

GREEK SMEs and EU Membership: Navigating Euroscepticism during times of crisis.

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Executive Summary

- This study explores how Greek SMEs view EU membership amid growing Euroscepticism, especially after the Eurozone debt crisis and COVID-19.
- Interviews and data reveal that while many SMEs value the Euro's stability and access to EU markets, austerity and bureaucracy have led to dissatisfaction.
- Immigrant-owned SMEs face extra challenges but remain resilient.
- Most SMEs consider EU membership vital for growth, but reforms are needed for fairer support.

Results

- **Positive Impacts:** The Euro brings stability, boosts trade and supports tourism, which are fundamental for SMEs survival and prosperity.
- **Challenges:** EU austerity and regulations, especially during the debt crisis, hurt SMEs. Immigrant-owned businesses face extra bureaucratic hurdles.
- **COVID-19 Response:** SMEs valued EU leadership's pandemic support like the Recovery and Resilience Facility, but access and distribution issues persist.

Objective:

- This study aims to explore how Greek SMEs perceive EU membership and navigate its advantages and challenges, particularly during economic crises.
- The study examines whether SMEs view the benefits of market access, funding and regulatory support as outweighing the negative impacts of EU-imposed austerity and regulation
- The research examines the resilience of SME leadership in navigating economic crises and also explores leadership from the lens of top-down policies passed by EU and Greek authorities



Conclusion

- Greek SMEs value EU membership for its economic benefits, especially the stability of the Euro and access to markets.
- However, issues such as austerity measures, regulatory burdens, and unequal access to EU funding continue to foster discontent.
- For continued support, reforms targeting smaller businesses are essential.

Methods

- **Data Collection:** A mix of primary and secondary data was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Greek SME owners across sectors like retail, hospitality, and technology, while secondary data was sourced from think tanks and reports.
- **Sampling:** Participants were selected from three geographic locations—Athens, Serifos, and Crete—to ensure diversity in perspectives.
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework was applied to identify recurring patterns and themes in SME attitudes towards EU membership.

Interpretation

- The findings suggest that while SMEs are generally positive about EU membership due to the economic stability and market access it provides, frustrations around inequitable access to EU support and the impact of austerity measures remain.
- More targeted reforms from leadership towards equalising equity for groups such as immigrants could resolve these frustrations.

References

- **Bibliography:** Alogoskoufis, G (2012), Katsikas (2024), Karas et al (2023), Kouloglou et al (2023), Nikiforos et al (2015), Ritchie et al (2020), Tosun et al (2018), Zettelmeyer et al (2013).
- **Key Readings:** 'Greece's Sovereign Debt Crisis: Retrospect and Prospect (2012)', 'Public Support for European Integration in Greece and Italy between 2015 and 2020.' 'Coping with Crisis: Europe's Challenges and Strategies. 1st ed. (2018)