



Green best practices for road transport SMEs and how the EU can support them

How to become more sustainable in the road transport sector: tips for SMEs, from operations to product development.

1. Introduction

Ever had someone ask you if your company, product, or service is 'green' or 'sustainable'? Not sure what steps you can take to ensure you can answer the question in the affirmative? Many entrepreneurs such as yourself have asked us how they can make their businesses greener, so we collected tips from SMEs on sustainable practices they have successfully implemented, which will hopefully serve to give you ideas. There's no need to re-invent the wheel; here are some useful and straightforward measures that any small business in the road haulage and spare parts sector can adopt on the path to becoming greener.

We hear from your peers that, in order to remain competitive in the sector and increase the sustainability of your services, you need to keep up with the regulations related to vehicle emissions. You might feel that there are no good solutions out there that can help your organisation to adapt to the changes in regulations and market attitudes – for instance, the shifting political and societal views on emissions and the uncertainties around how much electric mobility will transform the market. Despite these unknowns, there are good interim innovations available, such as emission-tracking devices, which can help bridge the gap for small enterprises. Spare parts distributors can struggle with profitability, which can make them resistant to change, yet the new green methods offer an opportunity to find a longer-term market positioning if they embrace the new possibilities and contribute unique solutions to the marketplace.

So, whatever your reason for introducing greener practices into your company, whether you just want to 'do a bit more' for the environment, save costs on fuel or replacements, or become more competitive in tendering processes, we are grateful that you are making the change! Luckily, some of these ideas need minimal or no investment. Every contribution to the EU Green Deal in terms of reducing emissions and waste benefits our beautiful home here in the EU, while at the same time increasing the competitiveness of your SME and future-proofing your business.

Before getting started, always consider the legislative and non-legislative context in which you are operating, as this can determine your chosen approach and the actions you decide to take. Look for existing national/regional incentives to implement these actions!

You might have already come across some interesting parts, devices, or ideas, but might not know how to get hold of them or implement them within your organisation. We want to help you figure that out, which is why this work is based on a collaboration between drivers and haulers, spare parts distributors, and garage workers.



2. Specific tips for going green in the road transport sector

Road haulage and spare parts SMEs can become greener by focusing on the following areas: operations, equipment, IT, and maintenance.

Operations >> people and process

A first step that an SME can take to significantly decrease its environmental impact is providing driver training and encouraging eco-driving behaviours in the whole team. As congestion often occurs during last-mile delivery, there are often different pricing schemes and incentives at regional and local levels intended to stimulate changes in operations that could ameliorate this congestion. As a business, there are some quick wins you can achieve through driver training that will both enable you to win some new tenders, and also to quickly achieve a positive green impact.

An example of a whole organisation (directors, employees, and drivers) undergoing training is a project financed by Italy's Veneto Region, which aimed to improve soft skills such as communication skills, digital skills, as well as Behaviour-Based Safety (BBS) for safe driving and eco-driving, according to the Safety & Quality Assessment for Sustainability (SQAS)-CEFIC guidelines. The project started in February 2020 and was completed in March 2021. The eco-driving training module provided was aligned with the BBS scheme promoted by CEFIC/ECTA as part of the qualification according to SQAS, 2019 edition.

Forward-thinking entrepreneurs have also been active in building small businesses focused on the incentivisation of changes in driving behaviour. For example:



- **LIFE ASPIRE** (Italy, received €1.03 million in funding): the company implements, in the city of Lucca, a tolling scheme for entering the city's low-emission zone. The scheme rewards green transport operators according to criteria such as: vehicle emissions and dimension, duration of the stay, trips frequency, utilised time slot, etc. <http://www.life-aspire.eu>
- **SafeMode** (Israel): the company implements a behavioural Artificial Intelligence (AI) platform that incentivises drivers to take into account safety and fuel consumption in their driving behaviours. The pilot projects that were conducted to date showed a decrease in road accidents and reduction in fuel consumption. The solution is implemented as part of a Fleet Management Solution. <https://www.safemode.co>
- **ADAM CogTec** (Israel): this is yet another company that implements an AI-based driver monitoring solution that enables the driver and fleet operator to monitor in real-time the driver's emotional state and cognitive condition, driver safety profile, and additional driver behaviours. The solution is implemented as part of a Fleet Management Solution. <https://www.adam-cogtec.com>

Certifications are also helpful to outline and plan for improved environmental performance. For example:

- Environmental Management System (ISO 14001): Certification of Environmental Management System according to ISO 14001:2015 standard, Assessment SQAS-CEFIC, since 1998;
- Setting lower GHG targets: Targets are fixed according to the 2019 SQAS-CEFIC scheme, Section 9 (<https://www.sqas.org>);
- Certification of Quality Management System according to ISO 9001:2015, since 1993;
- Certification of Occupational Health and Safety Management System according to ISO 45001:2018 (BS OHSAS 18001), since 2001.

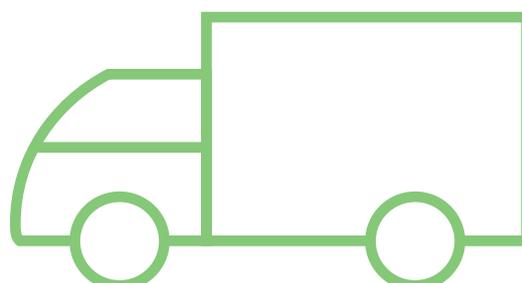


Vehicle & Equipment Retrofitting/Modifications >> to adapt to new standards

Some SMEs are making modifications to their fleets, while others are creating new businesses that offer or facilitate such modifications. For example:

- **LIFE CAT4HEAVY** (Greece/Italy, received €1.63 million in funding): develops and up-scales an innovative nano catalyst-based emission control system for heavy-duty vehicles. The nano-catalyst is expected to upgrade your truck to standards better than the Euro VII!
<https://www.lifecat4heavy.eu>
- **LIFE NEW HYTS** (The Netherlands, received €4.59 million in funding): will demonstrate the opportunities and feasibility for local production, distribution, and application of green hydrogen in road transport. It aims to create the right conditions for rapid uptake of green hydrogen-fuelled heavy-duty vehicles in local transport.
<https://www.kwrwater.nl/en/projecten/life-new-hyts-renewable-green-hydrogen-for-transport>
- **LIFE 'N GRAB HY** (Belgium/The Netherlands, received €1.64 million in funding): converted two garbage trucks into hydrogen trucks to test them in the city of Eindhoven before roll-out in ten other EU cities.
<https://www.lifeandgrabhy.eu>
- **LIFE-SAVE** (Italy, raised €1.81 million in funding): will develop an add-on kit to convert conventional cars into hybrid-solar vehicles at low cost. The kit will include flexible and mountable solar panels that can recharge the vehicle's battery and two electric motors that will be installed in the rear wheels.
<https://www.life-save.eu/en>

- **LIFE DUALNG** (Italy, raised €1.39 million in funding): proposes a disruptive, clean, integrated, and economically attractive Diesel Dual Fuel (DDF) technology. This will be marketed as a kit, using a mixture of diesel fuel with either compressed natural gas (CNG), liquefied natural gas (LNG), or biomethane, suitable for the retrofitting of diesel-powered heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs) including buses, trucks and vans, and also potentially ship engines.
<https://www.carrozzeriebm.it/dualng>
- **CRYOTRUCKS**: in the refrigerated transport sector, a number of operators are trialling the CRYO-TRUCKS system, which makes use of liquid nitrogen instead of diesel as a cooling medium. This results in energy savings, eliminating CO₂ emissions and nitrogen oxides, zero fine particles emissions, and 50% noise reduction compared to traditional systems.
<https://cryotrucks.ch>





IT >> the software

Some SMEs are integrating software into their vehicles to manage their route optimisation, as well as track precision in last-mile delivery.

A number of road haulers are trialling the Trucknet solution (<https://trucknet.io/en/>). Trucknet is a digital platform that offers cross-company optimisation that can increase the efficiency of logistics services by minimising empty miles and reducing CO₂ emissions through artificial intelligence, business intelligence, and machine learning. The benefit of this platform is that empty trips are reduced thanks to accurate calculations which help to identify the most appropriate subcontractors based on location (smart matching). It offers the following features to transport and logistic companies:

- performance indicators;
- CO₂ calculator;
- driver/subcontractor/cargo geolocation;
- real-time transport tracking;
- digital documents and electronic consignment note (e-CMR), transactions and automated accounting;
- transportation operations schedules.

The all-in-one platform provides a seamless user experience, process automation through digitisation and data analysis optimisation. Several SMEs are focusing on developing similar solutions. For example:

- **LIFE ECOTRAVID** (France, raised €1.04 million in funding): finds the optimal route and determines the truck configuration for a specific journey thanks to its virtual drive simulator. It can lower your fuel consumption and related CO₂ emissions by between 5% and 10%.
<https://ecotraavid.eu>
- **LIFE GreenYourRoute** (Greece/Czech Republic, raised €1.30 million in funding): a vehicle routing system specifically designed for urban freight last-mile delivery.
<https://www.greenyourroute.com>

Vehicle maintenance >> dismantling and end of life

Some SMEs are managing the end of life of vehicles, as well as extending the life of parts (circular economy). Such businesses include, for example:

- **LIFE De-BAY** (Italy, raised €0.88 million in funding): developed innovative depollution bays for vehicle dismantlers, enabling them to reduce the depollution time of end-of-life vehicles by 75%, increasing both fluid and materials recovery and operation safety.
<https://www.lifedebay.eu>
- **Ki Mobility Solutions:** is a car maintenance solution which collects car data in real time, enabling it to diagnose the vehicle's status and offer insights that facilitate predictive maintenance. Data is shared with service providers such as mechanics and fleet managers to provide a seamless service. The solution will be soon available in Europe in collaboration with Mobilion Ventures (<https://www.mobilion-vc.com>) and Nexus Automotive International (<https://www.nexusautomotiveinternational.eu>).
- **Bakelit (France):** a service that aggregates parts and solutions to maintain classic cars to the highest standards, by offering 3D-printed parts, vehicle renovation services, and circular parts (certified used parts and new old stock parts). Over 5,000 products are listed, as alternatives to new products, including more than 600 part numbers that have been 3D printed, a number that is quickly increasing month by month.
www.webstore.bakelit.eu
www.bakelit.eu
- **LIFE/Fit for REACH** (Baltic region, received €2.6 million in funding): join the car repair shops that received support to substitute hazardous chemical substances with safer alternatives.
<https://www.fitreach.eu>

3. Greening your office/HQ

The last years have shown us that we need to embrace sustainability in order to keep our businesses competitive and our teams engaged and motivated.

These general tips are from business owners, who stated that they implemented them to: **1) reduce operating costs** (because of optimised resources/waste); **2) increase the productivity** of their business; **3) access new customers** who had sustainability requirements; **4) increase the satisfaction** of their employees, who wanted to see the company modernise in preparation for the future.

SMEs can reduce the negative environmental impact of their business activity by introducing sustainable practices into their day-to-day operations. Here are some simple tips for making your office a little greener:

- Use retrofit lighting: when replacing your lighting, look for energy-efficient bulbs or LED solutions, substitute an older lighting system for a newer one, and install automated light timers.
- Plan preventive machine maintenance to keep machinery in working order for longer. Buy energy-efficient appliances and try to repair before recycling.
- Turn off equipment or electronics when not in use, including computers!
- Buy refurbished tech and equipment and consider selling your second-hand fixtures and fittings.
- Consider greening your procurement by selecting more sustainable providers/subcontractors and more energy-efficient machinery.
- Consider train as an alternative to flight for your long haul business trips when possible

- Consider the potential of digital work for your staff: teleworking, videoconferencing instead of missions are powerful tools to reduce the carbon footprint of your activities.
- Make a member of your team responsible for actively looking for green ideas and solutions, and implement them across the company (like an innovation scout!).
- Green up your office and get green office supplies: reduce paper consumption (use digital options instead), recycle printing paper, use refillable printer cartridges, reduce plastic water bottles in the office and replace them with re-usable glass bottles or jugs, use eco-friendly cleaning products.
- Consider carrying out an environmental audit of your business. This can enable you to gain benefits such as cutting costs, ensuring better compliance with legislation, as well as improving your reputation with your customers, employees, potential investors, and the local community.





4. Need more information and support?

So, you have implemented the quick wins, and you have more significant ideas for greening your SME?

For more in-depth information on further steps and/or access to funds at European, national, regional, or local level to finance your green transition, please ask your SME organisation or regional / local public authority.

About the LIFE Programme

The LIFE Programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action created in 1992. The current funding period, 2021-2027 has a budget of €5.4 billion.

Check out the application guidelines here: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/life/life-support-applicants_en or contact your national contact point: https://cin-ea.ec.europa.eu/life/life-european-countries_en.



Read more about the LIFE programme or follow us on social media at:

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youtube.com/channel/UC-htisi9TeqdRkTtpNtznrq

Do you know of a best practice in this sector?

Then flag it up to EREK (the European Resource Efficiency Energy Centre) at <https://clustercollaboration.eu/content/erek-european-resource-efficiency-knowledge-centre>. EREK is an online platform that aims to foster resource efficiency in SMEs. Your best practice will be showcased to all interested parties. The platform has been set up by the European Commission.

About SMEUnited

SMEUnited is the association of crafts and SMEs in Europe with around 70 member organisations from over 30 European countries. We represent the interest of crafts and SMEs in Europe, and our mission is "shaping Europe for SMEs and shaping SMEs for Europe". We act to create an SME friendly climate in the European Union.

<https://smeunited.eu>
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About UETR

UETR is the European umbrella organisation representing and defending the interests of more than 200,000 road transport undertakings (mostly micro, small, and medium enterprises) with a total capacity of more than 430,000 commercial vehicles. Together, we work towards a stronger, more flexible, competitive, and sustainable road transport sector in which our members are confidently able to face current and future challenges.

www.uetr.eu
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Publisher

SMEUnited & UETR, June 2022