

2016 European SME Exporting Insights Study



Introduction

Smaller companies are the engine of prosperity in even the most advanced economies – but how much of their success is due to exporting? In the fourth edition of its European SME Exporting Insights Study, UPS shows that European SMEs are exporting more, and that SMEs that export grow faster. However, barriers remain that hold companies back from exporting.

In the European Union the businesses defined as ‘small- and medium-sized’, or SMEs, account for more than half of all value added in the EU economy. According to the EU Commission’s most recent annual survey of the SME economy¹, these smaller companies are responsible for 67% of total EU employment, and represent over 99% of all non-financial businesses.

And these businesses are growing. According to the EU’s most recent figures, the European SME growth rate has more than doubled, to 3.3% (compared to 2.2% GDP growth in the EU28²), and SME employment is also growing again compared to a decline in previous years. The results of the 2016 UPS European SME Exporting Insights Study echo this story of recovery for exporters in particular: UPS finds that compared to last year, the proportion of SMEs exporting has increased in all markets, and the proportion of exporters reporting higher revenue has also grown. In the UK for example, 21% of SMEs are exporters, up from 17% the year before and 12% in 2014.

SMEs that export tend to record higher growth rates than those that do not. In 2016 that trend has not only been confirmed, but also become more marked. This may in part be because external demand has been the most important source of growth for the EU economy since 2008. According to the EU Commission, exports of goods and services were the only sources of economic growth during 2008-2013, while the latest figures show that exports are still the most important engine of growth³. The results of the UPS study confirm the growth opportunities for SME exporters: in every market surveyed in 2016, the proportion of exporting companies reporting increased sales over the previous three years was significantly higher than the proportion of non-exporters reporting growth – see page 8 for full details.

SMEs say they are mostly held back from exporting by the practicalities of shipping across borders. The biggest concern for SME exporters - whether exporting to other EU countries or beyond - is the risk of damage or loss to their shipments. Customs clearance and regulations are significantly more important to companies sending shipments outside the EU, which do not apply to exporters shipping within the European Single Market, with minimal administrative and tariff barriers - see page 10 for full details.

The UPS European SME Exporting Insights study was inspired by a desire to help SMEs prosper by capturing the opportunities for export growth. Over 12,000 owners and directors of small- and medium-sized enterprises in eight countries across the EU – in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom (UK) – were surveyed in an expanded survey designed not only to identify trends and opportunities in exporting but also the barriers that still exist to successful export growth. Export barriers do exist for SMEs, and in the 2016 study a new index of ‘Export Readiness’ has been added, to help companies prioritise areas where they may need to improve performance and take advantage of the higher growth that exporting offers. The UPS study aims to help SMEs by showing where opportunities lie, what challenges might confront them as they build their export businesses, and how they can meet these challenges with tried and tested logistics solutions and partners.

¹<http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/16341/attachments/2/translations>, ²<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115&plugin=1>, ³It should be noted that the EU Commission report cited above does not find that SMEs in export sectors performed well in 2008-2013 – other than micro companies, SMEs in export sectors recorded a fall in value added. However, differences in the time sequence of the data between the EU report and the UPS surveys, and differences between value added (EU report) and revenue (UPS surveys) may account for this.



The Brexit Effect

The survey for the 2016 UPS European SME Exporting Insights Study was conducted both before and after the 23rd June UK referendum vote to leave the EU. In the UK, 57% of survey responses were gathered before the vote, and the remaining 43% afterwards. The results showed a clear loss of confidence in exporting by UK SMEs – before the vote 36% of UK SMEs forecast an increase in exports, but that fell to 20% after the vote. Companies forecasting a decrease in exports rose from 7% to 16%. In all other markets surveyed, expectations also appeared to change, but in the other direction: companies expecting an increase in exports rose from 26% to 33%, while those expecting a decrease fell from 11% to 7%. These are initial results; the details of the UK's

future trading relationships with EU countries will not emerge until much closer to early 2019 when negotiations to withdraw the UK from the EU are due to be concluded, and much will depend on the tariff and market access regimes that are still to be negotiated. For manufacturers exporting to and from the UK, the main concern will be the potential for new customs tariffs, while financial and professional services providers will primarily be concerned about market access rules. However, no changes are due to be effective before 2019, and UPS expects the details of new trading rules to emerge only slowly over the next two years.

Research Scope

- ◆ 12,815 SME Owners & Directors
- ◆ 8 Countries
- ◆ 4 Sectors
- ◆ 3 Business Sizes

Methodology

The 2016 UPS European SME Exporting Insights Study is the latest installment in a long-term project designed to map and understand the exporting capabilities of SMEs in Europe's largest economies.

In late 2013, UPS commissioned the 'Growth Through Export Trade' quantitative survey in the UK and Germany to provide insights into SMEs associated with exporting to destinations inside and outside the EU. That study was then expanded in early 2014 to cover additional markets - Poland, France, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, with a view to identifying triggers to exporting and perceived barriers, as well as the business channels used in the exporting sector. In 2015, UPS again enlarged the scope of the survey with an expanded range of questions aimed exclusively at SMEs that are either exporting now or likely to do so within the next 12 months. Now in 2016 the project has been further expanded with the addition of Spain to the markets surveyed, while surveyed SMEs in all markets - whether actual or likely exporters - have been analysed according to their export readiness in a unique UPS Export Readiness Index. As part of the index, the 2016 survey includes for the first time responses from companies who identify as 'open to exporting', but not yet doing so.

The 2016 research surveyed 12,815 SME owners, and managing, commercial, business and sales development directors between 14 June and 24 August 2016. Interviews were conducted in the following countries: Belgium (1111), France (1250), Germany (1249), Italy (1667), Netherlands (1999), Poland (1790), Spain (1247) and

UK (2502). The companies in the study were identified by business information specialists Dun & Bradstreet and drawn from four sectors: industrial manufacturing & automotive (IM&A), retail, high-tech and healthcare. Sub-sectors such as textiles, milk and chemical producers, as well as cafés, bars and restaurants were excluded as well as certain main sectors such as agriculture, mining, and construction.

Sample sizes for individual questions are shown at the base of all charts. The maximum margin of error for results based on large sample sizes (1600+) is ± 2.5 . For results based on smaller sizes the maximum margin of error ranges from ± 5 (for samples of 400) to ± 7 (for samples of 200).

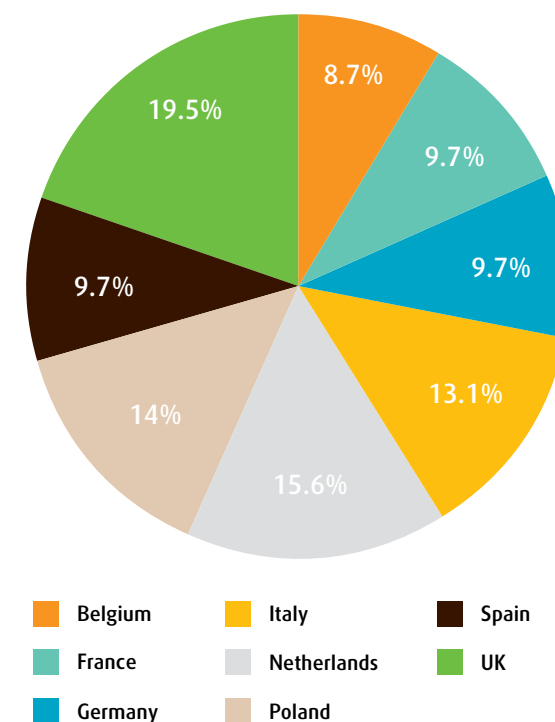
All businesses included in the survey had between one and 250 employees and were either currently exporting (having sent shipments abroad in the previous 12 months) or likely to export in the next 12 months, or open to exporting.

The survey selected 200 current exporter companies in each of the eight countries for an in-depth survey, with quotas set on company size (in each country 100 'micro' companies with 1-9 employees were surveyed, 50 'small' companies with 10-49 employees, and 50 'medium' companies with 50-250 employees). Industry sectors were also equally represented in the in-depth survey with 50 companies from each of the four sectors selected in each country.

The survey also selected 50-100 'open to exporting' companies in each market for a further set of questions about their potential future exporting behaviour.

Finally it should be noted that survey interviews were conducted both before and after the EU Referendum vote in the UK, generating data on how the pattern of survey responses changed after the UK voted to leave the EU.

Interviews were conducted in:
Percentage of total sample (12,815)



Business size & sectors



Industrial manufacturing & automotive (IM&A) includes manufacturers of goods with industrial applications, such as cranes and metal extruders, and domestic applications, such as kitchens, sanitary ware, and gardening equipment, as well as new and used motor vehicle and boat dealers, manufacturers of motor vehicles, motorbikes, bicycles, parts, tyres and engines, wholesalers and retailers.



The retail sector includes the full range of retailers, from florists to stationers, as well as wholesalers and manufacturers of consumer goods such as apparel, furnishings, appliances, and food.



The high-tech sector includes manufacturers of broadcasting and communication equipment, computers and semi-conductors, as well as software developers and computer programming service providers.



The healthcare sector covers a wide spectrum of manufacturers of medical apparatuses, prosthetics and pharmaceutical preparations including biopharmaceuticals, as well as healthcare providers like optometrists and chiropractors.

This report uses the EU sizing terminology 'micro' for companies with 1-9 employees, 'small' for companies with 10-49 employees, and 'medium' for companies with 50-250 employees.

Graphics shown are abstracts of key findings from the full survey results. Figures may total less than 100% where only partial data are available or more than 100% where more than one response was allowed.



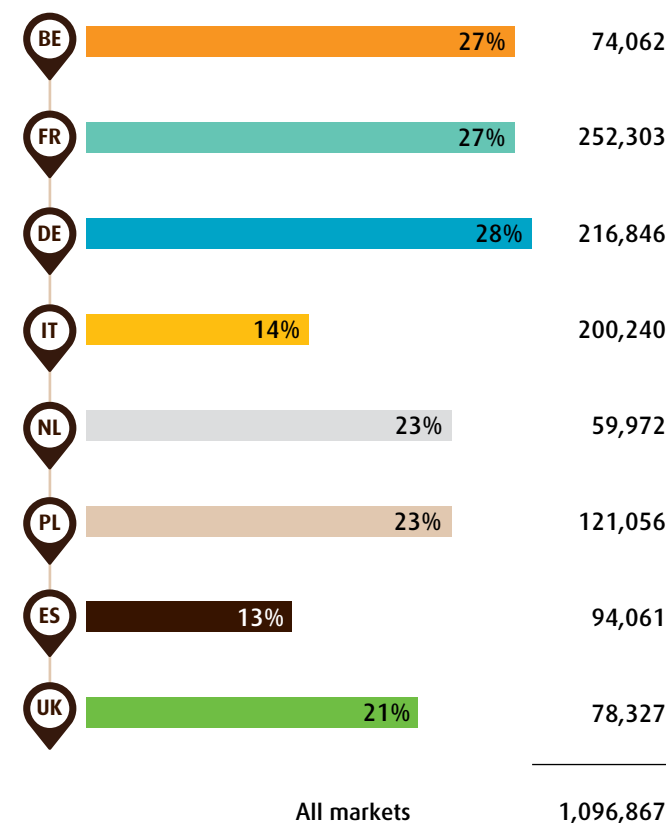
Executive summary

The responses of over 12,000 owners and directors of SMEs in eight European countries show that size of business is no barrier to exporting either to European destinations or beyond. Although it remains the case in 2016 that the majority of SMEs do not export, the proportion of those that do has risen overall, sharply in some cases. These SMEs also report positive export forecasts, with the majority in all markets expecting exports to be stable or growing. Key findings include:

- ◆ The proportion of SMEs that export has grown in all markets, with Germany the economy where SMEs are most likely to export.
- ◆ The Brexit vote has impacted all markets, with export expectations falling in the UK and rising everywhere else.
- ◆ The EU remains the most important export market for EU SMEs, followed by the US, but the proportion of companies exporting elsewhere is growing in all markets except Italy and the UK.
- ◆ Most exporting SMEs forecast that their export revenue will grow in the coming year, although growth confidence has fallen slightly.
- ◆ The association of exporting with higher revenue has been confirmed and grown stronger. Over half of exporting SMEs now say that their revenue grew over the previous three years.
- ◆ The proportion of exporting SMEs using online sales channels has fallen modestly.
- ◆ Shipment damage or loss are the most important concerns for exporters; internet security continues to fall in importance as online sales become routine.
- ◆ The UPS Export Readiness Index shows that non-exporting SME in France, Spain and UK are most ready to begin exporting in the near future. Non-exporters in Poland and the Netherlands are least ready.

SME Exporting Landscape

The percentage of SMEs that export and the estimated number of exporting SMEs in each of the surveyed countries



Europe's export economy is growing

The 2016 European SME results implies that there are over one million active exporting SMEs in the four business segments identified across the eight countries surveyed (assuming that the proportion of exporting SMEs in the Study is representative). The proportion of SMEs exporting has grown in every market for which there is year-on-year data (Spain is not represented as it is a new entrant to the survey in 2016). The propensity of SMEs to export varies sharply between markets, but in all markets surveyed the proportion of SMEs exporting has risen. In 2015, the proportion of SMEs exporting also rose in four out of seven markets (falling slightly in Belgium and France, and more sharply in Italy), while in 2016 the propensity to export has increased across the board.



German SMEs have the strongest propensity to export with 28% of all companies surveyed having sent shipments abroad in the last 12 months; Germany has the second largest number of exporting SMEs after France.



In all markets, except Italy and Spain, over one fifth of SMEs now report that they are exporting.



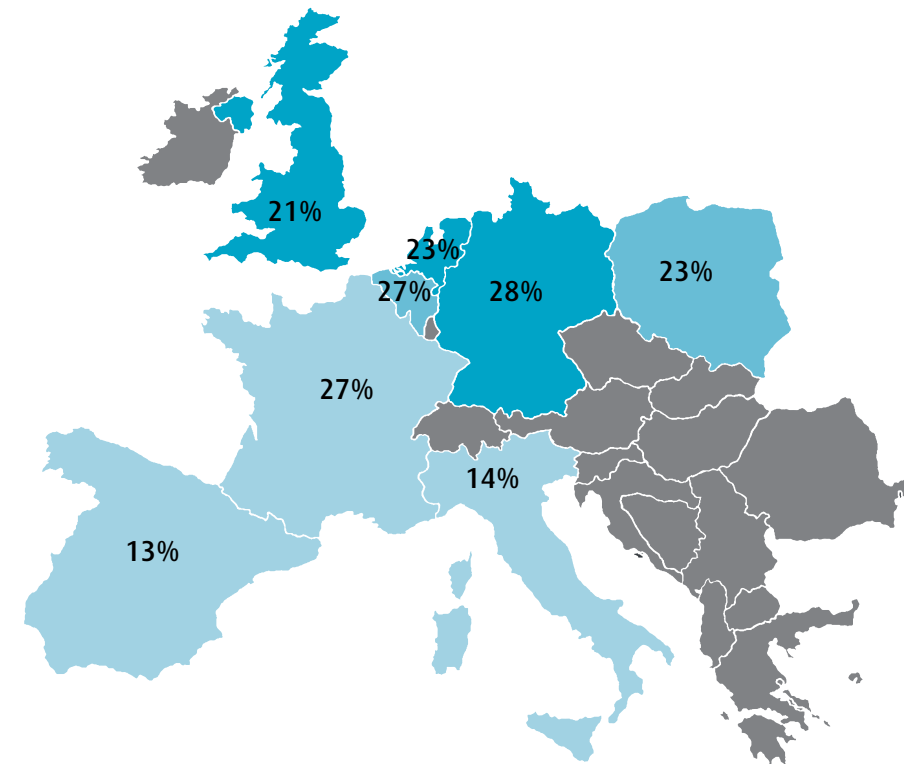
The rise in exporting in all markets has shifted the UK's relative position; formerly the second most SME export-intensive market after Germany, the UK has now fallen back to sixth place.



The larger an SME is, the more likely it is to export. In every market surveyed the proportion of SMEs that export grows with company size. On average 36% of medium-sized SMEs export, compared to 27% of small SMEs and 20% of micro enterprises. In 2016 the survey results showed no significant differences between different sectors' average propensity to export, although there are some differences on a country basis – in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland, industrial manufacturers are the most likely sector to be exporting. The sector results represent a change compared to the previous year: in 2016 manufacturers are somewhat more likely to report export business, while the proportion of retailers exporting has more than doubled.

SME Exporting Landscape

The percentage of SMEs that export per country



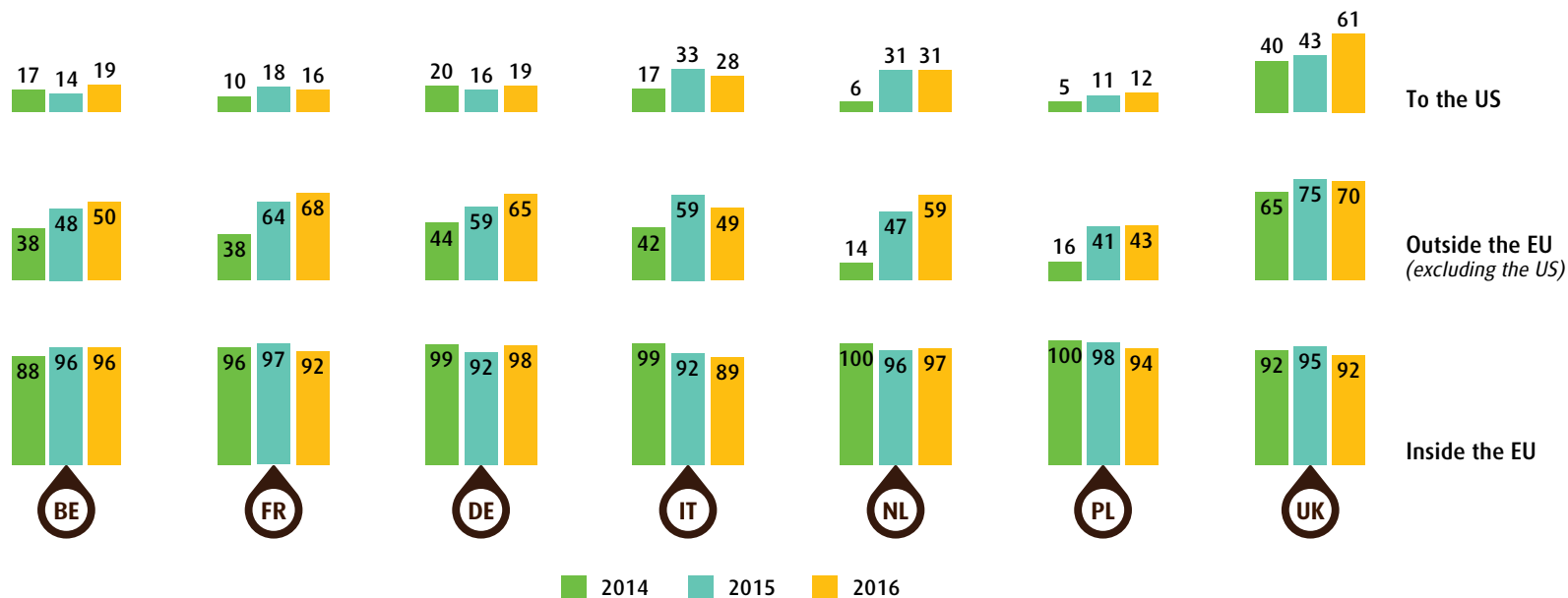
The shape of exports changes

Year-on-year there is little change in the proportions of SMEs who say they are exporting to EU destinations and the US (apart from a rising proportion of UK SMEs exporting to the US, with 61% compared to 43% in 2015). When it comes to the rest of the world, the story is different. In most cases a rising proportion of companies report exports to other destinations, with the only significant declines being among SMEs in Italy (49% compared to 59% in 2015) and SMEs in the UK (70% compared to 75% in 2015). The overall pattern is for more European SMEs to export to new destinations outside the EU and US.

'In 2016 the data sample was expanded to include all currently exporting SMEs rather than all currently exporting outside the EU.'

Export patterns

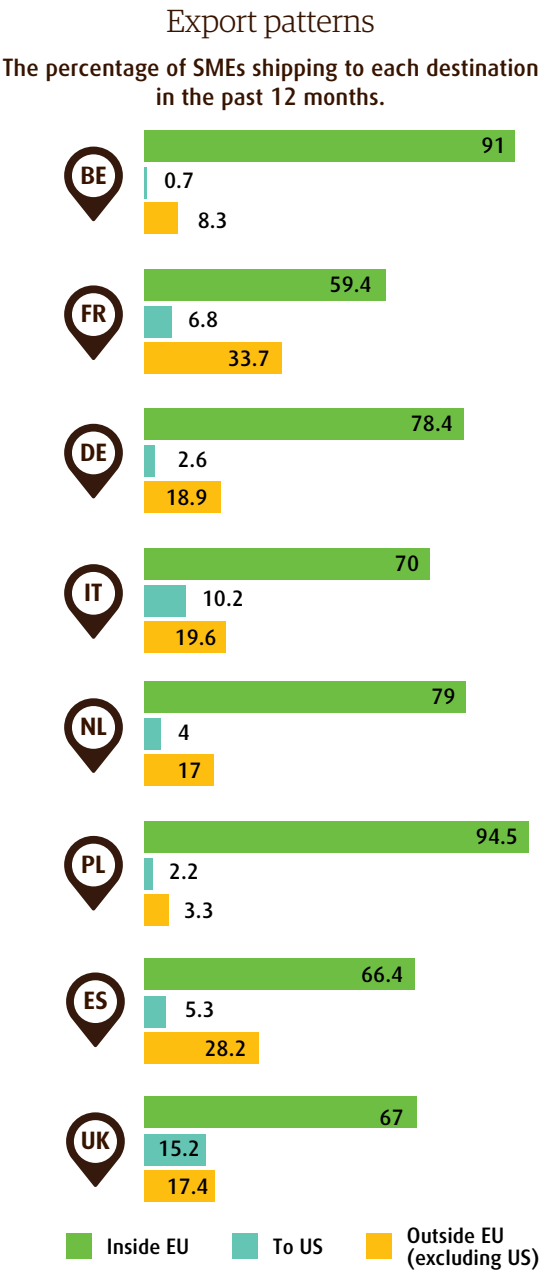
The percentage of shipments for SMEs in each surveyed country and the regions they were dispatched to in the past 12 months.



SMEs exporting by destination

For European SMEs, exporting is primarily a European trade. In all eight markets surveyed, SMEs export more to the EU than anywhere else by a clear margin. Although the most important non-EU market for Europe’s exporters overall continues to be the US, closely followed by non-EU Europe, the importance of individual non-EU markets varies widely by country and reflects historical patterns of trade.

- Overall the biggest non-EU export markets for SMEs in the eight countries are the US, non-EU Europe, and Asia excluding China.
- The US is the biggest non-EU export destination. The UK stands out as the market where SMEs are most likely to export to the US, with the proportion of SMEs trading with the US close to double the next most US-focused market which is the Netherlands. Belgium, France, Germany, Poland and Spain which all have limited US trade with fewer than 20% of SMEs trading with the US in all cases.
- China and the Middle East remain relatively insignificant SME export markets – only 13% of SMEs surveyed export to China, and only 12% export to the Middle East.
- The high proportion of SMEs in Belgium and France exporting to Africa (25% and 29% respectively) reflects their historical ties with West and Central Africa; perhaps surprisingly only 13% of UK SMEs export to Africa.



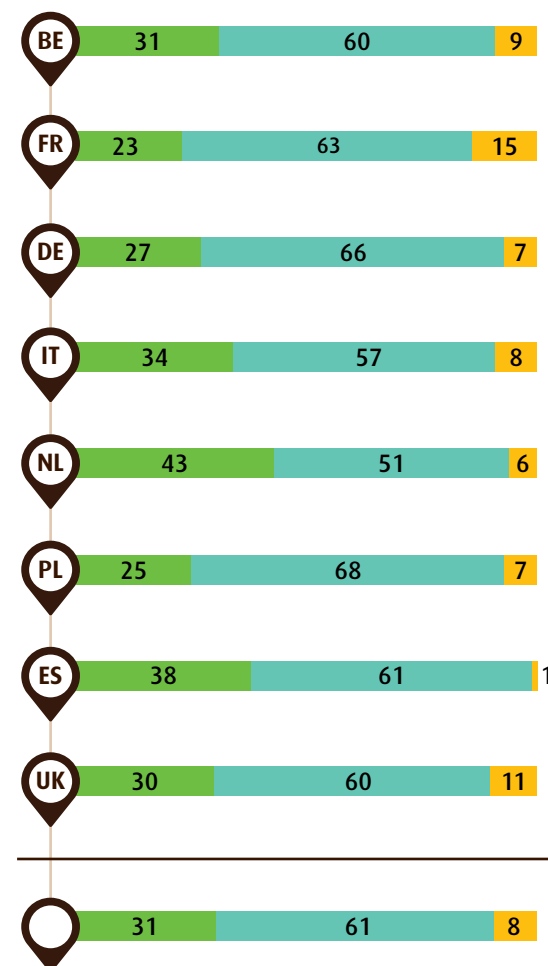
SMEs say exports drive growth

The 2016 UPS European SME Exporting Insights Study confirms that for SMEs exporting is associated with higher revenue. Over half of the exporting SMEs from the sample said that revenue increased over the previous three years, compared to only 31% of companies who said they were 'not open' to exporting - this represents a small (two percentage points) rise in companies reporting growth compared to 2015. Only 12% of exporters said that revenue decreased, compared to 17% of those "not open" to exporting. On a country basis the results did not vary greatly, although most favourable association between exporting and revenue growth was in the UK where 59% of exporters reported rising revenue, while the proportion of exporters reporting growth over three years was over 50% in all markets except France (44%) and Italy (45%). In every individual market, SME exporters were markedly more likely to report growth than companies describing themselves as 'not open' to exporting.

Companies also believe that the volume of their exports is more likely to grow than to contract. The majority of companies (61%) expect volumes to remain stable, but where they do expect change they are more likely to forecast an increase (31%) than a decrease (8%). However, this represents a fall in confidence from the levels recorded in 2015, when 37% of companies said they expected export volumes to grow.

Exporters' expectations over next 12 months

■ Increase ■ Stay same ■ Decrease



Ecommerce is enabling export growth

In 2015, the UPS Study showed that SME exporters are more likely to sell online than through any other channel, after a year when the use of online sales channels increased dramatically, doubling in many markets. But in 2016, the growth of online sales channels appears to have stalled.

In all markets surveyed*, with the exception of Germany and Italy, a smaller proportion of exporting SMEs say they are using online channels than in 2015. In most cases exporting SMEs are also more likely than non-exporters to use online channels when selling in their home markets.

In the category of companies that were open to exporting but not yet doing so, online use was markedly lower (only 31% of these companies used the online channel), suggesting that making the transition from open to exporting to actually making sales abroad is likely to mean greater investment in an online presence.

* The questions on online use changed between the 2015 and 2016 surveys. In 2015 companies were asked to say which of a selection of sales channels were used, including their own websites and third-party websites. In 2016 companies were simply asked whether they used the online channel domestically, and whether they used it for exports.

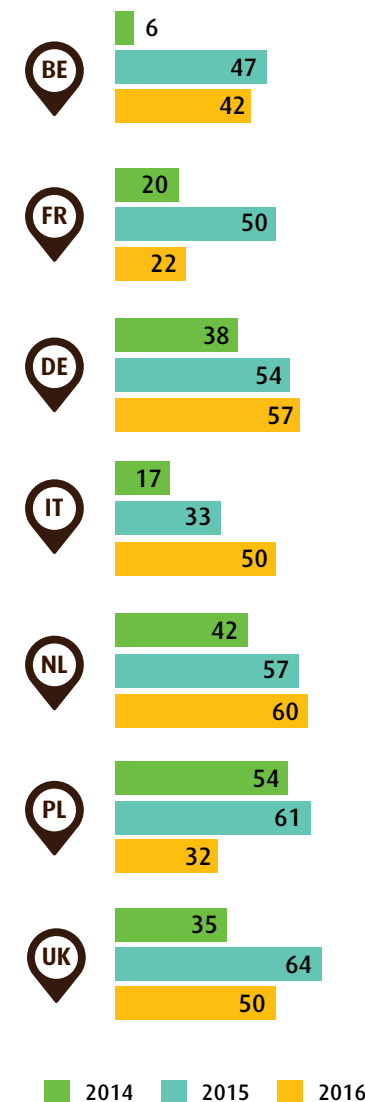
The limits of online

The use of online sales channels has been growing since UPS began surveying SME exporters in 2013, but now it appears that a plateau may have been reached. There are several reasons why SMEs may choose not to invest in online channels, and during the survey interview some of them emerged.

- + Companies with only a small number of large B2B customers who are served by personal contact do not feel the need to develop online channels.
- + Some product categories are not suited to online sales – these include regulated products like pharmaceuticals that cannot legally be sold online, as well as bespoke products and very high value products.
- + Some markets, such as Africa, have relatively poor internet access and are not yet considered suitable for online investment.

YEAR ON YEAR – Current exporters

% SMEs using the online channel
when selling abroad



Perceptions of export barriers are changing

Exporters care most about the practicalities of shipping across borders. The biggest concern for SME exporters - whether exporting to the EU or beyond - is the risk of damage or loss to their shipments. Intangibles like language issues and sales and marketing come right at the bottom of their list of concerns, for trade both inside and outside the EU.









However, the concerns of exporting SMEs do differ depending on whether they are exporting within or beyond the EU: customs clearance and regulations are significantly more important to companies sending shipments outside the EU, reflecting exporters' confidence that the EU Single Market works to their advantage by reducing administrative and tariff barriers.

On a country basis, it is notable that SMEs in some of the eight markets surveyed are much more sensitive to certain export barriers than others. For exports within the EU, companies in France, Italy and most notably Poland are more likely to score issues as worrisome than SMEs in other countries. For exports outside the EU, companies in France, Italy, Poland and Spain are more concerned about export barriers, with Polish companies again more likely than others to cite concerns.









Over the previous two years UPS has noted that concerns about the security of online trading have been falling: when a slightly different sample of SME exporters were asked about leading concerns in 2014, internet security was the second most cited issue for export within the EU, but by 2015 internet security had fallen to fourth most cited issue. In 2016 that trend continues: internet security is now close to bottom of the list of concerns, and on a country basis only companies in Poland rate it as a significant concern, and only for exporting beyond the EU. These results represent a very rapid evolution towards online sales becoming the norm for SME exporters.



Top 3 concerns when exporting inside the EU

	1	2	3
	Risk of damage/loss	Reliability of delivery	Costs
	Risk of damage/loss	Reliability of delivery	Speed of delivery
	Customs clearance	Local competition	Risk of damage/loss
	Customs clearance	Reliability of delivery	Costs
	Risk of damage/loss	Reliability of delivery	Security of ecommerce
	Risk of damage/loss	Reliability of delivery	Costs
	Risk of damage/loss	Reliability of delivery	Costs
	Risk of damage/loss	Reliability of delivery	Costs

Top 3 concerns when exporting outside the EU

	1	2	3
	Risk of damage/loss	Regulations	Customs clearance
	Risk of damage/loss	Reliability of delivery	Customs clearance
	Regulations	Customs clearance	Costs
	Costs	Regulations	Reliability of delivery
	Customs clearance	Reliability of delivery	Regulations
	Risk of damage/loss	Costs	Reliability of delivery
	Risk of damage/loss	Speed of delivery	Costs
	Risk of damage/loss	Regulations	Customs clearance

Future priorities & current performance

In the 2016 UPS European SME Exporting Insights Study, exporting companies were asked to identify their key business priorities for the near future and rate their performance on these issues. The results were very consistent across all eight markets - meeting customer demand and maintaining innovation were cited as the top two issues in seven out of eight markets (the UK was the exception with efficiency cited as the top challenge, but customer demand and innovation were in second and third place in the UK). The results were very similar for companies that identified themselves as open to exporting even though not yet doing so. Exactly the same priorities were cited by companies on a sector basis: all sectors rated meeting customer demand as their top priority, with maintaining innovation second.

These results are also consistent year-on-year. In 2015 (when the questions asked in the survey were slightly different) companies in six out of seven markets surveyed rated innovation or customer experience first or second on their priority lists (the one exception was companies in Italy, which rated cash flow as the second most important priority).

The conclusion has to be that exporters are more focused on customers than they are on processes. Issues like supply chain design and management, cash flow management and tracking competition come much lower on their agendas.

Companies were also asked to rate their own performance on these issues. Unsurprisingly, in all markets they considered their best performance was on the issues that were also their top priorities: customer demand and innovation. The only exception to this was in the UK, where companies did not consider their top priority – efficiency – to be one of their top three performance issues.

These results were further analysed to help create the UPS SME Export Readiness Index, detailed on the following pages.

Top 3 drivers for SMEs to start exporting

	1	2	3
BE	Customer demand	Innovation	Customer experience
FR	Customer demand	Innovation	Cash flow
DE	Customer demand	Innovation	Efficiency
IT	Customer demand	Innovation	Cash flow
NL	Innovation	Customer demand	Efficiency
PL	Innovation	Customer demand	Customer experience
ES	Customer demand	Innovation	Customer experience
UK	Customer demand	Innovation	Customer experience

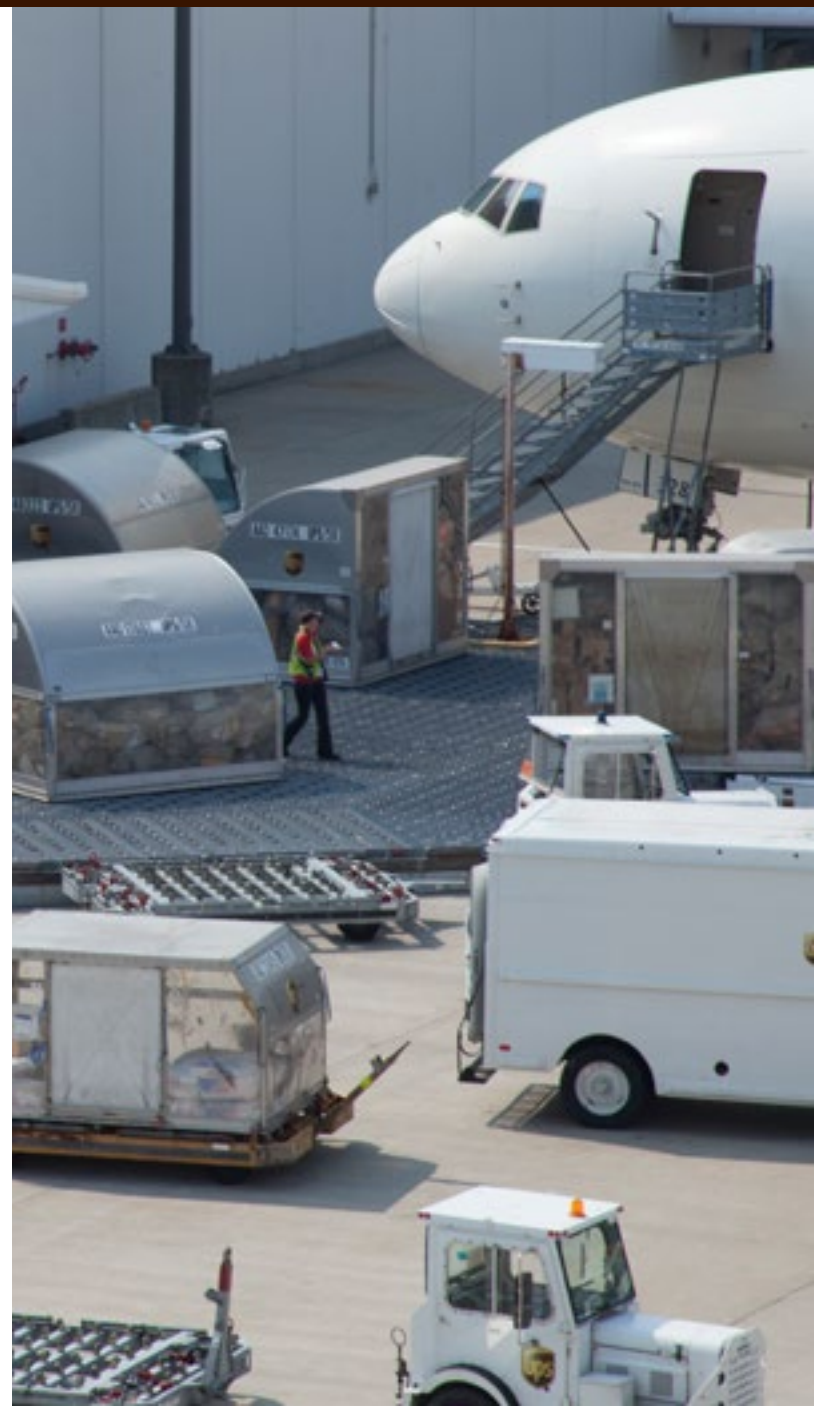
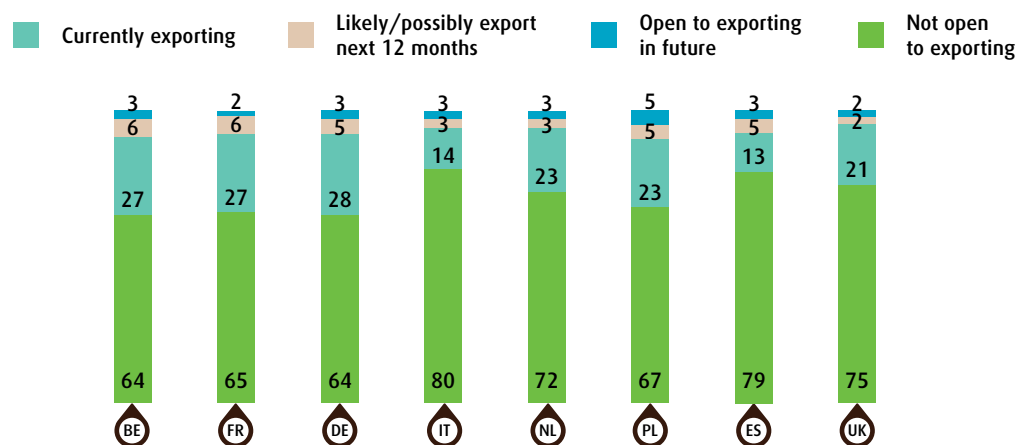
The exporters of the future

The 2016 UPS European SME Exporting Insights Study identified SMEs that were currently exporting, that were 'likely' to export during the next 12 months, and those that considered themselves 'open to exporting'. The results confirm that while it remains the case that the majority of SMEs do not export, a large minority do (over 20% in six out of eight markets), and there is also a significant minority that are likely to export soon or open to the idea.

Among those that do not export, while some cited the investment cost or the administrative cost of moving to exporting, others had more fundamental reasons – including the lack of customer demand outside their home countries, or that they considered that their products were not suitable for export (companies cited food, pharmaceuticals and services in this category).

On a country basis, higher levels of actual SME exporting correspond with higher levels of interest in future exporting on the part of non-exporters. Belgium, France and Germany are the most favourably disposed towards exporting, with both the highest export activity and highest interest in starting. Italy and Spain are the least likely to be exporting now and least open to exporting in the future.

% SMEs who are...



The Export Readiness Index

Using the results on openness to exporting detailed on the previous page, UPS derived an Export Readiness Index designed to show how close a country's non-exporters were to entering the export market, and what kind of new skills they would need to invest in to make the transition. All companies answered questions on their forward-looking business priorities and their current ratings of performance on those issues. These results were combined to create a weighted scale of openness to exporting, based on companies' own self reporting of current performance.



According to the Index the top three issues that companies would need to address to transition to exporting are taking advantage of e-commerce, learning to grow in unfamiliar markets, and obtaining market intelligence.

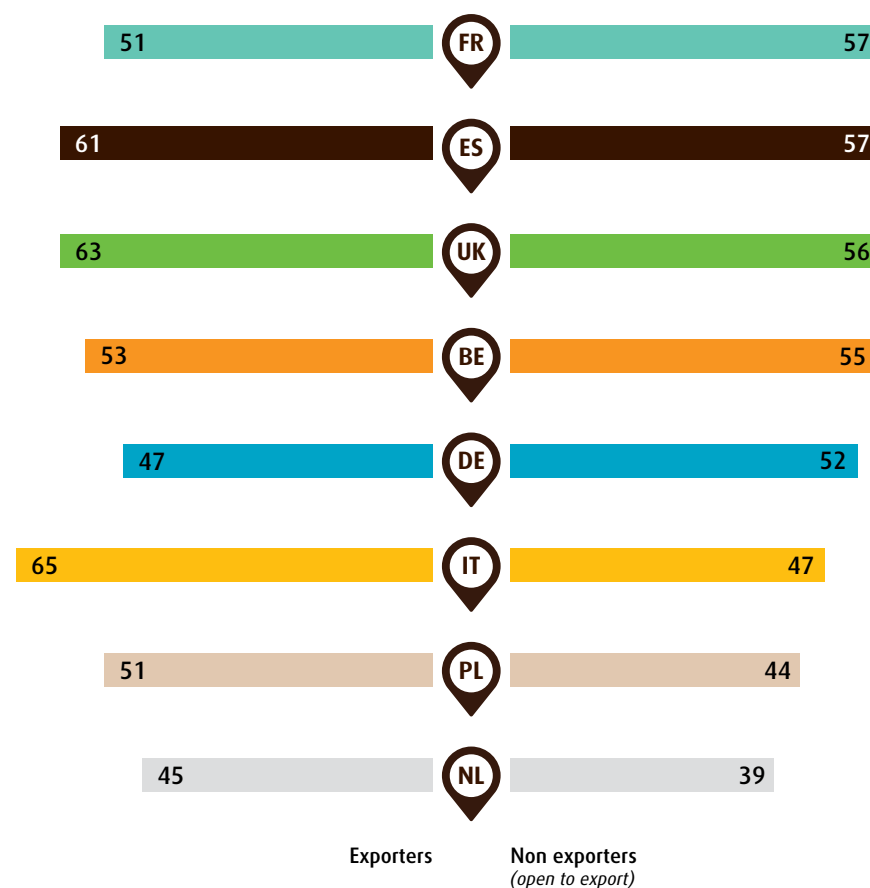


On a country basis the biggest skill deficit is among SMEs in Italy (on improving customer experience). There were also significant skill gaps in Poland (on e-commerce), in the UK (on customer experience), and the Netherlands (on market intelligence).



On a sector basis it is SMEs in retail and high-tech that believe they have most to learn in order to succeed in the transition to exporting.

The Export Readiness Gap between Exporters and Non-Exporters



Export readiness: a confidence trap?

Strikingly, some non-exporting SMEs believe they are performing better in areas critical to exporting than those SMEs who are actually exporting now. In Belgium, Germany and France, between 2% and 6% of companies open to exporting believe they are better equipped than actual exporters. As these results are based on companies' own self-reporting the cause of this disparity is elusive; it may well be that companies not yet exporting tend to underestimate how well they will perform in the real world of cross-border trade, which tends to demand specialist skills and experience.

Closing the Export Readiness Gap

Non-exporters can close the gap in different ways in each country

- IT** Improving customer experience
- PL** Taking advantage of e-commerce
- UK** Improving customer experience
- NL** Obtaining market intelligence about customer needs & expectations
- ES** Continually innovating and maintaining high quality products



Conclusion

Europe's exporting SMEs continue to represent a growing part of the overall economy, and are a significant contributor to European economic growth. The latest EU figures show that the growth rate of SMEs overall has surged, and SME employment is also growing. Data from UPS shows that the proportion of SMEs exporting rose in all seven markets for which there is year-on-year data, and that for SME exporters the link between exporting and higher levels of growth continues to underline the fact that exporting is the most powerful growth engine in the SME sector.

But for the first time in the four years that UPS has been collecting data on SME export performance, there has been a significant shift in trends. The growth of online sales channels – very marked in the previous two years – has now fallen back, suggesting that for SMEs there is a natural limit to the use of online channels (a significant minority of companies say that online does not suit their business). But for the majority of SMEs that do use online channels, there are again signs that online is becoming the norm – concerns about internet security continue to fall in relative importance, as online selling becomes more familiar to both customers and companies.

There have also been changes in the relative export orientations of individual markets. The UK in particular has fallen from near to the top of the league of export-oriented economies to close to the bottom. The UK's referendum vote has added a new factor to this trend shift. The Brexit vote had an impact on SME exporters in all of the eight countries surveyed. In the UK it depressed expectations of future growth through exporting, but elsewhere it had the opposite effect.

These changes to trends suggest that the SME export market is continuing the process of maturity that UPS first identified in last year's data. Exporting may once have been the preserve of large companies with the investment capacity to build their own cross-border trading systems, but that has now changed. Smaller companies can now access export markets on ever easier terms, thanks to third-party services and the increasing ease of online selling across borders. The proportion of SMEs that export remains a minority – nearly a quarter of SMEs are exporters – but it is a large minority that is set to become larger still.





About UPS

Though UPS operates in over 220 countries and territories around the world, it conducts business just like an SME. That's because it has a strong customer focus and a close connection to the communities in which it provides service. There are drivers who have been collecting parcels in the same streets in cities across Europe for the past 30 years. They know their customers by name.

UPS has built a global logistics network that delivers approximately 18.3 million packages and documents a day with more than 2,000 worldwide operating facilities. These packages are carried by a distribution fleet that includes 237 jet aircraft, over 110,000 package cars, trucks, tractors and motorcycles, including more than 7,700 alternative fuel vehicles.

By leveraging this network, SMEs are able to think big and compete big without having to create a global infrastructure to actually be big. SMEs are able to pick and choose a UPS logistics technology and service that addresses their specific business challenge. Having shipped millions of export orders around the world for years, UPS has developed solutions perfectly suited to exporting SMEs.

UPS firmly believes that exporting can help SMEs' businesses grow by opening new markets to them. Experience in new markets leads to product innovation, which propels business growth. Companies that are able to nimbly explore new markets and niches and respond quickly to changes in the marketing landscape are the ones that will succeed.

UPS Tools & Services for SMEs:

Packaging consulting service

UPS has a specialised Package Test Lab in Europe, where specialists can offer a packaging consulting service. This helps SMEs design packaging that can withstand the stresses of export transportation, which minimises the risk of loss and damage.

Package and freight services

UPS is able to transport every sort of shipment, from envelopes couriered overnight to break-bulk shipments that require specialised equipment to load them onto ships.

API Technology

UPS's Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) make it simple for exporters to integrate shipping, billing, and international customs technology directly into their website or enterprise system. This can help SMEs become more efficient and deliver benefit to their customers with an improved user experience.

Customs Brokerage Service

With brokerage facilities in all the top world markets, UPS covers the global trading centres where SMEs do business. Brokerage services are performed with consistency, reliability, and flexibility.

UPS Access Point™

UPS's network of UPS Access Point™ locations enable fast, efficient, and convenient parcel retrieval from a retail outlet such as a newsagent or grocery store. UPS Access Point™ helps retailers improve online shopping and customer service with an alternative to home parcel delivery.

Paperless solutions

UPS Paperless Invoice delivers exporters convenience and peace of mind by allowing SMEs to submit trade documentation to UPS electronically, which reduces the risk of customs holds from missing or misinterpreted information.

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