



D3.3

Identifying the Tech Savvies to meet the Needs of the SMEs

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List of Abbreviations

SME: Small and Medium-size Enterprises

WP: Work Package

1 Executive Summary

This deliverable D3.3, "Identifying the Tech Savvies to meet the Needs of the SMEs," presents the results of a comprehensive mapping and analysis of technology-savvy SMEs capable of addressing key supply chain challenges across 14 European industrial sectors, as part of the ResC4EU project.

Context and Objectives:

European SMEs face increasing supply chain vulnerabilities due to disruptions, labour shortages, and digitalisation gaps. D3.3 aims to support SME resilience by identifying and profiling tech-savvy solution providers across the EU, using a robust taxonomy and challenge mapping developed in D3.1: Mapping of relevant Advanced Technologies and Supply Chain Challenges of SMEs. It also aims to address the challenges faced by traditional SMEs outlined in D3.2: Cluster Interaction with SMEs to identify Needs and Challenges for Model Building.

Approach:

The project applied a five-layer technology capability model (hardware, data & storage, software, navigation & connectivity, security) and mapped these to five core supply chain processes (planning, inbound logistics, production, outbound logistics, return logistics). Cluster partners conducted 52 structured interviews with tech-savvy SMEs using a standardised data collection tool, capturing detailed information on capabilities, sectoral reach, and supply chain process impact.

Key Findings:

- 52 tech-savvy SMEs were identified, with the strongest representation from Latvia, followed by Ireland, Spain, and Germany.
- The SMEs collectively cover all 14 sectors and five supply chain processes, with notable cross-sectoral and cross-process applicability.
- Software and data capabilities dominate the tech-savvy portfolio, while navigation & connectivity solutions are less common.
- There is a distribution of representation across different sectors as well. Mobility, Transport and Automotive is the most addressed by companies followed by electronics, digital, and more in no particular order. Some sectors (e.g., cultural & creative industries) and processes (e.g., return logistics) are less well covered, highlighting areas for further recruitment or support.
- The majority of needs identified by D3.2 like the challenges in supplier identification, reliability of production, delivery of goods, rising competition, staff shortages and more can be addressed to a certain degree by the capabilities of the identified tech-savvy SMEs. Further case-by-case mapping to be performed in future work-packages.

Conclusions:

The mapping confirms that the identified SMEs are well-positioned to address the major supply chain challenges faced by traditional SMEs, supporting resilience, sustainability, and competitiveness across Europe.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

The results will inform targeted matchmaking between traditional SMEs and tech-savvy providers, support the development of the ResC4EU platform and marketplace, and guide future policy recommendations. Further work is recommended to address sectoral/process gaps and to continuously update the mapping as the ecosystem evolves.

Limitations:

The sample reflects SMEs accessible through cluster partners and may underrepresent certain regions or sectors. Ongoing outreach and data collection are advised.

2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of this document

This document, D3.3 "Identification of Tech Savvies to meet Needs of the SMEs" is a deliverable of the Resc4EU project. Its purpose is to explore technology capabilities that have been used to solve supply chain challenges. The document also identifies specific tech savvies and highlights their expertise and capabilities in deploying innovative and effective solutions to meet the needs of the SMEs identified in D3.2 "Cluster Interaction with SMEs to identify Needs and Challenges for Model Building" across the 14 sectors included in the project. The 14 sectors addressed by the ResC4EU project include:

1. Aerospace and Defence
2. Agri-food
3. Construction
4. Cultural and Creative Industries
5. Digital
6. Electronics
7. Energy-Intensive Industries
8. Energy-Renewables
9. Health
10. Mobility, Transport and Automotive
11. Proximity, Social Economy, and Civil Securities
12. Retail
13. Textile
14. Tourism

Objectives of this document are:

- Understand how and what technology has been applied to in relation to supply chains.
- Identify tech savvy SMEs with capabilities that are relevant for meeting the needs of the SMEs identified in D3.2.
- Highlight the verified capabilities and expertise of the tech savvies under a defined taxonomy. The capabilities were verified through desk-based interviews.
- Demonstrate how the tech savvy SMEs identified are fit to address the needs and challenges of the traditional SMEs.

2.2 Document structure

The document is divided into three Chapters:

- Tech Savvy Identification and Classification Methodology
- Tech Savvy Identification: Data and Analysis
- Mapping challenges of traditional SMEs to capabilities of identified tech-savvies

2.3 Targeted group

The document is classified as public, means for the members of the consortium including the commission services and for the general public.

Specifically, the following groups would benefit from this document:

- Tech Savvies: To understand the strength and capabilities of the technology companies across the different regions of the EU and enhance visibility of their capabilities.
- Traditional SMEs: Find and explore the technological capabilities to meet their needs and challenges.
- Policy makers / Government Entities: Understand the distribution of the capabilities in terms of regions and gaps that exist in terms of meeting the needs of the traditional SMEs.

3 Tech Savvy Identification and Classification Methodology

This section delves deeper into the taxonomy and methodology used to capture and characterize the technology savvy companies and their capabilities. It outlines the rationale for the method of categorisation and the process used for the data capturing of the tech savvy SMEs. It also outlines in detail the process used to identify the tech savvy SMEs. This work takes inspiration from the concepts outlined and taxonomy used in D3.1: Mapping of relevant Advanced Technologies and Supply Chain Challenges of SMEs.

3.1 Proposed Taxonomy Definitions

The methodology proposed initially was to use the categorisation of digitalisation, process optimisers, and tools and method specialists.

Digitalisation is referred to as the processing and analysis of data throughout the organisation using advanced digital technologies to drive changes and improvements in supply chain processes that result in new business models and social changes¹.

Process Optimisers are organisations involved in a systemic analysis of supply chain processes to improve efficiency, efficacy, and quality of business and products. The objective is to reduce waste and improve business growth and outcomes².

Tools and Method Specialists are organisations with specific capabilities and technologies that can allow for process improvement and digitalisation advancement within traditional SMEs.

The next section goes into details of this categorisation as per D3.1.

3.2 Alternative Proposed Taxonomy and Relevance to Supply Chain Challenges

Based on the shortcomings with the initially proposed taxonomy of categorisation, we explored the categorisation as proposed in D3.1. This breaks it down as per technological capability, supply chain process impacted, and sectors served. The report goes into slight detail of each to provide context before then comparing how the essence of the proposed taxonomy is still captured in the new method of categorisation with taxonomy from D3.1.

The technological capabilities can be broken down into five interconnected layers. These include:

- Hardware (e.g., robotics, advanced materials, sensors): To collect the data and provide inputs from the real and physical world and also execute the outputs of the software back into the real world
- Data Storage (e.g., big data platforms, data lakes, data governance): To manage and store the enormous amount of data generated by the hardware used in the physical world
- Software (e.g., AI, advanced computing, digital platforms): For processing the data and running analysis and providing predictive outputs and recommendations

¹ SAP (n.d.) Digitization vs. digitalization. Available at: <https://www.sap.com/products/erp/digitization-vs-digitalization.html> (Accessed: 27 May 2025).

² ProcessMaker (2022) Process optimization explained. Available at: <https://www.processmaker.com/blog/process-optimization-explained/> (Accessed: 27 May 2025).

- Network and Connectivity (e.g., satellite navigation, 5G/6G): This is a layer spanning all of the above to allow seamless transition throughout the entire technology stack
- Security (e.g., cybersecurity, physical security, compliance management): This is a layer spanning all of the above to ensure protection of all proprietary information.

In terms of the supply chain processes, there are 5 different processes:

- Planning: This process focuses on the data collecting, analysis, and forecasting around business growth and operations at a strategic level.
- Inbound Logistics: This process covers the procurement and supply chain management of getting goods and raw materials required by the company for the production of their goods.
- Production: This is one of the key business activities that focuses on the making of the goods / providing services.
- Outbound Logistics: This focuses on the sales and distribution of these finished goods from the previous step to the end users and customers.
- Return Logistics: This process focuses on getting the product back to the organisation due to failures and defects due to production or outbound logistics.

This process-oriented framework is also directly drawn from D3.1, which further maps these processes to specific types of supply chain challenges (vulnerabilities, risks, disruptions) and the capabilities required to address them (internal, network, IT/digital).

3.3 Comparison of initial and proposed taxonomy

The new taxonomy, as proposed by D3.1, explores the what and the how of the interventions of the tech savvy companies. The 'what' refers to the supply chain process impacted and the 'how' refers to the technical capabilities.

The initial taxonomy (digitalisation, process optimisers, tools/methods specialists) was found insufficiently granular and did not allow for clear mapping across processes and sectors. The D3.1 taxonomy, by contrast, enables a multidimensional analysis of both the supply chain process (what) and technology capability (how), capturing the cross-cutting nature of digitalisation and process optimisation. As such, the D3.1 taxonomy was selected for its comprehensiveness and alignment with the needs of sector-wide supply chain resilience mapping.

The digitalisation is a cross-process spanning categorisation and the granularity across the 'what' and 'how' is lost if it is just kept at the high level as per the old taxonomy. Thus, the revised taxonomy captures this better. In terms of the process optimisation as well, it is very focused on the production step of the supply chain process and thus is also captured in the new taxonomy. In terms of the methods and tools specialist, this is captured in the 'how' aspect with the technical specification of the tech savvy.

Thus, with the proposed taxonomy as per 3.1 capturing the data in a more cohesive and consistent manner, it was determined that this taxonomy would be used for the purposes of the data analysis for this task.

3.4 Standard Data Collection Tool

To capture the results in a uniform method, a standard data collection tool was developed for the cluster partners to fill in the form based on the interviews with the tech savvies. The motivation of the tool was to align with the taxonomy generated in D3.1 and allow for qualitative analysis of the data to improve easy match-making with the needs and challenges of the traditional SMEs. Cluster partners had a major role to play in the identification of the tech savvy SMEs. They were able to identify appropriate SMEs from their networks that would be a good fit for addressing the challenges identified in D3.2. Clusters then interviewed these tech -savvy companies and summarized their discussions to capture the data in the standard data collection tool that was developed.

The tool was broken into 2 sections. The first section was around the demographic information about the company; the section 2 was focused on the essential data capture. The questions asked were as below:

- Section 1:
 - Organisation Name – Free Text
 - Organisation Address – Free Text
 - Country of Location – Single choice
 - Website URL – Free Text
 - Brief Description of Organisation – Free Text
 - Cluster inputting the interview – Single Choice
- Section 2:
 - Selection of all the technical capabilities that were applicable – Multiple choice
 - Selection of all the sectors served in by the SME – Multiple Choice
 - Selection of all the supply chain process impacted due to the solution of the SME – Multiple choice
 - Brief description of products / services – Free Text
 - Any example of past project that might be relevant – Free Text

The structure and content of this tool directly reflect the taxonomy and mapping approach of D3.1, ensuring that data on technology capability, sector coverage, and supply chain process impact could be systematically captured and analysed.

3.5 Interview Statistics

The clusters identified tech-savvy SMEs from their network companies that have a good, proven track record. The role of clusters in the process was essential as they know their members very closely and can vouch for the calibre of services of these tech savvy can offer SMEs. Clusters are also very aware of the capabilities and offerings of their member SMEs. Thus, clusters used a number of methods to conduct cluster-to-business (C2B) interviews with their members, including phone calls, email-based interviews, face-to-face meetings, and 1-1 meetings and conversations at events or conferences. A combination of all these various methods were adapted by each cluster that suited best to their audience to extract the information needed to capture the capabilities of the tech savvy SMEs and document the results in the standard data collection tool. From M11 (November 2024) to M17 (May 2025), 52 interviews were completed across all cluster partners, in the following countries Latvia, Ireland, Poland , Spain, Germany and Austria with 52 tech savvy SME identified. All interviews but one were undertaken with members of

the clusters engaged in ResC4EU project; that one interviewee was an external company from outside ResC4EU partner membership at this stage. The results are documented in the upcoming section.

3.6 Key Results

Data from the standard data collection tool was initially extracted and analysed to identify trends and strengths within the cohort of tech-savvy SMEs, and to evaluate how these align with the needs and challenges of traditional SMEs. This analysis is detailed in Section 5 of the report.

The section below outlines the process and presents the key findings from the cluster interviews conducted with the identified SMEs, with results categorised into four distinct analyses:

1. **Analysis of Tech savvy SMEs serving different sectors in each of the supply chain process.** The motivation for this analysis was to understand how the capabilities of tech savvies were spread across the industry sectors and different supply chain processes and the impact they have. It was important to understand if there were sectors that were more or less favoured by solution providers and if there were certain gaps in terms of supply chain processes impacted in our pool of identified SMEs.
2. **Analysis of Tech savvy SMEs across the different technology capability layers in each of the supply chain process.** The motivation for this was to look at the distribution of capabilities across each of the layers in each of the supply chain processes. This was important to understand any gaps in terms of the capabilities of the identified SMEs.
3. **Analysis of specific capabilities in each of the tech capability layers.** The motivation for this analysis was to go deeper into each of the capability layers and understand the distribution in terms of the specific capability. This was important to have a more granular understanding in terms of the capabilities and gaps as we match-make the tech-savvy SMEs and traditional SMEs in the future work-packages of the project.
4. **Analysis of cross-sectoral and cross-supply chain process presence of tech savvy companies.**

3.6.1 Tech savvy SMEs serving different sectors in each of the supply chain process

This section focuses on the distribution of the identified tech savvies across the sectors in each of the supply chain processes impacted. This section gives a variation of how spread the SMEs working in each of the sectors is and also identifies how this spread might vary across each of the supply chain process impacted.

Planning

Looking into planning as a supply chain process impacted by their solution, there are a total of 47 companies out of 52, that have solutions that assisted with challenges in the planning supply chain process for traditional SMEs. When looking at the spread of the SMEs across each sector, we can visualise that there is a significant number of SMEs operating in the mobility, transport, and automotive industry with 39 SMEs with solutions in that area. The least number of SMEs are in the cultural and creative industries with 23 companies. Figure 1 illustrates the spread across all the 14 sectors.

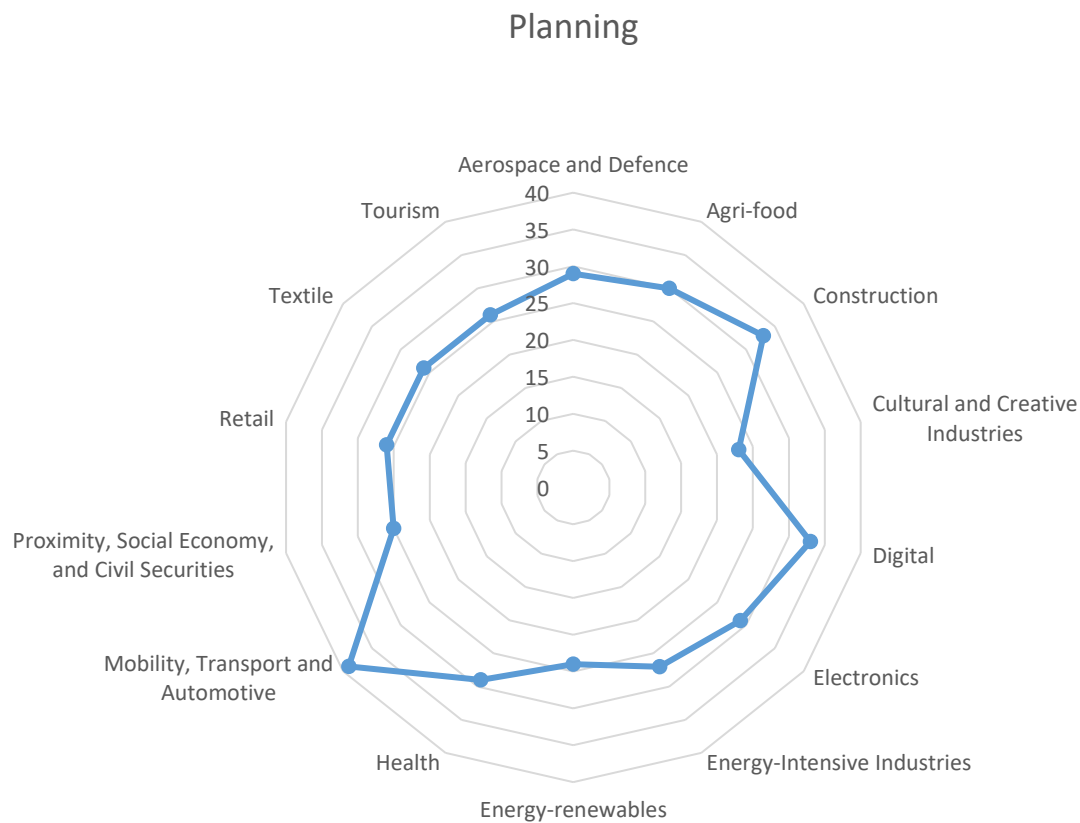


Figure 1: Number of tech savvy SMEs involved in helping traditional SMEs with planning broken down as per the sector they operate in for planning

Technology solutions revolutionize planning across the 14 critical EU sectors. Advanced forecasting tools process vast datasets—historical sales, weather patterns, economic indicators, and real-time market shifts—to deliver precise demand predictions and optimize resource allocation. Cloud-based platforms facilitate seamless collaboration among stakeholders, from food producers to water utilities, enabling real-time updates and scenario planning. These tools help anticipate disruptions, such as supply shortages in defense or raw material delays in manufacturing, ensuring resilience. By aligning with EU sustainability goals and security mandates, technology empowers strategic decision-making to keep critical sectors robust and adaptable.

An example of a solution provided by “SME 4” supporting the planning supply chain process in an innovative platform for process coordination and resource management for manufacturers. It supports the full life cycle of the product - sales, estimation, processing of design information, order and project management, production planning, quality control, logistics, assembly, etc. The platform is easily integrated with the accounting systems, design tools and manufacturing equipment and automates the essential manufacturer processes, such as production planning.

Inbound Logistics

Looking next into inbound logistics as a supply chain process impacted by their solution, there are a total of 32 companies out of 52, that have solutions that assisted with challenges in the inbound logistics supply chain process for traditional SMEs. When looking at the spread of the SMEs across each sector, we can visualise that there is a significant number of SMEs operating in the mobility, transport, and automotive industry with 28 SMEs with solutions in that area. A close second is the construction sector with 27 SMEs in the area. The least number of SMEs are in the cultural and creative industries with 20 companies. Figure 2 illustrates the spread across all the 14 sectors.

It is to be noted that the difference between the sectors is not significant in terms of SMEs served. This could be an indicator of the importance of inbound logistics solutions. It also highlights that the solutions that address challenges of inbound logistics are sector agnostic.

In inbound logistics, technologies like IoT, blockchain, and GPS tracking transform material flows for sectors like manufacturing, chemicals, electronics, and aerospace. IoT sensors monitor shipments of raw materials—steel for construction, components for tech, or supplies for hospitals—providing real-time visibility on location, temperature, and condition. Blockchain ensures transparency by recording every transaction, verifying supplier authenticity, and ensuring compliance with strict EU regulations, thus

Inbound Logistics

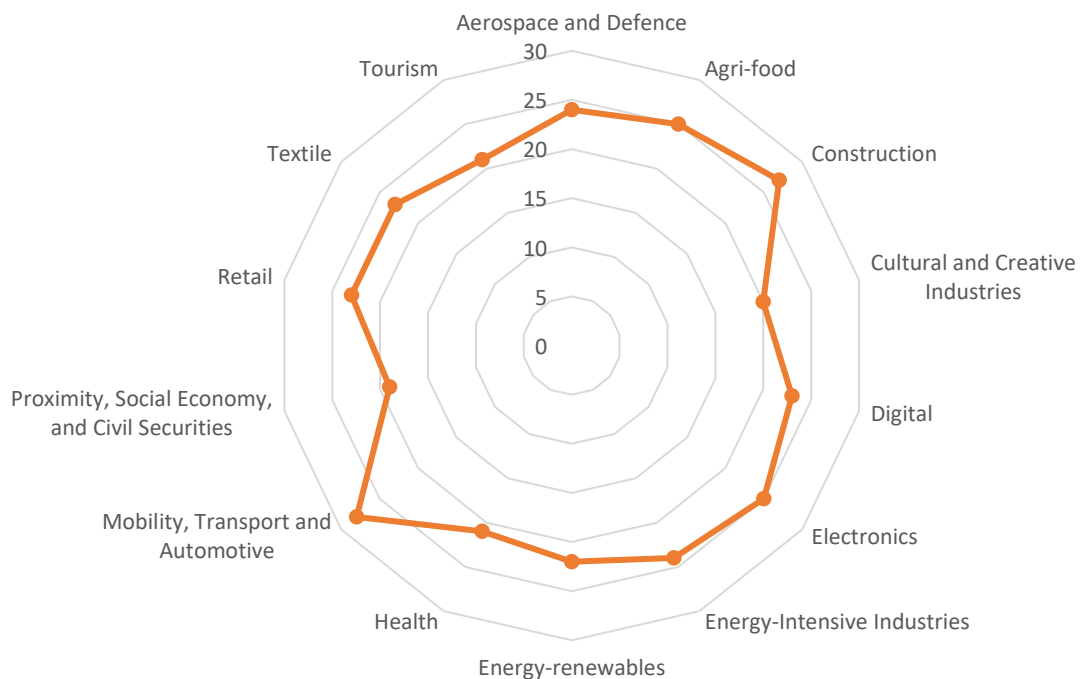


Figure 2: Number of tech savvy SMEs involved in helping traditional SMEs with inbound logistics broken down as per the sector they operate in

reducing fraud and delays. For critical sectors like defense, space, and communications, this traceability is vital for security and reliability. Automated inventory systems further streamline procurement, cutting costs and ensuring timely inputs, which bolsters the EU's supply chain efficiency and stability.

An example of a technology solution for inbound logistics supply chain process is a platform of “SME 2” to evaluate and manage a traditional SMEs suppliers’ social, environmental, governance, and business ethics performance. This platform allows the company to identify and vet local suppliers thus improving and enhancing their inbound logistics supply chain and improving their resilience by finding good quality alternate and local suppliers for their raw materials.

Production

There are a total of 36 companies out of 52, that have solutions that assisted with challenges in the production supply chain process for traditional SMEs. Just like with the planning and inbound logistics, the highest number of SMEs with solutions addressing a particular sector is Mobility, Transport, and Automotive with 31 SMEs. There is a similar number of SMEs supporting production in the construction, agri-food, and electronics sectors with 27, 26, and 25 SMEs respectively. The least number of SMEs are in the cultural and creative industries and also in the proximity, social economy, and civil securities sector with 19 SMEs each. Figure 3 illustrates the spread across all the 14 sectors.

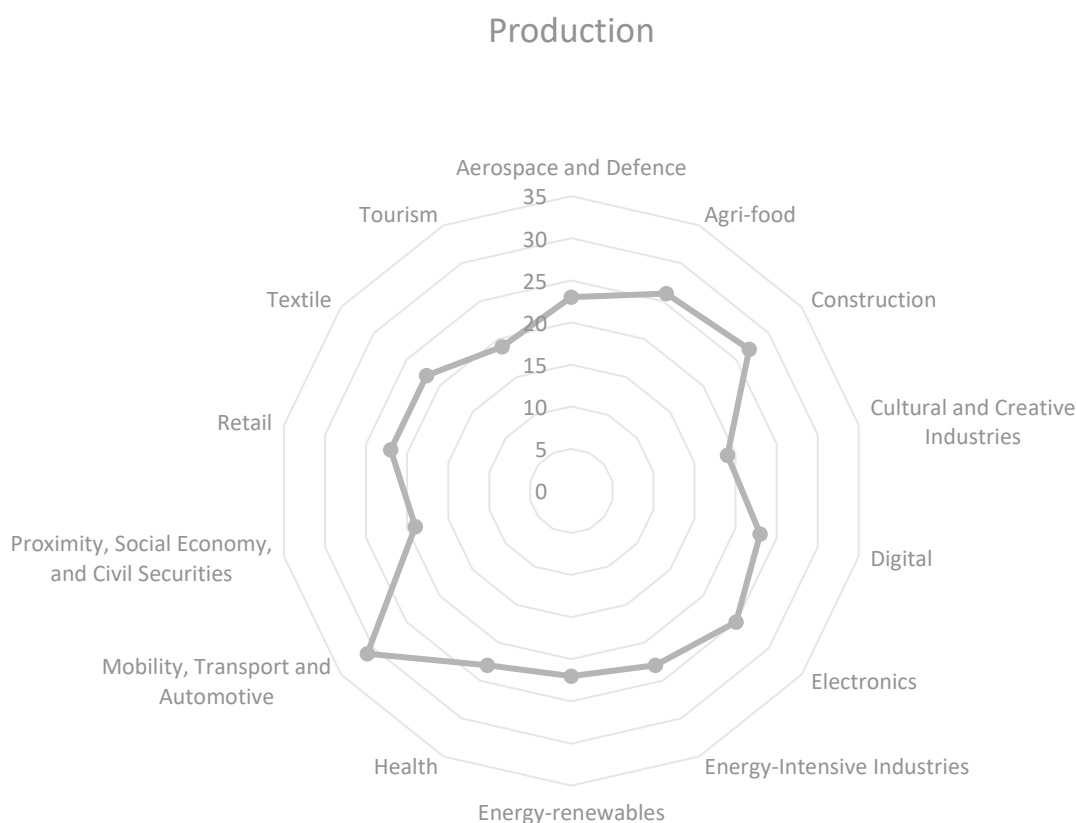


Figure 3: Number of tech savvy SMEs involved in helping traditional SMEs with production broken down as per the sector they operate in

Production across EU sectors like automotive, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and energy is enhanced by automation, robotics, and Industry 4.0 technologies. Smart factories deploy AI to monitor machinery, predict maintenance needs, and optimize workflows, increasing output for steel plants or power facilities. Digital twins—virtual models of processes—allow simulation and testing, ensuring quality in nuclear facilities, safety in healthcare products, and efficiency in chemical manufacturing. Robotics handle repetitive tasks, freeing workers for complex roles, while real-time data integration minimizes downtime. These advancements cut waste, align with EU environmental standards, and boost productivity, ensuring critical sectors meet growing demands reliably.

An example of identified tech savvy SME, “SME 36”, addressing the production supply chain process, is offering industrial automation and robotics solutions that help manufacturing companies and critical infrastructure managers reduce manual labour, increase efficiency and optimize resource use. The offered solutions ensure a unified management of different equipment and data integration, making processes more flexible, secure and transparent. The company stands out for its ability to tailor automation solutions to each customer's specific needs, ensuring integration into existing infrastructure without much change.

Outbound Logistics

31 SMEs out of 52 companies have solutions in the outbound logistics supply chain process across all the 14 sectors. There is the same number of SMEs across the construction, Mobility, Transport, and Automotive, and Digital sectors with 26 SMEs each. The lowest number is in the proximity, social economy, and civil securities industries with 20 SMEs and 21 SMEs in the cultural and creative industries. Figure 4 illustrates the spread across all the 14 sectors.

Outbound logistics benefit from technologies like automated warehousing, GPS tracking, route optimisation, and autonomous systems, serving sectors like transport, retail, emergency services, and water management. Advanced software calculates the fastest, most fuel-efficient routes for delivering medical supplies, food, or energy resources across the EU. Drones and autonomous vehicles accelerate urgent shipments, such as vaccines for healthcare or spare parts for infrastructure, even in remote areas. Warehouse robots speed up order fulfilment, while real-time tracking ensures visibility for customers and regulators. These solutions enhance reliability, reduce emissions, and meet EU demand for sustainable, efficient distribution across all 14 critical sectors.

An example of identified tech savvy SME, “SME 20” in the outbound logistics supply chain process is a AI-powered marketing, business development, and media solution that drive business growth through automation and strategic creativity. The core nature of the service includes business development and sales support through AI-driven lead generation and company analysis, performance marketing with PPC, Meta advertising, SEO, and partnership-driven growth hacking, as well as communications and media services such as content creation, PR, and training programs. The company’s unique approach blends automation with human creativity, delivering high-impact solutions that enhance brand visibility, engagement, and business success. This allows organisations to be visible to the right audience at the right time allowing for improving the sale and distribution of their finished goods and services.

Outbound Logistics

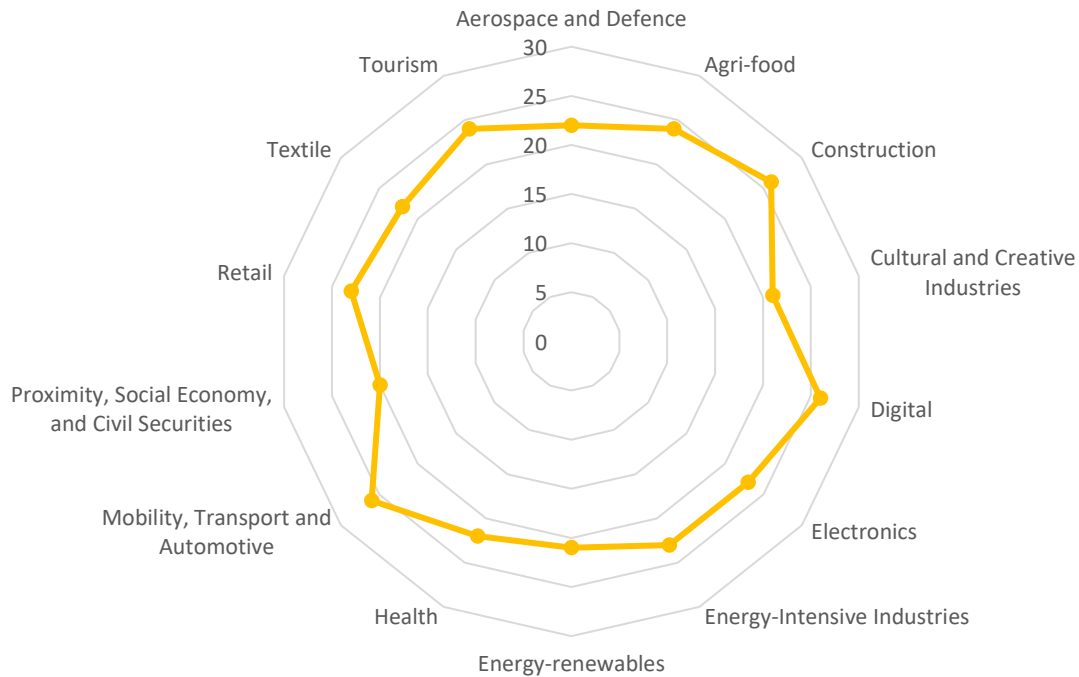


Figure 4: Number of tech savvy SMEs involved in helping traditional SMEs with outbound logistics broken down as per the sector they operate in

Reverse Logistics

Finally, looking into return logistics, there are the lowest number of 24 SMEs out of 52 that have solutions in this supply chain process across all the 14 sectors. Out of these 24 companies, 22 are present in the mobility, transport and automotive sector and 21 in the retail sector. This is not surprising given the challenges of return logistics faced by retail-based companies. Figure 5 illustrates the spread across all the 14 sectors.

Return logistics is transformed by reverse logistics software, RFID, AI analytics, and automated sorting, supporting a circular economy in EU sectors like electronics, automotive, construction, and waste management. RFID tags track returned goods—defective devices, used car parts, or recyclable materials—enabling precise monitoring of volume and condition. AI analyzes return patterns, optimizing processes for refurbishment, recycling, or disposal, which is crucial for chemicals and manufacturing. Software coordinates logistics, reducing costs and ensuring compliance with EU waste directives. These technologies minimize environmental impact, recover valuable resources, and strengthen sustainability, aligning with the EU’s goals for a greener, more resilient economy across critical sectors.

Reverse Logistics

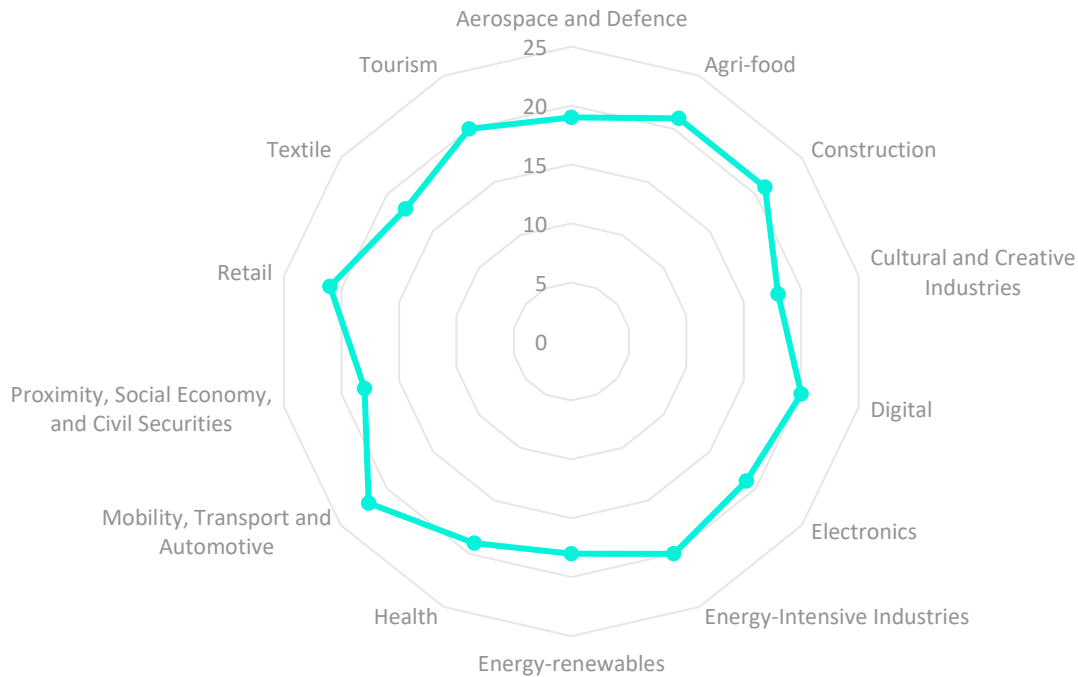


Figure 5: Number of tech savvy SMEs involved in helping traditional SMEs with return logistics broken down as per the sector they operate in

An example of tech savvy SME identified in our C2B interviews, “SME 10” that addresses the challenges with return logistics, provides 2 distinct solutions. The first solution is an artificial intelligence conversation analytics tool that helps save time and improve sales, customer service and their quality control. With this tool, traditional SMEs don't need to listen to hundreds of conversations at random to determine quality levels and understand product return or customer satisfaction analytics. The second solution incorporates several specific types of agents like information search agent, customer service agent, and document and form verification agents to seamlessly automate the product returns journey with their customers for the traditional SMEs.

Thus, overall, we can see that there is a good representation of SMEs across all the sectors with solutions addressing challenges faced by traditional SMEs in all supply chain processes from planning to return logistics. There is some indication that the solutions in impacting each of the supply chain process are sector agnostic which is beneficial for the tech savvy SMEs as it allows them to scale into different sectors. There is a consistent lower number of SMEs addressing challenges in the cultural and creative industries and the proximity, civil securities, and social economy sectors compared to mobility, transport and automotive industries or construction or digital industries. This trend is observed across all supply chain processes which could indicate a couple of conclusions.

The first one is the importance of the mobility, transport and automotive sector in relation to the supply chains. There is more activity in terms of companies operating in that space with the topic in consideration and the reverse is true in terms of cultural and creative industries. The second conclusion could be that these sectors were underrepresented in the cohort of SMEs that we identified. The list of SMEs here was a representative sample and there was selection bias in the types of SMEs we outreached. The last conclusion could be that the solutions offered by the SMEs scale across supply chain processes and is not limited to just one. Like for example, an Enterprise Resource Planning software can plan across multiple supply chain processes.

3.6.2 Tech savvy SMEs across different technology capability layers in each supply chain process

This subsection focuses on how the 52 identified tech-savvy SMEs distribute their solutions across the five technology-capability layers (data, software, hardware & materials, connectivity and security) for every supply-chain process. It mirrors the layout used in § 4.4.2 but substitutes sectors with capability layers. The accompanying radar charts (Figures 6 –10) visualise the spread.

Planning

Out of 47 SMEs whose solutions address the planning process, software-layer capabilities dominate with 42 SMEs, followed by data-layer solutions at 37. Security attracts 18 providers, whereas hardware and materials remains in single digits, and connectivity is almost absent. Figure 6 shows this strong digital skew, confirming that planning challenges are chiefly met with data management and software analytics tools.

Technology solutions transform planning by integrating the five layers of technical capabilities for optimal outcomes. Data analytics harness vast datasets—historical sales, market trends, weather, and consumer

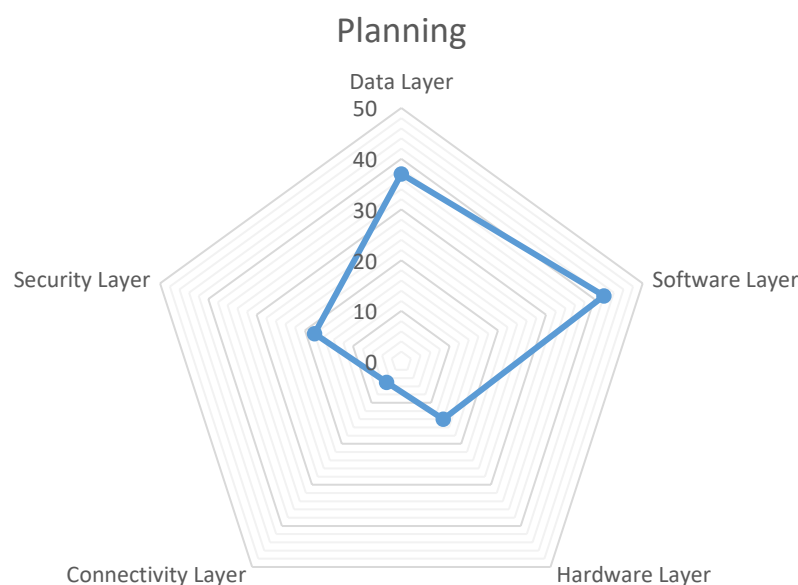


Figure 6: Planning – tech-savvy SME count per technology-capability layer

behavior—delivering precise demand forecasts and risk assessments. Software like advanced ERP systems and AI-driven planning tools synthesize this data, enabling dynamic scenario modeling, resource allocation, and strategic decision-making. Hardware, such as high-performance servers and edge computing devices, processes complex simulations swiftly, supporting real-time adjustments. Connectivity via cloud platforms and high-speed networks links stakeholders—suppliers, planners, and distributors—facilitating seamless collaboration and data sharing across global supply chains. Security measures, including end-to-end encryption, multi-factor authentication, and secure data storage, safeguard sensitive plans and intellectual property, ensuring resilient, trustworthy planning processes.

Another example of an identified tech-savvy SME in the planning supply chain process includes a company “SME 8” that develops and customizes various sophisticated information systems and business solutions. The company customizes workflow management with both waterfall and Agile or another project management approach, if necessary, through software. This allows the traditional SME to elevate their project and organizational planning capabilities through digitalisation with this advanced planning tool.

Inbound logistics

A total of 32 SMEs support inbound-logistics challenges. Here, the pattern persists: data with 28 SMEs and software with 31 SMEs together account for more than two-thirds of all capabilities. Security attracts a modest 14, hardware sits at 8, and connectivity remains the least served layer with 3. Figure 7 illustrates this distribution.

Inbound logistics thrives through the five technical layers, streamlining material flows effectively. Data from IoT sensors and GPS trackers monitors shipments, capturing real-time metrics like location, temperature, and humidity for perishable or fragile goods. Software such as warehouse management systems (WMS) and supply chain platforms optimises inventory levels, schedules deliveries, and predicts

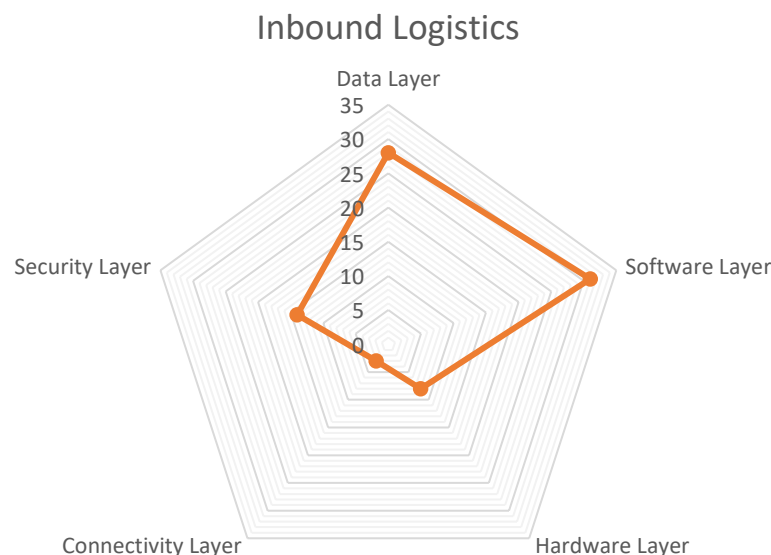


Figure 7: Inbound logistics – tech-savvy SME count per technology-capability layer

delays. Hardware, including barcode scanners, automated guided vehicles, and robotic arms, accelerates material handling and reduces human error in warehouses. Connectivity via 5G, Wi-Fi, and satellite networks ensures constant communication between suppliers, logistics providers, and receiving facilities, enabling rapid response to disruptions. Security tools like blockchain validate supplier credentials, track transactions, and prevent fraud, while encrypted data flows protect sensitive shipment details, ensuring efficient and reliable inbound logistics.

Another example of inbound logistics from a different lens as mentioned previously is an identified tech-savvy SME, “SME 41”. This SME provides software for shipping companies, like a fleet management tool for shipping. It was one of the first maritime tracking solutions in the industry and evolved to a modular performance analysis and reporting tool allowing traditional companies to track their raw materials and deliveries.

Production

For production-related challenges, solutions are provided by 35 SMEs. Data-layer and software offerings lead the field, each represented by 31 SMEs. Security is addressed by 12 providers, while hardware and materials account for 13. Connectivity, however, is supported by only 3 SMEs. As shown in Figure 8, the radar chart reflects a similar pattern to that of the planning phase, though on a slightly smaller scale.

Production is revolutionised by leveraging all five technical layers for efficiency and quality. Data collected from sensors and quality control systems monitors equipment health, production rates, and defect levels in real time. Software like Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES) and AI algorithms coordinate workflows, optimize schedules, and predict maintenance needs to minimize downtime. Hardware, such as industrial robots, CNC machines, and 3D printers, automates repetitive tasks, enhances precision, and scales output for diverse products. Connectivity through industrial IoT networks and high-bandwidth

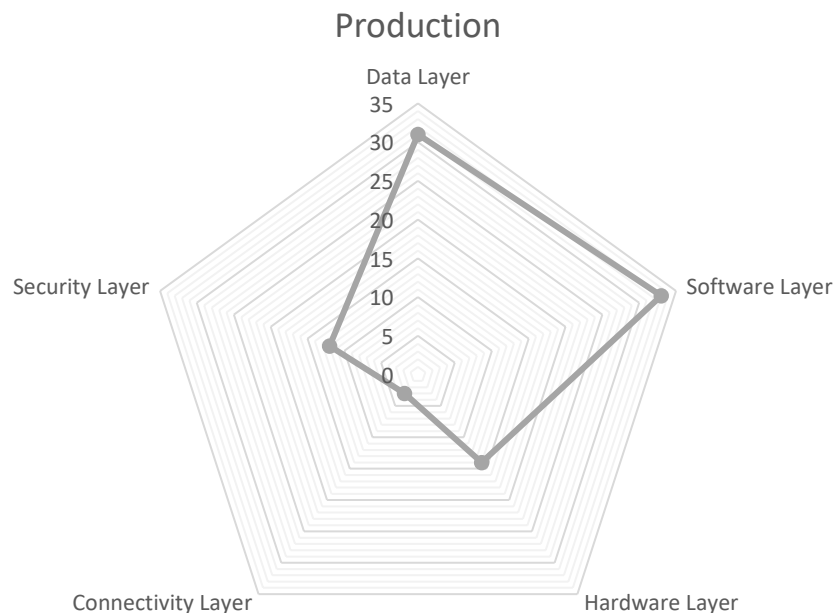


Figure 8: Production – tech-savvy SME count per technology-capability layer

systems links machines, operators, and management, syncing operations across facilities. Security protocols, including secure firmware updates, network segmentation, and user authentication, shield against cyber threats and data breaches, ensuring safe, uninterrupted production processes across supply chains.

An example of identified tech-savvy accelerating time to production, “SME 45” has an IoT based solution to accelerate machine and system integration by conducting virtual site acceptance and factory acceptance testing. This solution allows the traditional industry to save significant amount of money when installing new production equipment and troubleshooting problems at the supplier location before the machine is delivered and installed on their site through simulations and software with IoT capabilities.

Outbound logistics

In outbound logistics the total SME count remains close to 30, but software marginally overtakes data as the most populated layer. 31 SMEs in software versus 29 SMEs in data. Security keeps its mid-table position at 15, with hardware with 7 SMEs and connectivity with 3, still in single figures. Figure 9 highlights this subtle shift towards software-heavy, customer-facing solutions.

Outbound logistics benefits significantly from the five technical layers, enhancing delivery efficiency. Data from GPS, RFID tags, and telematics tracks shipments, providing real-time visibility into location, estimated arrival times, and environmental conditions. Software for route optimization and fleet management analyzes traffic, weather, and fuel costs to determine the fastest, most cost-effective paths. Hardware, including drones, autonomous delivery vehicles, and automated warehouse systems, speeds up order fulfilment and last-mile delivery for diverse goods. Connectivity via 5G, satellite, and cellular networks maintains constant contact between drivers, warehouses, and customers, enabling dynamic rerouting and

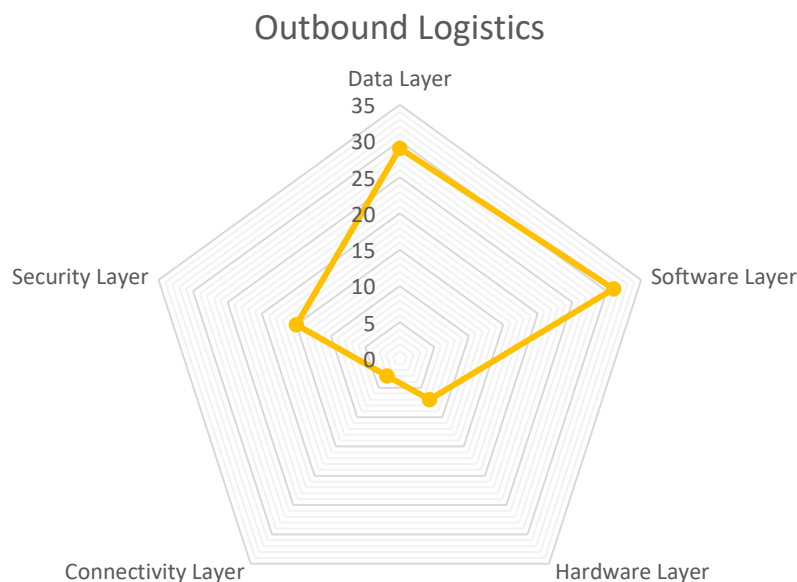


Figure 9: Outbound logistics – tech-savvy SME count per technology-capability layer

updates. Security measures like tamper-proof packaging, encrypted tracking systems, and digital signatures protect goods and data, ensuring secure, reliable distribution to end users.

An example of this would a solution by an identified tech-savvy, “SME 42”. The company has created a warehouse and sales management system that maintains a catalogue of goods, warehouse balances, analysis of sales data and movement of goods. The system works in synchronization with cash registers/ POS systems, helps maintain gift cards, customer loyalty programs, sales promotions and other features needed for trading, and ensures data analysis, reducing the manual work and errors of sales companies.

Reverse logistics

Reverse logistics attracts the fewest tech-savvy SMEs overall 24 SMEs, yet the hierarchy of layers is unchanged: software first with 24 SMEs, data second with 22 SMEs, security third with 11 SMEs, hardware fourth with 7 SMEs and connectivity last with only 3 SMEs. Figure 10 shows the same tapering shape, emphasising that even return-flow issues are tackled far more through digital than physical capabilities.

Return logistics is optimised by integrating all five technical layers, supporting sustainability and efficiency. Data analytics from customer feedback, return rates, and product condition reports identify patterns, pinpoint issues, and inform recycling or refurbishment strategies. Software for reverse logistics and customer relationship management streamlines return approvals, tracks progress, and coordinates refunds or replacements seamlessly. Hardware, such as automated sorting machines, conveyor belts, and inspection robots, handles returned items quickly, assessing damage or reuse potential with precision. Connectivity through cloud-based platforms and real-time networks links retailers, warehouses, and recycling centres, ensuring smooth coordination across the return process. Security tools like RFID tags, secure databases, and encrypted communication protect customer data and track items, preventing loss or fraud and aligning with sustainable, efficient return logistics.

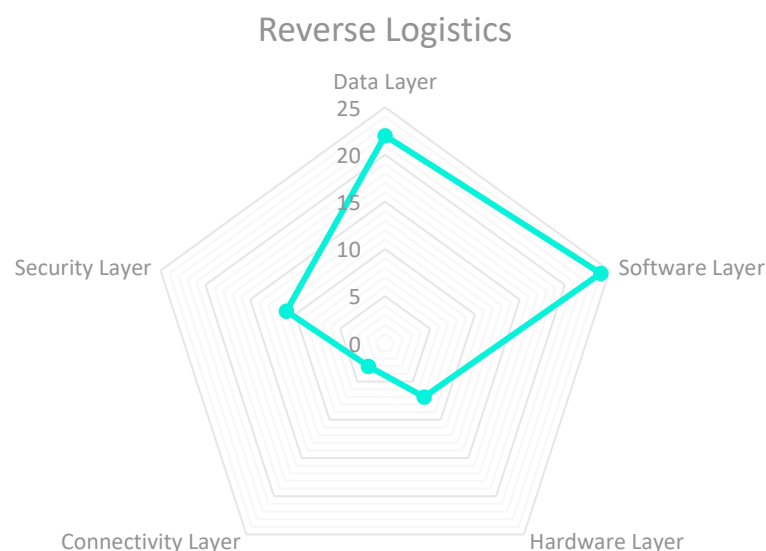


Figure 10: Reverse logistics – tech-savvy SME count per technology-capability layer

Another example of automation in the customer relationship for reverse logistics of the products / services is an identified tech-savvy SME, “SME 13”, that has developed a multi-channel tool that will be an assistant to every company where calls are made or received, as well as text messages, e-mails, WhatsApp, Telegram and other communication channel messages sent.

3.6.3 Specific capabilities in each of the tech capability layers

This subsection describes how the 52 tech-savvy SMEs distribute their solutions inside the five technology layers, drawing directly on the five doughnut charts (Figures 11-15).

Data Layer

Looking first at the data layer (Figure 11), exactly half of the recorded capabilities – 38 out of 76 (50 %) – sit in data management and analytics. A further 22 capabilities (29 %) specialise in data governance and backup, while the remaining 16 (21 %) focus on storage technologies, such as cloud, edge and high-performance computing. The emphasis on analytics and governance confirms that resilient supply-chain solutions start with clean, well-managed data.

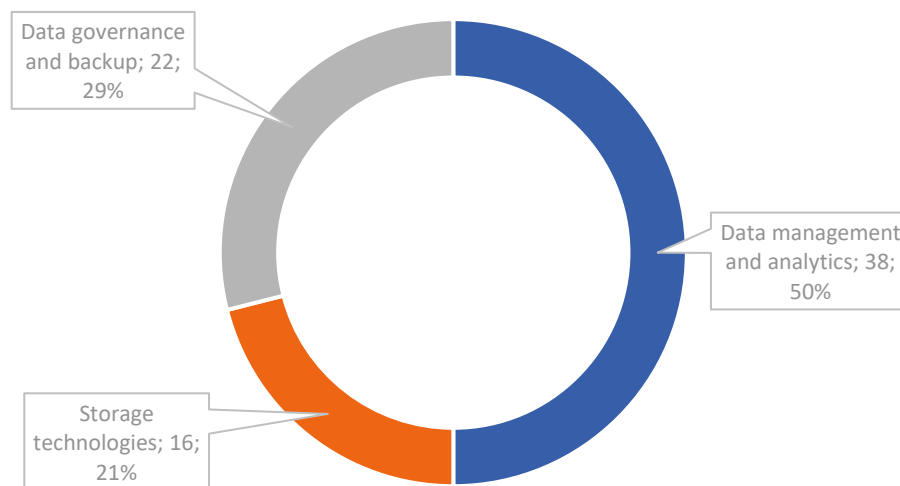


Figure 11: Distribution of tech-savvy SME capabilities within the Data layer (data management & analytics, storage technologies, data governance/backup)

An example of identified tech-savvy, “SME 30”, that has capabilities in the data layer for their solutions includes a cloud-based service that offers extensive business data analytics for SMEs. The cloud service provides real-time data feeds, data consolidation from multiple source systems, and a full-cycle business intelligence process: from downloading data to publishing reports to your company team.

Software Layer

Turning to the software layer (Figure 12), the spread is broader but still dominated by two categories: digital platforms account for 43 capabilities (46 %) and artificial-intelligence applications for 31 (33 %). Advanced computing contributes a respectable 15 capabilities (16 %), whereas extended-reality and

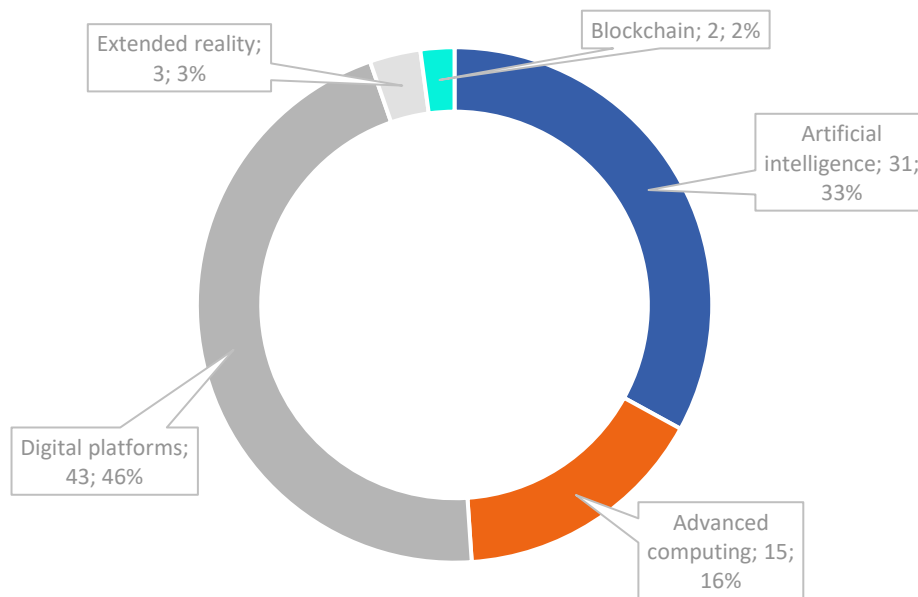


Figure 12: Distribution of tech-savvy SME capabilities within the Software layer (digital platforms, artificial intelligence, advanced computing, extended reality, blockchain)

blockchain tools remain niche, with 3 (3 %) and 2 (2 %) items respectively. This mirrors market trends in which platform-based and AI-driven services are maturing fastest.

An example of an identified tech-savvy with significant software capabilities is a company, “SME 47”, with expertise in AI. They have an AI chatbot that can be imagined as an employee who knows multiple languages, is available around the clock, never tires, and is always polite. It is able to process up to 8 out of every 10 questions asked on a daily basis so that the team has more time to deal with more complex problems. Their answers are provided by large language models (LLM) and supplemented by previously defined dialogue scenarios; hence this next-generation approach enables the companies to use all the information they need (websites, documents, videos, etc.) to create a unique knowledge base for the virtual assistant.

Another example of a company again using AI and software capabilities to advance automation and productivity in traditional SMEs, “SME 51” is an AI-powered optimisation tool designed to help manufacturers optimise production, reduce waste and lower carbon emissions. The company has developed a set of optimisation algorithms that help production managers make smarter choices. Using a probabilistic approach combined with AI models to extract carbon emissions data traditional SMEs can optimise production to run more efficiently.

Hardware Layer

Within the hardware and materials layer (Figure 13) the picture is more even. Advanced manufacturing solutions lead with 9 capabilities (26 %), followed by advanced transportation and mobility 8 (24 %), advanced electronics 8 (23 %) and advanced energy technologies 6 (18 %). Advanced materials complete

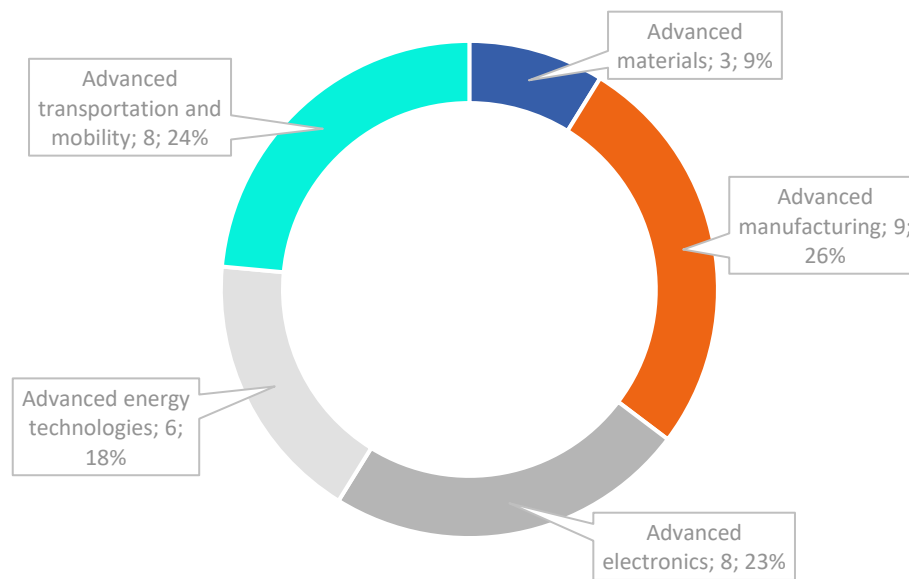


Figure 13: Distribution of tech-savvy SME capabilities within the Hardware & materials layer (advanced manufacturing, advanced transportation & mobility, advanced electronics, advanced energy technologies, advanced materials)

the set with 3 capabilities (9 %). The distribution illustrates that no single hardware sub-field yet dominates supply-chain resilience; instead, SMEs diversify across several physical technologies.

An example of a hardware solution for quality control in production is an identified tech-savvy SME, “SME 48”, with a solution empowering industry such as medical devices, automotive manufacturing, semiconductors, and food & beverage production to achieve product quality and precision. They have varied AI powered vision systems combining both software and hardware to create a valuable solution for traditional SMEs.

Connectivity Layer

Capabilities in the navigation and connectivity layer (Figure 14) are comparatively scarce – just 6 in total. Next-generation wireless (5G / 6G and beyond) supplies 3 capabilities (50 %), satellite-based navigation systems 2 (33 %) and indoor positioning systems 1 (17 %). The low count highlights an opportunity for future cluster matchmaking in positioning and connectivity technology.

An example of identified tech-savvy SME, “SME 35”, addresses the need of traditional SMEs for flexible, scalable and cost-effective IT infrastructure, providing remote access to needed resources 24/7 without customers’ need to invest in maintaining their physical facilities. This company offers virtual machines, VMware public clouds and private clouds, tailoring solutions to customers’ needs. They also offer the ability to rent custom servers and other IT hardware configured to meet client-specific requirements and ready in stock configurations.

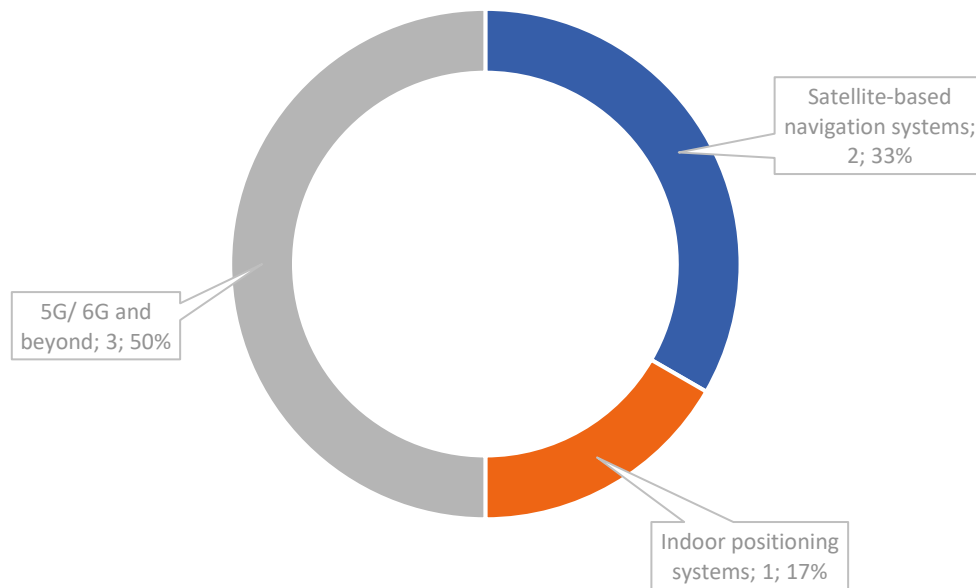


Figure 14: Distribution of tech-savvy SME capabilities within the Navigation & connectivity layer (5G / 6G and beyond, satellite-based navigation systems, indoor positioning systems)

Security Layer

Security

Finally, the security layer (Figure 15) splits into three roughly proportional segments. Information-security services top the list with 16 capabilities (52 %), cyber-security tools follow with 13 (42 %), and physical-security offerings make up the remaining 2 (6 %). The data show that SMEs place greatest emphasis on protecting information assets, with cyber-security a close second.

A company identified as a tech-savvy operating with capabilities in the security layer, “SME 32”, has an offering of a high availability IT Platform and IT security solution for ships. Based on industrial standards, this company provides a rugged system that overcomes almost all drawbacks of standard IT setups.

Overall, the doughnut charts confirm a clear pattern: data- and software-layer capabilities dominate the tech-savvy portfolio, while navigation and connectivity remain the least populated layer. Hardware, materials and security capabilities occupy the middle ground, each with a balanced internal mix. This insight will guide forthcoming ResC4EU matchmaking activities, highlighting where additional provider coverage or targeted support could most effectively strengthen SME resilience.

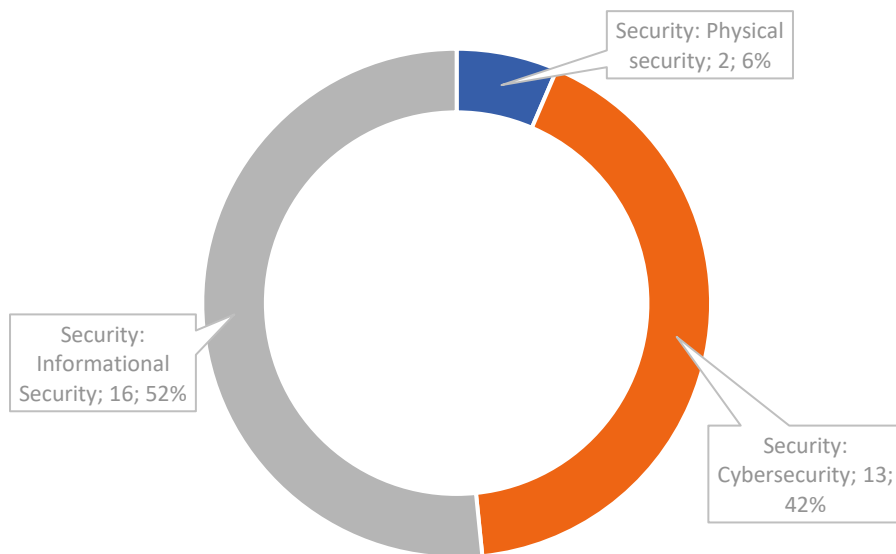


Figure 15: Distribution of tech-savvy SME capabilities within the Security layer (information security, cyber-security, physical security)

3.6.4 Cross-sectoral and cross-supply chain process presence of tech savvy companies

It was an observation during the interviews and from the data analysis previously as well that there was a significant number of tech savvy SMEs that provided solutions across all the sectors and across all the supply chain processes.

Looking at the sectors impacted, there were 18 out of 52 tech savvy SMEs that had a solution that impacted each of the 14 sectors. This illustrates that technological solutions can be sector agnostic and that there are significant similarities across the processes and challenges to be addressed across the 14 sectors.

In terms of the supply chain processes impacted, there were 20 out of 52 tech savvy SMEs that had a solution that spanned across all supply chain processes.

4 Mapping Challenges to Capabilities of Identified Tech-Savvies

This chapter summarizes some of the key challenges identified as per D3.2 and explores how the capabilities of the identified tech savvies can meet these key needs and challenges of the traditional SMEs and help them be more resilient. This chapter also highlights some of the key-matches that can be explored in future work-packages of the project.

4.1 Key Challenges Identified

Based on the D3.2 deliverable, the key challenges identified across SMEs in various industrial ecosystems are:

- **Challenge 1: Delivery Issues**

Sectors Impacted: Mobility, Transport & Automotive; Construction; Aerospace & Defence; Energy-Intensive Industries; Renewable Energy

Technology offer: Tech-savvy SMEs offer real-time tracking, AI-based forecasting, and logistics optimisation tools that improve delivery reliability, predict delays, and enhance flexibility. These include IoT-enabled tracking systems, route optimisation software, and digital platforms for supply chain visibility

- **Challenge 2: Bureaucracy and Regulations**

Sectors Impacted: Construction; Agri-Food; Health; Energy-Intensive Industries; Tourism

Technology offer: Several tech-savvy SMEs provide automated compliance tools, sustainability reporting platforms, and data governance systems. These help SMEs manage complex EU and national regulations, especially around emissions and sustainability, by simplifying documentation and ensuring regulatory alignment.

- **Challenge 3: Customer Dependencies**

Sectors Impacted: Aerospace & Defence; Renewable Energy; Offshore Oil & Gas; Research Institutes; Mobility, Transport & Automotive

Technology offer: Digital platforms developed by tech-savvy SMEs support customer diversification through market analytics, CRM systems, and AI-driven sales tools. These enable SMEs to expand their customer base, improve engagement, and reduce overreliance on a few clients.

- **Challenge 4: Supplier Dependencies**

Sectors Impacted: Agri-Food; Mobility, Transport & Automotive; Aerospace & Defence; Electronics; Retail

Technology offer: Solutions include supplier evaluation platforms, blockchain-based traceability, and local sourcing tools. These help SMEs identify alternative suppliers, assess supplier reliability, and build more resilient and transparent supply networks.

- **Challenge 5: Product-Related Challenges**

Sectors Impacted: Agri-Food; Mobility, Transport & Automotive; Aerospace & Defence; Electronics; Renewable Energy

Technology offer: Tech-savvy SMEs offer predictive maintenance, quality control systems, and digital twins to monitor and manage critical components. These technologies reduce dependency on vulnerable parts and improve the reliability of production inputs.

- **Challenge 6: Relationship Management**

Sectors Impacted: Mobility, Transport & Automotive; Retail; Construction

Technology offer: CRM platforms, collaborative planning tools, and secure communication systems help SMEs build and maintain trustful relationships with partners. These tools support transparency, data sharing, and long-term cooperation.

- **Challenge 7: Price and Competition**

Sectors Impacted: Retail; Digital; Textile; Electronics

Technology offer: AI-powered market intelligence, dynamic pricing tools, and digital marketing platforms help SMEs stay competitive. These solutions enable better pricing strategies, customer targeting, and differentiation in crowded markets.

- **Challenge 8: Infrastructure Failures**

Sectors Impacted: Energy-Intensive Industries; Mobility, Transport & Automotive; Construction

Technology offer: Tech-savvy SMEs provide resilient IT infrastructure, cloud-based systems, and redundant network solutions that mitigate the impact of power outages or transport disruptions. These ensure business continuity and operational stability.

- **Challenge 9: Recruiting and Retaining Talent**

Sectors Impacted: Construction; Health; Energy-Intensive Industries

Technology offer: Automation tools, digital training platforms, and AI-assisted HR solutions help SMEs address labour shortages. These technologies reduce manual workloads, support upskilling, and improve workforce productivity.

- **Challenge 10: Information Gaps**

Sectors Impacted: Retail; Agri-Food; Electronics; Mobility, Transport & Automotive

Technology offer: Data analytics platforms, supply chain mapping tools, and GWP tracking systems enhance visibility and decision-making. These solutions close knowledge gaps by providing real-time insights into supply chain operations and environmental impacts.

4.2 Needs and Challenges Addressed with Identified Tech-Savvies

The following section outlines the key challenges identified in D3.2 and presents a high-level analysis of how the tech-savvy companies interviewed in D3.3 possess the capabilities and experience to support traditional SMEs in addressing these challenges. It details the number of tech-savvy companies per country that are equipped to tackle each of the 10 SME challenges. Each challenge is then classified based on the level of support available—**strong** (20 or more supporting companies), **moderate** (15–19), or **low** (fewer than 15)—to highlight areas of robust engagement and those requiring further attention in future project phases.

- **Strong Support Areas:**

- **Challenge 1: Delivery Issues** has **24 companies** offering solutions like IoT tracking, route optimisation, and logistics platforms.
- **Challenge 2: Bureaucracy and Regulations** is supported by **25 companies**, the highest among all, showing strong capabilities in compliance automation, sustainability reporting, and data governance
- **Challenge 3: Customer Dependencies** (20 companies)
- **Challenge 5: Product-Related Challenges** is supported by **22 companies**, indicating solid capabilities in predictive maintenance, digital twins, and quality control.
- **Challenge 7: Price and Competition** (21 companies) show moderate engagement. These areas are covered by CRM systems, supplier evaluation tools, and AI-driven market intelligence, but could benefit from more specialised or diverse tech providers.
- **Challenge 10: Information Gaps** is addressed by **23 companies**, reflecting a robust presence of data analytics, supply chain mapping, and visibility tools

- **Moderate Support Areas:**

- **Challenge 4: Supplier Dependencies** (18 companies),
- **Challenge 6: Relationship Management** (19 companies)
- **Challenge 8: Infrastructure Failures** is supported by only **17 companies**, providing scope for the project partners to further engage organisations offering resilient IT infrastructure, cloud redundancy, and disaster recovery.
- **Challenge 9: Recruiting and Retaining Talent** has the lowest support with **16 companies**, highlighting a gap in automation, digital HR, and upskilling platforms that could be addressed in future phases.

- **Low Support Areas:**

None of the 52 companies interviewed ranked low in terms of their ability to address some of the challenges identified in D3.2.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

Through 52 structured interviews and detailed capability mapping, this report confirms that a diverse and competent group of tech-savvy SMEs exists across Europe, capable of addressing the supply chain challenges faced by traditional SMEs. These companies offer scalable, cross-sectoral solutions that span all five supply chain processes and technology layers.

The analysis highlights areas of strong support—particularly in software and data-driven solutions—and identifies gaps in infrastructure resilience and talent development. These insights provide a foundation for targeted matchmaking, strategic platform development, and future policy recommendations.

In combination with the needs identified in D3.2 and the taxonomy framework from D3.1, this deliverable lays the groundwork for the next phase of the ResC4EU project: enabling impactful collaborations between traditional SMEs and tech-savvy providers to build more resilient, sustainable, and competitive supply chains across Europe.

5 Annex 1

The table below reproduces – verbatim – the key structured fields collected for each of the 52 tech-savvy SMEs.

Table 1: Individual interview datapoints for 52 tech-savvy SMEs (source: “ResC4EU Identification of Tech-Savvy Companies – Raw CSV”, 26 May 2025)

ccc	Country	Data and Storage: Data management and analytics										Data and Storage: Storage technologies										Data and Storage: Data governance and backup										Data Summary										Software: Artificial intelligence										Software: Advanced computing										Software: Digital platforms										Software: Extended reality										Software: Blockchain										Software Summary										Hardware: Advanced materials										Hardware: Advanced manufacturing										Hardware: Advanced electronics										Hardware: Advanced energy technologies										Hardware: Advanced transportation and mobility										Hardware Summary										Navigation: Satellite-based navigation systems										Navigation: Indoor positioning systems										Navigation: 5G/ 6G and beyond										Connectivity Summary										Security: Physical security										Security: Cybersecurity										Security: Informational Security										Security Summary										Aerospace and Defence										Agri-food										Construction										Cultural and Creative Industries										Digital										Electronics										Energy-Intensive Industries										Energy-renewables										Health										Mobility, Transport and Automotive										Proximity, Social Economy, and Civil Securities										Retail										Textile										Tourism										Planning, administration, and strategy										Inbound Logistics: Procurement, Supply and										Production, Quality control, and Operational Processes										Outbound Logistics: Sales and Distribution including transport										Product Returns and Reverse Logistics																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																												
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