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Accelerating SME Digital Transformation through Enterprise Europe Network: The Friend Europe Experience in Northern Italy

Motivations & Research Question(s)

Background & Motivations

- Digital transformation is a key driver for SME competitiveness, resilience, and sustainable growth.
- **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)**: The largest business support network of the EU, providing advisory, technology transfer, partner search, and access to finance

SME Challenges in Digitalisation

- Limited internal digital capabilities and technical expertise.
- Difficulty in identifying appropriate technologies for business needs.
- Constrained financial resources for high-risk digital investments.
- Fragmented access to regional and European innovation ecosystems.

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Methodology

Digital Readiness: Digital Maturity Assessments to identify baseline capacity and priority roadmaps.

Innovation Advisory: Innovation management support and regulatory/market guidance.

Technology Scouting & Transfer: International business and technology partner matching.

EDIH Synergies: Direct connections with European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) and research organisations.

Funding Facilitation: Guidance to regional and EU digitalisation grants.

Adoption of innovative technologies: support SMEs to efficiently integrate digital technologies for specific applications.

Preliminary Results



Digital Readiness ↑: Increased awareness and structured digital roadmaps.
Innovation Capacity ↑: Enhanced internal management and reduced adoption risks.
Technology Uptake ↑: Faster market adoption of advanced Industry 4.0 & AI solutions.
Ecosystem Integration ↑: Stronger regional and cross-border collaborative networks.

1) The Friend Europe experience demonstrates EEN's role as a vital gateway for SME digital transformation.
2) Combining local advisory with European networks bridges the gap between SMEs and high-tech ecosystems

Aknowledgemnts:
This work presents activities developed within the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) through the Friend Europe Consortium supporting SMEs in Northern Italy in their digital and innovation transition pathways.

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