GreenHub is a **living hub** where SMEs can:

- **explore tools and learning paths** relevant to green & digital transition
- **engage with innovation programmes and coaching**
- **connect with providers, demo centres, and peers**
- **find investment readiness support and templates**

It is our answer to the fragmentation that too often stalls progress – a place where inspiration meets action, and where solutions link seamlessly with real business needs.
B2GreenHub was officially **launched in late 2025** and continues to evolve as a resource ecosystem beyond the project's formal end.

Milestones and moments

The past three years were packed. A few snapshots from the journey:

- cross-border partner meetings in **Portorož, Budapest, and beyond**, where UAM, value chain pilots, and platform integration were refined together.
- a vibrant **Innovation Contest** spotlighting green and digital solutions from across Central Europe – pushing creativity and real-world application.
- transnational co-creation workshops designed to build new partnerships and value chains while weaving policy insights into practice.
- local SME sessions where green and digital challenges were discussed in everyday terms – practical, grounded, and immediately useful.

All of this added up to more than outputs – it shaped *a community*, a network of actors now connected across borders and sectors.

Looking forward: what comes next

While the INTERREG phase of Greene 4.0 concludes, the **impact continues**:

- B2GreenHub remains open for all SMEs and innovation partners seeking support and collaboration.
- the insights from SME engagement and UAM add to a growing evidence base for green digital transformation policy and programmes in Central Europe.
- regional action plans and co-created tools pave the way for future transnational value chains built on sustainability and innovation.

“Thank you” to our Partners, SMEs, and Supporters

From Austria to Poland, Slovenia to Hungary, Italy to Czechia and Germany – this was a truly European team effort. It was rich in perspectives, built on mutual curiosity, and fuelled by the belief that small and medium enterprises deserve both world-class tools and a supportive ecosystem to thrive in the green and digital era.

Here’s to the next chapter – greener, smarter, and stronger together.