



# International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Scholarly Publisher  
RS Global Sp. z O.O.  
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

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## ARTICLE TITLE

COMPARISON OF THE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS GROWTH  
METHODS IN SMEs ALGERIA AND EU

## ARTICLE INFO

Tayebi Abdallah, Benba Djelloul, Seddiki Ahmed. (2025) Comparison of The Sustainable Business Growth Methods in SMEs Algeria and EU. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 2(46). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.2(46).2025.3421

## DOI

[https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.2\(46\).2025.3421](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.2(46).2025.3421)

## RECEIVED

20 May 2025

## ACCEPTED

28 June 2025

## PUBLISHED

30 June 2025

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# COMPARISON OF THE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS GROWTH METHODS IN SMEs ALGERIA AND EU

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the proposed study is to elaborate the comprehensive framework to sustain growth in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the analysis of the prospective drivers of sustainability as identified in the realms of economics, organizational behavior, and environment. By making a comparative study of Algeria and the European Union (EU), the study outlines the major differences between the two scenarios and attempts to make lessons out of the achievements of European activities. SMEs are challenged with various challenges, such as the lack of finance and reinforced digital infrastructure, lack of institutional support, and complicated regulatory environments that are undermining their enterprising opportunities and potential suicides. Conversely, the member states within the EU have set in common systems that lead to innovations, protecting the environment and modernizing technologies. The study has an analytical framework based on the discussions of the role of the economy, organizational forces and community involvement/action in facilitating sustainable development and has been able to give a conclusive analysis of the level of Algeria as compared with the EU. It determines the primary challenges facing Algerian SMEs - especially financial and poor digital resources and suggests that by implementing aspects of the effective policies of the EU, it is possible to promote modernization and sustainability of the sector of the SMEs in Algeria.

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## KEYWORDS

Algeria, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Sustainability, Economic Growth, Innovation, Comparative Analysis

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## CITATION

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. A look at the background of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a pivotal role in the global economy by creating job opportunities and fostering innovation. According to the G-8 Group in 1997, these enterprises are key contributors to sustainable development, especially in countries at early stages of development (Benmessaoud, 2024) For example, Algeria witnessed the creation of many such ventures following the privatization of public enterprises and the restructuring of large corporations, as labor-intensive businesses contribute to job creation and strengthen social bonds (Bank, 2018)

However, SMEs face many challenges that hinder their growth, such as difficulties in obtaining financing, complying with regulatory requirements, and facing intense competition (Company, 2023). Additionally, since the majority of Algeria's population is young, these enterprises struggle with unstable market conditions, making their survival and development even more difficult (Peng, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to build alliances and business networks to provide the necessary skills and resources to overcome these obstacles (Lee, 2021). Considering environmental and social aspects in business practices also contributes to ensuring long-term success (Peter Green, 2019).

Developing a strong support system for SMEs is fundamental, especially when it includes effective financing policies and support for entrepreneurship, enabling these enterprises to succeed and contribute to sustainable economic growth (Development, 2022).

### **1.2. Significance of Building a Sustainable Business**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly recognized as pivotal drivers of sustainable economic growth, contributing to over 90% of businesses globally and playing a major role in job creation, innovation, and poverty reduction (Mohammad N. Alraja, 2025). Their agility and capacity for innovation make them essential in advancing green transitions and supporting resilient economies, especially as new global challenges emerge ((OECD), 2025b). Integrating sustainability into SME operations—covering environmental, social, and economic dimensions—not only enhances their competitiveness and market access but also improves operational efficiency and brand reputation (Tania Diacono, 2024).

Recent systematic literature reviews highlight that technology adoption is a key enabler for SMEs to embed sustainability in their business models, allowing for more efficient resource use, waste reduction, and innovation in products and services (Alraja et al., 2025). However, SMEs continue to face barriers such as limited financial and human resources, regulatory pressures, and the complexity of sustainability reporting (OECD, 2025a; OECD, 2022) ((OECD), Fostering convergence in SME sustainability reporting: A background study, 2-25a) ((OECD), Recommendation on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy, 2022). Effective sustainability reporting and access to green finance are now increasingly prerequisites for SMEs to participate in supply chains and attract investment ((OECD), 2025b).

Despite these challenges, evidence shows that SMEs engaging in sustainable practices experience tangible benefits, including cost savings, improved resilience, increased sales, and enhanced stakeholder trust (Tania Diacono, 2024). Policymakers and international organizations are therefore focusing on developing supportive ecosystems, streamlined reporting frameworks, and targeted financial instruments to help SMEs overcome obstacles and unlock their full potential in driving sustainable development ((OECD), Fostering convergence in SME sustainability reporting: A background study, 2-25a) ((OECD), SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook 2025, 2025b). Ultimately, fostering sustainability in SMEs is not only crucial for their long-term survival but also for achieving broader societal and environmental goals in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)((OECD), Recommendation on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy, 2022).

### **1.3. What the study aims to accomplish**

This study would like to concentrate on the various parameters that affect sustainable development of SMEs in Algeria and in European Union. One of the objectives of the study is to determine the impact of risks and barriers on the way SME owners operate towards sustainability with a particular emphasis on the role of the government that is outlined in the study (Huatao Peng, 2022). In addition, the study also attempts to present a model of connecting the inside and outside factors promoting sustainable development with the assistance of the work by Runtuk et al. on the managerial competencies and entrepreneurial mindset, as well as government support (Johan Krisnanto Runtuk, 2023).

This research aims to identify the key sectors in which Algerian SMEs underperform, while exploring regional and international lessons that can be adopted to improve their performance. The study also seeks to develop a conceptual framework encompassing the essential elements that contribute to the sustainable growth of these enterprises. By comparing performance across different regions, we hope to highlight significant differences and practical points that can guide stakeholders in effectively enhancing the sustainability of SMEs.

The literature indicates that Algerian SMEs face challenges related to financing, innovation, and the ability to adapt to market demands (Benhabib, 2022). International experiences show that implementing policies supporting innovation and facilitating access to financial and technical resources can enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of these enterprises (Ayyagari, 2011). Furthermore, developing human capital and improving administrative infrastructure are critical factors in supporting sustainable growth (Elhajji, 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The way SMEs are identified and separated into various categories

SMEs are important in the economic world given that they can operate alone, and they are able to span business activities. Although a small business might not mean the same definition in all locations, in most locations, the number of employees, annual turnover, and the total asset value will be of significance. In Algeria, according (Fella Bekhouche Ouahdi, 2023), the law (law n° 01-18) establishes that SMEs are firms that have fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of not more than two billion dinars, and a balance sheet of not more than 500 million dinars. This legal system has rules that are compatible with the international standards to assist in increasing economic congruity.

SMEs across the globe differ between small start-ups and medium enterprises and are significant both in terms of employment and the driving force of the economy. The European Union considers approximately 25 million SMEs, and they collectively constitute nearly 99 percent of the total number of companies in the member countries of the European Union (according (Support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), 2025). This varied group includes many various spheres of agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Not all SMEs are like, some of them remain faithful to ordinary business practices, whereas others are open to new technologies and new methodologies.

The definition of small businesses in some countries like Europe differs with that of countries like Algeria (to get more information, read (Kheloufi, 2025). Despite such differences, they must address problems that emerge because of harsh market conditions. These groups should be well understood so that rules can be made to enable the important sector to continue its expansion in a sustainable position.



**Fig. 1.** Empowering Sustainability Growth of SME's

**Source:** NAS CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS LLC. (2023). Empowering SME's towards Sustainable Growth. LinkedIn. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/empowering-smes-towards-sustainable-growth-nasuae>.

### 2.2. Factors That Influence the Growth of Small Businesses

The successes of the small and medium firms (SMEs) have economic, organizational, and environmental factors as chief drivers. Economic restrictions still top the list of worries, especially market conditions and availability of finance with numerous SMEs in various parts of the world failing to find enough funds to invest and expand (Beck, 2006). Moreover, the research findings note that access to finance remains a constant problem with SMEs (Ayyagari, Demirgüç-Kunt, & Maksimovic, 2011). The financial risk undertaken by the entrepreneurs directly reflects their ability to take up sustainable projects (Peng M. Y., 2022). Financial assistance and resource accessibility, including policy-making facilitation are some government interventions that have been useful in reducing these burdens and co-creating SME resilience (OECD, 2023).



It is also important to consider organizational details, such as the quality of management, the ingenuity of its founders and flexibility of the organizational structures. Research has indicated that innovative and open management practices of SMEs increase the likelihood of the SMEs to grow and respond strategically to the changing market needs(Runtuk, Puspaningrum, & Hidayat, 2023). An additional study drives this home, as the adaptability can be increased because of such approaches to management(Coad, Segarra, & Teruel, 2013). Sound management capacities allow SMEs to comprehend and react to the needs of the market, and the increase in entrepreneurial competence is vital to the innovativeness and competitiveness of such enterprises(Bouazza, Ardjouman, & Abada, 2015).

SME strategies are more and more affected by environmental factors, including regulatory frameworks and government and social demand to achieve sustainability. Companies that take upon themselves the responsibility of integrating environmental issues as well as sustainability issues in their core business processes experience better and long-term performances, and stakeholder confidence(Bos-Brouwers, 2010).

Government policies and competition comprise environmental factors. Regulations and legislation can contribute or detract towards the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. The SME sector has to remain adaptable and must employ new regulations to their favour. It is useful to learn what customers desire and what is selling in the market so that the products or services that are produced will be liked all over.

The Bottom line is that the development and growth of the SMEs is influenced by the way the economic, organizational and environmental factors fit.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The outlay of the research in this case emphasizes the application of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. These two components are worthy of being considered simultaneously in order to research the factors that influence the development of SME in such regions as Algeria and the European Union. Initially, quantitative techniques will be used to survey and examine reputable databases to reveal the operations problem experienced by SMEs in various locations as highlighted by (Asma Benzazoua Bouazza, 2015).

In the case of qualitative research, field visits will be undertaken and in-depth interviews with SME owners and other stakeholders concerned will be taken to point out the problems that are restraining business growth. Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) method will also be especially helpful in the analysis of the connections between different growth factors(Runtuk R. J., 2023). In this manner, one can analyze the relationships between internal corporate capabilities, market trends, and the activities of governmental assistance in realization of sustainable business progress(Agyapong, 2010).

International research has established that such qualitative and analytic approaches help to better understand the forces that influence the growth of SME and help in developing efficient strategies to boost their growth in competitive economies(Ahmad, 2010). Moreover, the studies indicated that adoption of innovative management and friendly government policies may promote the performance of SMEs to a considerable extent(Blackburn, 2013). Adaptive strategies and entrepreneurial skills also play an important role in sustainable development and overall sustainable success (Zahra, 2011).

As part of data collection to ensure validity and reliability of the findings, small businesses are covered in all areas of the economy. The secondary sources which will support the findings in several ways will also be used in data collection. This structure of the research seeks to give a near look into the way SMEs evolve and should offer some guidelines that can help to give some useful advice that can help businesses to be sustainable in the future.

#### **3.2. Modeling vs. One Another**

To compare and study, the framework examines the different approaches of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the many regions with Algeria and the European Union in consideration. The strategy examines both internal and external factors, such as, the market environment, availability of funds, quality of local services and regulations. The framework attempts to exhaust these factors by combining the applications of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Policy indices data will be analyzed as an example to assess SMEs development and success strategies based on defined criteria. Based on the experiences of those frameworks cited in (Digitalisation., 2024), the OECD evaluates the policies relating to SMEs in the ASEAN region in terms of their effectiveness.

(Digitalisation., 2024)By applying comparable methods, we could observe how the state of SMEs in Algeria measures against EU standards in order to reveal large disparities.

It would also be wise to engage stakeholders by carrying out surveys and interviews of people who operate small businesses and government officials. Consequently, we will collect valuable non-numerical information that will enable us to tailor our recommendations to suit certain local conditions. In general, the comparison of countries in this research paper aims to demonstrate in detail how various economic conditions influence the sustainable development of SMEs and contribute to the formation of the future policy decision-making.

#### **4. The condition of the SMEs in Algeria**

##### **4.1. The small and medium-sized businesses of Algeria currently**

Qualitative research will involve participation of the stakeholders by means of the survey and individual interview of the owners of the small businesses and government authorities as a highly efficient activity. In such a way, it is possible to gather well-balanced contextual data, so that recommendations could be tailored to the local reality and current local requirements (Bryman's Social Research Methods, 2021). It is particularly important to engage with the stakeholders to have insight into various challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in various regions(Gupta, 2013).

The study employs a cross-country comparative methodology in an attempt to outline the effect of different economic environments on sustainable development of SMEs and how different economic scenarios should be used to make policy decisions in the future(OECD, Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2022: An OECD Scoreboard., 2022). ed to make policy decisions in the future (OECD, Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2022: An OECD Scoreboard., 2022). As an example, Algerian legislation dedicated to SMEs was implemented, hence, creating a more favorable environment to develop the enterprise, where SMEs are companies with no more than 250 employees and annual sales of no more than a certain amount (Bank, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Finance: Improving SMEs' Access to Finance and Finding Innovative Solutions to Unlock Sources of Capital., 2022). Although SMEs are widely used in Algeria, where the great majority of them do not hire more than ten employees, these enterprises still encounter serious challenges(Kelley, 2022).

Being widely accepted as the major stimulators of economic growth and job rise, SMEs continue to face external issues like intricate regulations, poor availability of finances, as well as existence of informal enterprises(Beck T. &-K., 2006) Internally, poor management of the businesses as well as lack of entrepreneurial knowledge further tightens the growth capabilities of such businesses(Brinckmann, 2010). Besides that, disproportionately more SME activity is located in urban regions and there is a tendency to under-serve rural areas(Williams, 2015).

Systematic inefficiency and continued heavy focus on traditional industries remain major barriers to innovation and macroeconomic implication, despite the introduction of government support programs to help developing SMEs (M. Ayyagari, 2017). Consequently, even with the growth in the number of SMEs, an immense obstacle still exists, which incapacitates SMEs to take full effect in promoting sustainable economic growth.

##### **4.2. Algerian small and medium sized enterprise barrier**

There is a broad spectrum of barriers inhibiting the development of SMEs in Algeria and their sustainability in the long-term perspective. The red tape involves complex and usually burdensome rules that pose huge impediments to business entry into the market and makes doing business daily an uphill task which can dishearten prospective entrepreneurs and cause many to work informally, which can raise unfair treatment and reduce access to formal support systems (Djidjik, 2024). The issue of access to finance stands as a key constraint as SMEs in Algeria usually find difficulties to access bank loans, with binding collateral requirements, complex application processes, and the absence of products that accommodate their needs(Djidjik, 2024).

Furthermore, deficiencies in human capital are a persistent issue. Many SMEs suffer from a shortage of skilled employees and inadequate business training, which stifles innovation, reduces competitiveness, and leads to suboptimal decision-making (Mansour, 2024). The adoption of advanced technology is also limited; while some progress has been made in ICT uptake, most SMEs still lack the technological capabilities necessary for modern business practices and sustainable development (Boumediene, 2021).

Marketing expertise represents another critical gap, with many Algerian SMEs lacking the knowledge and experience needed to effectively reach new customers and expand into foreign markets (Ghafir, 2022). These interrelated challenges highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms and targeted

support programs—such as streamlining regulations, improving access to finance, investing in workforce development, and fostering innovation—to create a more enabling environment for SME growth and resilience (Kheloufi, The Contribution of SMEs to the Algerian Economy., 2025).

## **5. An analysis of the functioning of the small and medium-sized enterprises within the European Union**

### **5.1. European Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Strengths and Weaknesses**

Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are very important in the European Union with almost 26 million SMEs in the region having 99 percent of the business in the region. They cannot be underestimated in their contribution to the strengthening of the economy since they provide 67 percent of the European workforce, 57 percent of output in the EU and are regarded as vital (Auditors, 2019). EU has submitted the SME support that makes them stronger in the developments that are sustainable and digital one. A Sustainable and Digital Europe: The SME Strategy is a draft to facilitate this move by raising company capabilities, facilitating the regulatory environment, and making it easier to access finance(Commission, 2020).

Regardless of their crucial role in economic growth, the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) continue to experience problems such as complex regulation and lack of finance. Studies indicate that most SMEs face management challenges that impede business growth and improvement in operations (Al-Mamun, 2018). Moreover, the recent geopolitical concerns have also placed some additional pressure on the challenges associated with managing the current energy crisis which even further complicates the business environment in which such businesses operate(Soininen, 2012).

As for potential solutions to such urgent issues, the European Commission has suggested a package of potential support measures to eliminate some daily SME-related imperatives and help these companies be more resilient and stable in the long term. The initiative aims to attract 200 billion euro by 2027 with its different formulas to enable small to medium-sized enterprises to become drivers of green growth and innovation(Doran, 2021).

The European Union, in its effort to provide impetus to the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has been adopting several methods that not only are helpful to the economy but also to the sustainability of the same. The new SME Strategy: A Sustainable and Digital Europe puts in place the pathway where SMEs will shift to a green and digitalized economy, in addition to an attempt to alleviate the administrative burden that limits SMEs(Ferreira, 2022). It is highlighted in recent studies that this is the measure necessary to help SMEs adjust to sustainable and digital transitions and become more competitive and resilient entities on the European market (Commission, SME Strategy for a Sustainable and Digital Europe: Progress and Future Directions, 2023).

ERDF and ESF are quite important since they assist different SMEs and help them to improve themselves in the market. Recent studies point to the fact that this financing channel is also important in financing high-risk, innovative SMEs especially those that are innovative in sustainability solutions(Dvouletý, 2023). ERDF and ESF support the SMEs in making their practices more profitable and thus sustainable by providing relevant financial support and capacity-building measures(Gagliardi, 2022).

Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) in Europe are numerous, but they help transform and make companies sustainable through their participation in other activities like environmentally beneficial projects and the involvement of European SMEs(Cimini, 2023). The hubs represent a point of contact between SMEs and high-tech solutions, experience, and innovation networks, which help share knowledge and develop new business relationships (Navarro, 2022). The DIH network plays a significant role in helping the SMEs achieve their path to digitalization and environmental sustainability.

Besides that, the Enterprise Europe Network offers tailored support including sustainability advisors who assist the SMEs in adopting effective approaches. Intellectual strategies are also crucial in assisting SMEs in securing their innovations and soliciting investments(Gallié, 2023). By SMEs can better achieve their potential and sustain prosperity due to the changes in the market, with the help of the mentioned resources(Spithoven, 2022).

## **6. Comparative Analysis of Algeria and European Union**

### **6.1. The Variations in growth strategies between small and large businesses**

The development strategy of SMEs in Algeria and the European Union is different since they encounter numerous differences. Starting a business in Algeria is difficult due to financial, regulatory, and labor-related challenges that face SMEs. Many regions struggle to obtain finance because lenders are very rigid and lack a clear understanding of financial resources (Djadjik, 2024). The challenges within bureaucracy complicate the process of operating the business and postpone its developments.

European SMEs, unlike American ones, have the advantage of being guided more, and they can acquire capital in the form of various funds and venture capital (Abdelhak Senadjki, 2023). The primary objective of the EU is innovation, as the latter is actively contributing to small and medium enterprises in terms of research and development and is significantly concerned with digitalization and skill enhancement to boost competitiveness.

Some of these gaps can be explained by the way culture perceives things. The citizens of Algeria are not as entrepreneurial as citizens in some European nations, whose educational system is open and embraces entrepreneurship (Djidjik, 2024). Also, the EU laws promote the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Its various approaches show that it is significant to allow places to develop their own strategy though adhering to the world's best practices of the EU and attaining sustainable development goals.

## 6.2. What European Countries Have Learned

The European strategy in developing SMEs provides positive suggestions to Algeria. It is quite important to have some plan in mind on how the skills are to be developed, one of the main insights. The core of the Skills Agenda of the EU is to promote National Skills Strategies made by all countries to stimulate more common work and promote skills as a high policy priority. With the help of this strategy, some essential policies have been selected, and the skill systems have been stabilized among the member states in order to enabling them to adjust to the new economic conditions (OECD, Insights from Skills Strategies in the European Union: Lessons Learnt for Developing and Implementing Effective Skills Policies, 2024).

Moreover, the EU SME Strategy actively encourages enterprises to transition towards sustainable business models, recognizing the growing consumer demand for environmentally friendly products (Commission, COM(2020) 103 final, 2020). Recent global studies confirm this trend, revealing that nearly half of consumers worldwide purchased sustainable products in 2023, and over 55% are willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly brands (Deloitte, 2023). The strategy's initiatives are designed to alleviate administrative burdens for SMEs, supporting them on their journey toward sustainable growth by providing access to funding, capacity building, and regulatory simplification (Commission, COM(2020) 103 final, 2020).

In addition, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) exemplifies how targeted support can help SMEs use resources more efficiently and establish trustworthy international trade relationships (Commission, COM(2020) 103 final, 2020). By focusing on skill development, forming strategic partnerships, and tailoring support systems to local contexts, Algerian SMEs have the potential to achieve sustainable development like their European counterparts. Leveraging such European experiences and support networks can significantly enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Algerian SMEs in the global market.

## 7. Proposed Strategies toward Sustainable Development of Small and Medium Business

### 7.1. The entire components of the Framework

The proposed mechanism of generating sustainable growth among the SMEs highlights three significant aspects, which include access to finance, digitalization, and institutional support.

The availability of increased access to finance will ensure that the SMEs get the finance to expand their operations and propose new ideas. Recent OECD reports emphasize that improving access to finance—through both traditional and alternative channels—is crucial for SME growth and innovation, especially in the context of sustainability transitions. Initiatives such as blended finance, venture capital, and government-backed loan guarantees are increasingly recognized as effective tools to support high-risk small and medium enterprises and facilitate their transition to sustainable and digital business models (OECD, Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2024: An OECD Scoreboard, 2024). In addition, unconventional business financing methods like crowdfunding and peer-to-peer lending are facilitative and empower the financing options available to companies, as banks are not always sufficient sources of support (Nations, 2023).

The presence of digital transformation initiatives is quite essential in enhancing the efficiency of SMEs. Implementation of artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and blockchain make these businesses more productive and allows them to develop new ideas faster. Regardless of that, these businesses must be made to understand the value of data in enhancing their competitiveness (Forum, 2024).

Institution level support is required to promote the gradual development of SMEs. The government should develop supportive policy that eliminates administrative barriers and establish courses that inform employees about technological advancements (UNIDO, 2024). When publicly funded, academic and industrial bodies join forces, they will be able to liaise and provide pertinent assistance to SMEs.



## 8. Policy Makers Recommendations in Algeria

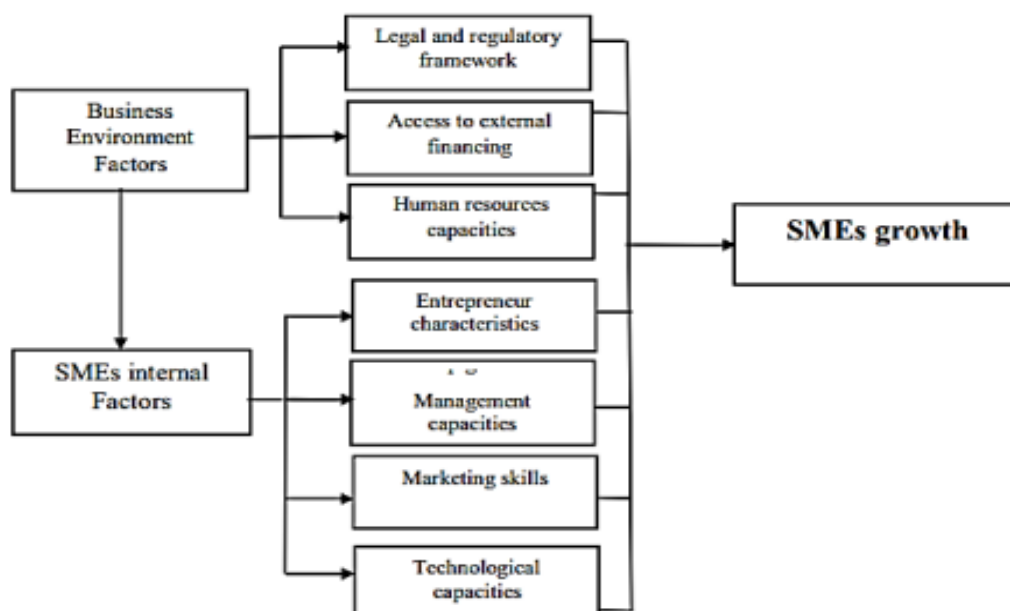
### 8.1. Expanding the opportunities of the unbanked to get finance

Finance remains a pivotal factor in ensuring the survival and growth of SMEs in Algeria. Access to funding is a persistent challenge for many small and medium-sized enterprises, which in turn restricts their capacity to expand and innovate. Recent studies highlight that one of the primary obstacles facing Algerian SMEs is the difficulty in securing financing, as banks typically require an established business track record and substantial collateral, such as land or equipment. The loan approval process can be protracted, often taking from six months to over a year, which hampers timely business development (Bouazza A. A., 2015).

Further, the stiffness of banking processes and demanding collateral investments is perhaps the fundamental factors why the SMEs are having a difficult time accessing lending (OECD, Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2024: An OECD Scoreboard, 2024). The African Development Bank has registered that more than 65% of the Algerian SMEs cite the access to finance as one of the major obstacles to the growth (Bank A. D., 2024). These results were also reflected by the 2024 North Africa Economic Forum, where the necessity of the urgent reforms in the lending practice, providing assistance with establishment of the entrepreneurship and economic diversification, was pinpointed by the specialists ((IFC), 2024).

The Algerian banks and the microfinance institutions must, therefore, modernize the lending structure to deal with these issues. Streamlining application procedures, lowering the cost of borrowing capital as well as developing loan products that specifically target SMEs is also reckoned as a good practice in the global market (OECD, Insights from Skills Strategies in the European Union: Lessons Learnt for Developing and Implementing Effective Skills Policies, 2024). As an example, Morocco and Egypt have been able to put in place specialized credit institutions that focus on SMEs and this has largely enhanced the accessibility of finance in these markets ((IFC), 2024). Using the models in Algeria will help in easier access to financing thus unlocking the growth potential of Algerian SMEs (Bank A. D., North Africa 2023: More than \$2 billion from the African Development Bank for inclusive, sustainable growth, 2024).

Crowd funding and impact investing can enable SMEs to access the essential capital without receiving it through the conventional credit systems. The government may find it helpful to develop some programs that can assist emerging businesses to obtain the credit they require. When digital infrastructure is reinforced in favor of small and medium-sized business, access to finance increases as indicated in (Benoit Denis, 2021). By directly facing these problems, the small to medium enterprises in Algeria will be able to continue their growth regardless of the circumstances in the market.



**Fig. 2.** Internal and external impeding the growth of Algerian SMEs according to Bouaaza (2015)

*Source:* reference (Djadjik, 2024).

### **8.2. Upgrading the Digital Infrastructure Quality**

Of great importance, it is necessary to highlight several key areas that can significantly enhance the access to and utilization of digital tools by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Algeria. A major advance lies in investing substantially in superior telecommunications infrastructure. Scholars from the European Investment Bank (EIB) emphasize that to ensure SMEs have equal opportunities to thrive, universal access to the internet through a robust and reliable digital network is essential (Denis, 2021). This new infrastructure should not only facilitate online sales but also support the development and deployment of innovative business applications, thereby fostering digital transformation among SMEs.

Also, there should be an attempt to enhance the digital skills of the workforce of the community. Due to the growing popularity of technology in business, it will be necessary to have more workers who know how to use new tools (as described in the (Commission, An SME Strategy for a Sustainable and Digital Europe, 2020). The public and private sectors could collaborate in setting up programs that would teach missing skills and prepare workers on the new jobs.

Ensuring strong cybersecurity is a critical requirement for SMEs to safeguard against the growing risks of cyber threats in the digital era. Recent research highlights that international cooperation, such as partnerships between African and global cybersecurity organizations, can significantly bolster the digital safety of SMEs engaging in online trade and operations ((UNCTAD), 2013). Such collaborations contribute to the development of harmonized standards and practical solutions tailored to the needs of small businesses ((ENISA), 2024).

Additionally, it is vital to establish clear and actionable guidelines that support SMEs in their digital transformation journey. For example, the implementation of user-friendly digital platforms and the simplification of regulatory processes have demonstrated notable success in empowering SMEs in emerging markets (Forum, Accelerating Digital Transformation for Small and Medium Enterprises: Global Insights and Policy Recommendations, 2024). These strategies not only facilitate smoother business operations but also foster innovation and enable SMEs to effectively coordinate both local and international activities (GSMA, 2023).

### **8.3. Doing a Better Job Coping with Regulations**

The robust control is significant to ensure the development and success of the small and medium enterprises in Algeria. Borrowing the argument in (Aissa Mosbah, 2014), I wish to bring to your attention that complex regulations bring about numerous trip wires to entrepreneurs and small firms, who in most cases find regulations and taxes to be excessive. Making regulations easier will also help SMEs to operate effectively, which will allow them to spend more time on development and innovation.

If the government adopts the "Think Small First" principle in shaping business regulations, it could significantly reduce the bureaucratic obstacles that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) encounter in Algeria (Commission, SME Strategy for a Sustainable and Digital Europe: Progress and Future Directions, 2023). This approach should also prioritize the simplification and unification of existing laws, making them more accessible and straightforward for aspiring entrepreneurs. Leveraging digital solutions can further streamline compliance processes, allowing SMEs to manage regulatory requirements more efficiently (World Bank, 2024) (Forum, Accelerating Digital Transformation for Small and Medium Enterprises: Global Insights and Policy Recommendations, 2024). Recent policy trends in advanced economies show that integrating digital technologies with business legislation can substantially lessen administrative burdens on companies, as digital record-keeping and automated document management accelerate essential business activities ((ITC), 2023)

At the same time, it is crucial to develop transparent and accessible regulatory guidelines. Increased interaction and communication between government authorities and enterprises foster greater awareness and compliance with regulations. Establishing dedicated support channels for SMEs can help them navigate complex regulatory environments effectively (Bank A. D., North Africa 2023: More than \$2 billion from the African Development Bank for inclusive, sustainable growth, 2024). Ultimately, creating a more supportive and simplified regulatory framework will promote a dynamic and sustainable environment for SME growth and development in Algeria.

**9. We present our conclusions in this article and include some suggestions concerning further research.****9.1. Overview of the findings**

Researchers emphasize the vital role that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play in promoting sustainable economic growth in Algeria. Recent data indicate a substantial increase in the number of SMEs between 2012 and 2022, with notable growth in sectors such as agriculture and public works (Industry, 2023). However, experts also highlight ongoing challenges, including persistent regional disparities in economic performance and the proliferation of very small firms, which may hinder broader, more inclusive development (OECD, Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2024: An OECD Scoreboard, 2024). Addressing these issues is essential for maximizing the positive impact of SMEs on Algeria's sustainable growth trajectory (African Development Bank, 2024).

Further research (Adem Benmessaoud, 2024) explains that many SMEs are currently opting to be concerned about the environment in their day-to-day practices. These enterprises are exercising an enhanced sense of sustainability in their attempt to be ISO 14001 certified. Conversely, the complexity of grinding the required funds and tackling the regulations continues to hamper the capability of achieving the targets of sustainable development.

Researchers stress that SMEs can avail themselves of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a feasible model to direct their daily functioning. SMEs through sustainable practices thus not only contribute to economic growth, but also to socio-economic issues like alleviating poverty, gender equality through employment and inclusive or equal working places (Forum, Accelerating Business Action on the SDGs: A Guide for SMEs). According to the recent studies, it can be stated that even small-scale sustainability measures could improve the business performance of organizations operating in different spheres (Organization, 2023). Besides, the establishment of green-finance mechanisms currently provided SMEs with additional ways to finance and start up sustainable business models (Bank E. I., 2023).

In short, Algerian SMEs should be prompted to align economic goals with sustainability practices to resolve structural constraints and prevail in the long-term ((UNIDO), 2024).

**9.2. Its impact on Stakeholders**

The role of stakeholders is quite important and beneficial to the development of sustainable enterprises of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Algeria. Government institutions may become instrumental in supporting industry by eliminating obstacles to the growth of businesses and entrepreneurship. According to recent studies, the regulatory environment, administrative procedures, and the access to finance are the decisive factors that impact the capability of SMEs to manage risks and sustain performance (Cherif, 2024).

What is more, according to multiple studies, the development of a more focused support system towards SMEs and reinforcing institutional frameworks can help to balance regional growth and bring a more competitive view of the industry at large (Abdelkader, 2023). These observations confirm the role of governmental proactive initiatives and organized policy responses to the development of risk perception? awareness and the eventual prosperity of SMEs in Algeria.

Moreover, the financial institutions should also consider the dilemma that SMEs encounter, in the effort to borrow funds. When financial products are adjusted to the needs of businesspeople and when financing is simplified, the business of the entrepreneurs is affected a lot. By disbursing huge amounts of money to industries, African Development Bank hinted that there is a need to create a stable system of financial aid to SME (Group, 2019).

The investors can also get into the business of an SME by venturing into and investing in new financing mechanisms such as cryptocurrencies or digital tokens. Through the strategy the companies can raise funds within a short time and enjoy more of their investments through diversification.

Concurrently, the government groups, financial groups and other individual investors need to collaborate to facilitate sustainable activities within the SMEs. By engaging with each other towards ensuring sustainability and inventions of new products, such entities aid SMEs to overcome any future economic turmoil.

### 9.3. New Directions for Research

To foster sustainable activities within Algerian SMEs, it is essential for government agencies, financial institutions, and private investors to collaborate closely. Such partnerships, focused on sustainability and innovation, can help SMEs withstand future economic challenges and drive long-term growth ((UNESCWA), 2023).

Future research on SME development should address a diverse range of topics to provide deeper insights and actionable findings. One promising area is the impact of digital transformation on SMEs, particularly as e-commerce and digital technologies reshape business operations. Investigating how SMEs leverage the internet and digital tools can reveal strategies for enhancing their sustainability and competitiveness (OECD, Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2024: An OECD Scoreboard, 2024).

Another valuable research direction involves evaluating the effectiveness of government support for small businesses in Algeria. Applying international benchmarking tools—such as the indicators from the SME Policy Index: ASEAN 2024—can facilitate objective assessments of policy outcomes and identify areas for improvement ((ERIA), 2024).

Cross-country studies are also recommended to explore how SMEs in different nations collaborate, exchange knowledge, and export innovations to new markets. Comparative analyses of sustainable practices across industries can help identify which approaches are most effective in specific sectors (Forum, Global Competitiveness Report: Advancing Sustainability in SMEs, 2024).

Additionally, examining the various motivations that drive entrepreneurs to adopt sustainable business models can yield important insights for policy and practice ((ILO), 2023).

Finally, researchers should investigate regional disparities within Algeria, analyzing how local economic conditions influence SME activities and sustainability strategies. It is equally important to consider the cultural and societal factors that shape entrepreneurs' attitudes towards sustainability, as these elements often determine both the obstacles and opportunities facing SMEs ((AfDB), 2023).

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