

**INNOPAY**

A business of Oliver Wyman

**taylor**

# THE STATE OF EUROPEAN SME LENDING

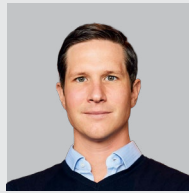
Market report in collaboration  
with Teylor

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# FOREWORD



**Patrick Stäuble**

CEO Teylor AG

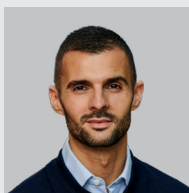
Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of Europe's economy — yet for too long, access to financing has remained unnecessarily complex, fragmented, and slow. At Teylor, we believe that the future of SME lending will be defined by speed, transparency, and collaboration. To close the SME financing gap, banks, fintechs, advisors, and investors must work together to build a more connected and efficient lending ecosystem.

This report highlights the three major shifts transforming SME lending today: the acceleration of technology-driven efficiency, the rise of alternative capital sources such as private debt, and the emergence of embedded distribution models that bring financing directly to where SMEs operate. These trends represent an opportunity — but also a challenge — for traditional lenders who must rethink their models to remain relevant.

At Teylor, we are proud to support this transformation by providing the digital infrastructure that enables banks, platforms, and non-bank digital lenders to offer faster, smarter, and more seamless credit solutions to SMEs. We hope this whitepaper helps spark a broader dialogue on how the ecosystem can work together to make financing simpler, fairer, and more accessible for Europe's small businesses.

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**Mounaim Cortet**

Vice President at INNOPAY — a business of Oliver Wyman

The challenges SMEs face in accessing financing are well recognized but overcoming them requires more than just speed and technology. It calls for a fundamental reimagining of how incumbent financial institutions operate within a rapidly evolving lending landscape driven by digital innovation. This whitepaper provides a strategic perspective on these changes, highlighting how traditional banks can effectively adapt amid growing competition from non-bank digital lenders.

For lenders entrenched in legacy systems, the path forward lies in embracing modular, data-driven, and collaborative models — not only to stay relevant but to unlock SMEs’ full potential as vital engines of economic growth. At INNOPAY, we view this transformation as a pivotal convergence of business innovation and societal impact. Closing the SME financing gap is essential for fostering economic resilience and inclusion, requiring bold leadership and informed strategies from all ecosystem participants.

We trust this report inspires financial institutions and stakeholders to move beyond incremental adjustments and adopt a truly future-ready approach that empowers SME finance throughout Europe.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are fundamental to the European economy. However, these businesses still face significant challenges in securing timely, accessible financing, largely because traditional lending practices remain complex and rigid after decades of dominance.

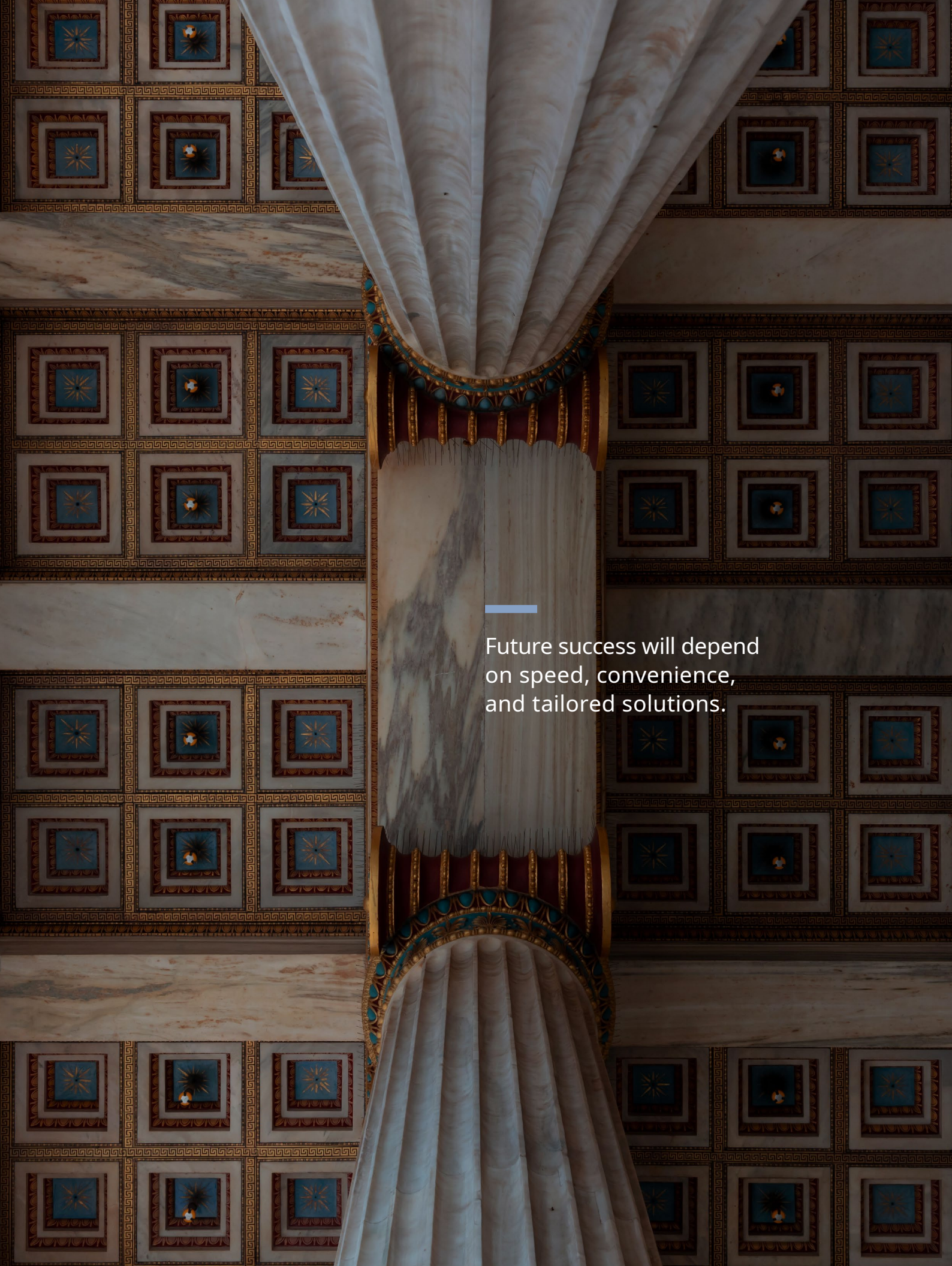
As a result, many banks struggle to serve small and medium-sized enterprises profitably. High fixed costs, regulatory requirements, and risk profiles prolong loan processing and raise borrowing costs. Many small and medium-sized enterprises remain underserved despite strong demand for financing, especially for short-term, small-ticket loans. To close this gap, three major trends have emerged in recent years.

First, technological advancements — including artificial intelligence, machine learning, and open banking through application programming interfaces — are transforming the lending process. These capabilities enable faster, more efficient data collection, analysis, and credit decision-making. Digital lenders use these tools to deliver superior speed and user experience compared with traditional banks, reshaping expectations for small and medium-sized enterprise financing.

Second, private debt funds have grown rapidly as alternative capital providers. Operating with lighter regulation and greater risk flexibility, they approve loans more quickly and serve borrower segments that banks often avoid, broadening and diversifying funding sources for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Third, an increasing share of loans is offered directly within the business software companies already use — across both horizontal and vertical solutions — integrating financing into daily operations. This embedded model increases convenience and access but also changes traditional lending relationships by shifting customer ownership and data control toward software platforms.

To remain competitive, banks must decide how to reshape their small and medium-sized enterprise lending propositions: build digital capabilities, acquire proven solutions, or partner with technology providers. Each path carries different trade-offs in cost, control, and speed to market. Banks that delay transformation risk disintermediation as the lending ecosystem becomes more modular, networked, and capital-fluid. Taken together, these shifts signal a fundamental transformation driven by technology, capital diversification, and evolving customer needs. Future success will depend on speed, convenience, and tailored solutions. Banks face a clear imperative to innovate their small and medium-sized enterprise lending models to close the financing gap and unlock greater growth potential.



Future success will depend  
on speed, convenience,  
and tailored solutions.

# INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the European economy due to their essential contributions to job creation and innovation. In the European Union, SMEs represent 99.8 percent of all companies, contribute about 53.6 percent of total GDP, and employ 65.1 percent of the workforce.<sup>1</sup>

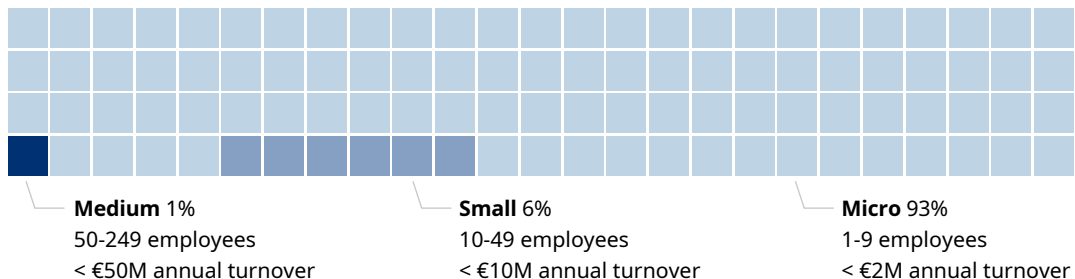
Despite their importance, SMEs face persistent challenges in obtaining sufficient and timely financing. The process of receiving a loan from incumbent lenders is often slow and complex. In this market, “incumbent lenders” refers to established banks that traditionally provided credit to SMEs. The terms “traditional bank,” “traditional credit provider,” and “incumbent lender” are used synonymously throughout this document.

In this paper, small and medium-sized enterprises are defined as companies with a maximum turnover of €50 million and a maximum of 250 employees.<sup>2</sup>

This paper, written in collaboration with Taylor, analyzes the SME lending market and how recent trends are modernizing the SME lending lifecycle, which spans every step from initial application to final repayment. Our methodology integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the evolving landscape. We conducted interviews with SMEs and innovative fintech companies to assess the trends shaping the lifecycle and performed peer comparisons to highlight best practices among incumbents and challengers. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations for traditional banks and presents options for how incumbent players can respond to the identified trends.

## Exhibit 1: European SME Definitions & Figures

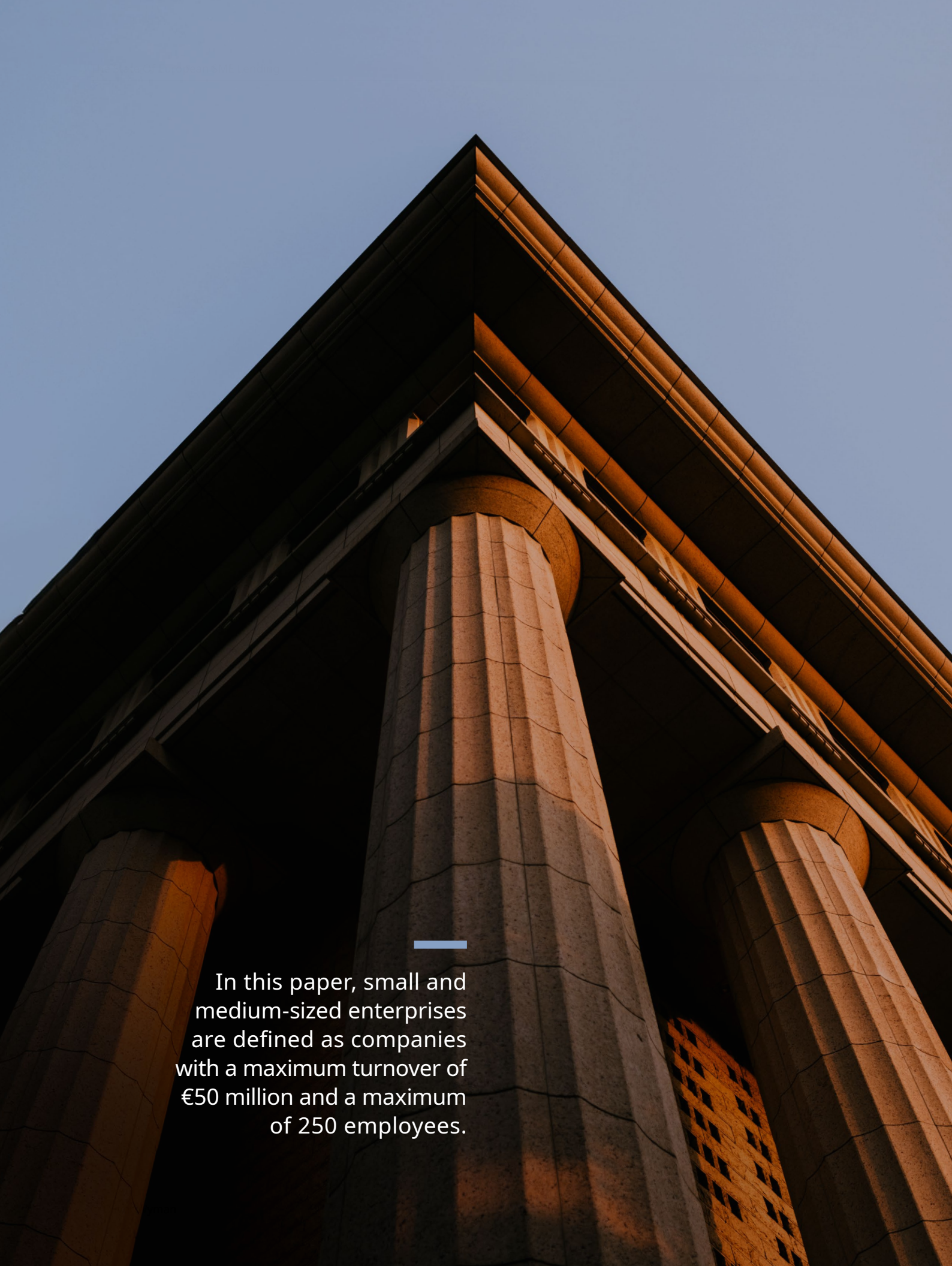
Share of all SME companies (EU)



Source: SME finance forum, Harvard Business Review

1 Annual report on European SMEs 2024/2025, European Commission, 2025

2 EU recommendation 2003/361



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In this paper, small and medium-sized enterprises are defined as companies with a maximum turnover of €50 million and a maximum of 250 employees.



## 1.1 CHALLENGES FOR SME LENDING IN THE EUROPEAN FINANCIAL ECOSYSTEM

For decades, traditional banks dominated the SME lending market. These banks have operated a lending process characterized by end-to-end complexity and rigidity. Banks fund loans using customer deposits and, by applying different terms for savings and lending products, transform risk, maturity, and ticket size to balance liquidity needs with the pursuit of higher returns.

Large deposit bases and the ability to operate on a leveraged basis enable banks to provide high volumes of loans. However, banks face two major challenges in meeting SMEs' financing needs. First, SME loans are difficult to serve profitably because of the nature of SME's needs and the cost structure of business loans for banks. Second, due to the risk profile of the average SME loan, banks must run extensive checks, which lengthen the loan application process and often clash with SMEs' short-term needs.

To achieve profitability, traditional banks must offset high origination and servicing costs driven by manual processes and legacy systems. Many of these costs are fixed, regardless of ticket size or loan term. As a result, banks favor larger, longer term loans where higher interest income can absorb fixed costs.<sup>3</sup> Short term, small ticket loans, often sought by smaller to mid-cap SMEs, tend to carry higher rates to cover these costs, which makes it harder for banks to offer attractive terms.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, SMEs generally face proportionally higher borrowing costs than large corporates.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond their preference for longer, larger loans, traditional banks' application processes also conflict with SMEs' need for fast funding. Because banks play a critical role in the economy, they are heavily regulated. Requirements include strict and costly know your customer (KYC) obligations as well as liquidity and capital checks for every loan. These controls increase per loan costs and prevent banks from shortening lead to loan time frames. In practice, application processes at traditional banks are often time consuming and bureaucratic, which creates a significant barrier for SMEs with short term financing needs. For most SMEs, speed is critical, especially when operating with short cash runways. Several interviewees cited speed as the primary reason for applying to non-bank digital lenders (NBDL).

Although bank loans remain a primary source of external financing for SMEs in Europe, barriers to access leave many SMEs underserved. This limits their capacity to invest, grow, and contribute fully to economic development. The resulting underfinancing is often referred to as the SME financing gap. Bridging this gap can create a more inclusive financial landscape, unlock the full potential of SMEs, and strengthen the overall resilience of Europe's economy.

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3 FED, FEDS notes August 12, 2020

4 "The Cost Structure of Consumer Finance Companies and Its Implications for Interest Rates: Evidence from the Federal Reserve Board's 2015 Survey of Finance Companies", August 12, 2020

5 European Commission, Survey on the Access to Finance of Enterprises (SAFE), 2025

# 25%

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of SMEs in the euro area report that they continuously face severe financing challenges throughout capital markets.<sup>6</sup>

# 50%

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of SMEs in the Euro area indicate bank loans are a relevant source of financing. Yet, only 14% of SMEs indicate they obtained a bank loan.<sup>7</sup> The difference is attributed to difficulties in accessing this financing source.

# 55%

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of debt financing in the Euro area of non-financial corporations was issued by non-bank institutions in 2023, up from ~37% in 2008.<sup>8</sup>

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6 EIF Working Paper 2024/101

7 EIF Working Paper 2024/101, European Commission, Survey on the Access to Finance of Enterprises (SAFE), 2025

8 European Commission, Survey on the Access to Finance of Enterprises (SAFE), 2025

# THE EVOLUTION OF SME LENDING

## 2.1 THREE MAJOR SHIFTS DISRUPTING SME LENDING

With many SMEs underserved in their financing needs, the market has seen a wave of tech savvy, agile entrants in recent years aiming to fill this gap. These companies approach SME lending through technology. They are redesigning the SME lending lifecycle by recognizing and addressing the frictions that create the SME financing gap. This redesign is captured in three major trends:

### Exhibit 2: Three major shifts in SME Lending

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#### **Technology-enhanced process efficiency**

Section 2.1.2

Shift from risk calculations based on (physical) documents and manual assessments to near-instant, automated response to loan requests based on real-time transaction and other financial data accessible via APIs.

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#### **Emergence of private debt-funded loans**

Section 2.1.3

Shift from funding of loans from bank's balance sheet to private debt investors, that act similar to VC investors, with a fixed ROI through loan interest.

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#### **The rise of Embedded lending**

Section 2.1.2

Shift from applying for a loan by visiting a bank branch and talk to a contact person to applying for a loan via business software platforms in which SMEs operate and manage their business (e.g. marketplace, e-commerce platform, accounting software tool).

Source: Oliver Wyman analysis

These trends are embodied and leveraged by innovative new SME lender types and new lending solutions in a market that historically revolved around traditional banks issuing loans directly to SMEs. New players, new business models, and innovative funding mechanisms and products are redefining how, where, and from whom SMEs access loans.

## 2.1.1 THE SME LENDING LIFECYCLE

In general, the lending process follows a recurring set of steps that this report refers to as the SME lending lifecycle, outlined in exhibit 3. Although specifics vary by institution, the phases of the lifecycle are broadly consistent across traditional banks.

### Exhibit 3: SME Lending Lifecycle



Source: Oliver Wyman analysis

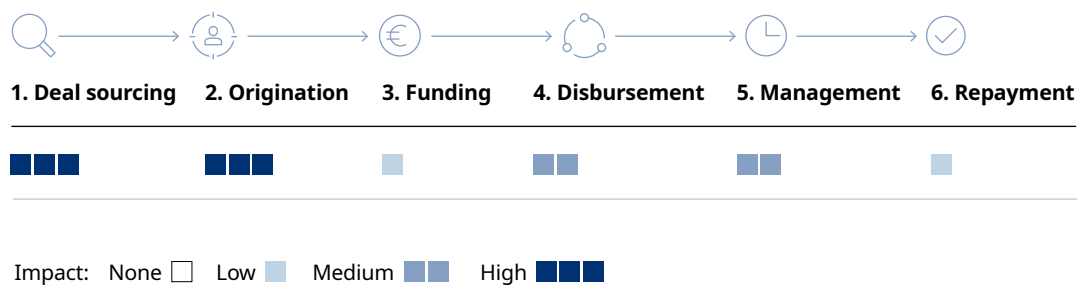
By using emerging technologies, embedded finance solutions, and alternative funding vehicles, modern fintech lenders design processes that are less costly, more efficient, while also offering a better user experience for SMEs applying for loans. The following sections explain how these shifts are applied in practice, their impact on the SME lending lifecycle stages, and how these innovations align with SME needs and improve the overall lending experience.

## 2.1.2 ENHANCING PROCESS EFFICIENCY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Since the early 2000s, advances in digital technology have transformed the SME lending market. Digitally savvy entrants have reshaped the end-to-end lending process. Technological innovations have had a particularly strong impact on how information is transferred between lender and borrower, how applicant data is analyzed, and the accuracy of risk calculations for loan decisions. The impact of technological disruption on different lifecycle steps appears in exhibit 4.

In some cases, information transfer still requires physical documentation that is exchanged during face-to-face interactions between lenders and borrowers. Leading tech savvy lenders now offer digital channels for document upload and collect information directly from third parties through application programming interfaces (API).

**Exhibit 4: Technological Disruption of the SME Lifecycle**



Source: Oliver Wyman analysis

## INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHTS

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### **BANCA AIDEXA**

Banca Aidexa is an Italian fintech focusing on online financing of SME organizations. It relies on open banking data, primarily as transaction history from business accounts, to inform its credit decisioning. It employs fully automated machine learning models to create profiles of applicants, allowing for a 20 minute response time on loan applications. Funds are transferred within 48 hours. Banca Aidexa is reported to have a 3.4% default rate on loan repayments, outperforming many traditional banks.<sup>9</sup>

### **KARMEN**

Karmen is a French fintech specialised in providing working capital. After completing the financing application Karmen requests the lender to connect bank and other software tools to their app. Karmen then conducts an analysis based on the information received from these API connections and sends a offer upon completing the analysis.

### **EURAZEO**

Eurazeo is a private markets investment group providing private debt (in addition to equity- and real asset-) financing to larger SMEs. Eurazeo takes on the role as financial partner, by providing customized financing and strategic support, for example in complex transactions. It can do so more flexibly than traditional banks as it does not need to adhere to rigid requirements. Streamlined and centralized decisioning and cloud-based, data-driven risk models allow for short lead-to-loan timeframes.

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<sup>9</sup> Actio.com, How banks are using AI to lend to SMEs faster and more reliable, 20.11.2023

This shift delivers major efficiency gains.<sup>10</sup> After the lender receives the borrower's data, analysis is the next step, which has also changed significantly. Traditional banks still rely heavily on human review of documents. In contrast, digital leaders use artificial intelligence and machine learning for near instantaneous analysis, delivering results in a preset format. This format allows easy comparison against underwriting guidelines and enables faster decisions. Alongside faster data transfer, these advancements have reduced minimum application processing times from weeks to hours or even minutes. Despite this progress, most decision processes still include human intervention.

Regulatory frameworks such as the Revised Payment Services Directive (PSD2) in Europe and other open banking initiatives have accelerated this shift. By requiring banks to provide access to customer payment account data with user consent, these policies have unlocked rich transaction data. Access to payment data, combined with better algorithms, allows new entrants to run creditworthiness analysis using more than traditional sources such as annual reports, cash flow statements, and profit and loss statements. These data sources are accessed efficiently through APIs. These capabilities give digital lenders an advantage over incumbents that still rely on legacy processes.

As outlined in this section, fintech lenders are implementing technology solutions that move from physical documents and manual assessments to near instant automated responses based on real time transactions and other financial data received through APIs. Traditional banks that rely on slow, manual, and relationship driven lifecycles now compete with fintech lenders that offer faster, more efficient, and more seamless journeys. As new players set a higher bar for speed, convenience, and personalization, traditional banks and other incumbent lenders are being forced to adapt.

### **2.1.3 EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE DEBT-FUNDED LOANS**

As more businesses seek alternative financing from non-bank institutions, the private debt asset class has grown significantly in recent years. Global assets under management in private debt are now over 1.5 trillion dollars.<sup>11</sup> The growth trend is expected to continue, with forecasters estimating the total market size to be over \$2.6 trillion by 2029.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas large financial institutions once dominated with balance sheet strength and in-house underwriting, a growing ecosystem of private investors and debt funds now provides funding for loans to corporates and SMEs, often in partnership with non-bank digital lenders. The influence of this development appears in exhibit 5.

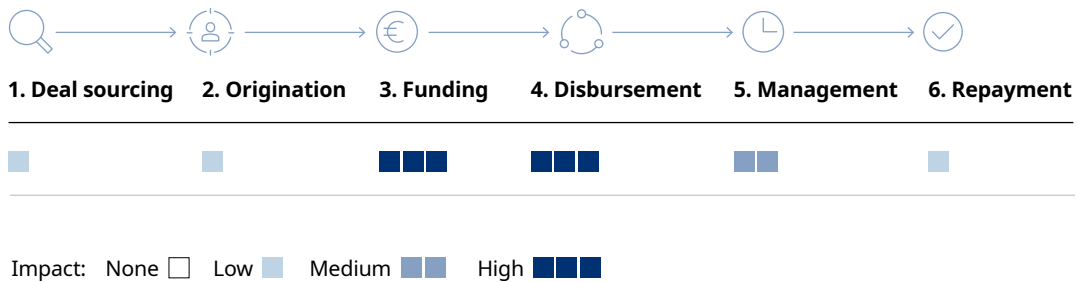
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<sup>10</sup> Actico, How banks are using AI to lend to SMEs faster and more reliably, 2023

<sup>11</sup> Preqin global report: Private debt, 2025

<sup>12</sup> Preqin global report: Private debt, 2025

### Exhibit 5: Private Debt funding impact on SME Lifecycle



Source: Oliver Wyman analysis

Investor interest in private debt rose with the increase in regulatory requirements imposed on banks after the 2008 financial crisis. Many of these requirements have only become more stringent since. The Basel III framework, published in 2011, imposed stricter capital and liquidity requirements on banks, particularly for higher risk loans such as those for SMEs. In addition, know your customer legislation requires banks to implement more stringent processes, which increases both the cost and the time of origination. Average spend on KYC processes by banks has grown at significant rates in the past years, with reports varying between 13 and 18 percent growth year-on-year.<sup>13</sup> These regulatory requirements constrain banks' investment choices and lengthen loan processing times.

Because they are non-bank financial institutions, private debt funds are not subject to the capital and liquidity requirements of the Basel framework and often face lighter compliance burdens in KYC. As a result, they have more freedom in risk appetite and can design faster, more seamless application processes. This allows private debt funds to make higher risk investments in search of higher returns and to build leaner processes that improve customer experience while lowering cost.

Prevailing low interest rates during the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis also contributed to the rise of private funding for SME loans. Deposit rates were exceptionally low in many EU member states, and some markets even experienced negative deposit rates for a time. In that environment, investors sought alternative opportunities, and SME credit became an area of focus.

<sup>13</sup> Fenergo KYC trends report, 2023; Celent IT and operational spending on financial crime compliance, 2024



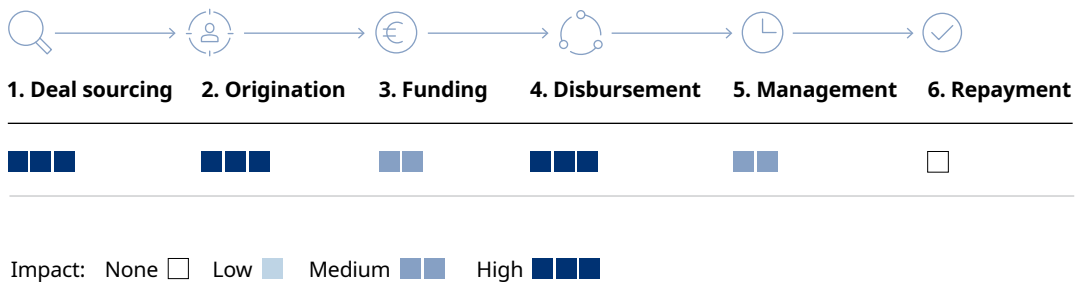
The growth of private debt capital has introduced new players into SME lending, a segment that was long dominated by traditional banks. Private debt focused fintech companies benefit from several structural advantages, including lighter regulatory costs, faster processing times, and flexible risk appetite. This allows them to reach segments that banks often cannot, including SMEs in start-up phases or those in riskier industries. Some providers operate an unbundled model, focusing on digital origination and servicing, while external investors provide the loan capital. This separation enables greater scale and specialization and lets platforms respond more quickly to borrower needs.

The rise of private debt in SME lending marks a fundamental evolution in how credit is originated and funded. No longer reliant on banks as the only source of capital, SMEs can access a wider set of financing options. As the supply of private debt capital increases, SMEs benefit from better access to financing. This shift does not eliminate the role of traditional financial institutions in SME lending, but it does redefine it.

### 2.1.4 THE RISE OF EMBEDDED LENDING SOLUTIONS

The third trend is the rise of embedded lending. Embedded lending integrates credit services directly into non-financial digital platforms, enabling businesses to access financing within their everyday workflows. It allows platform providers to offer loans at the customer interface as a value-added service, which strengthens the proposition, increases client stickiness, and creates additional revenue.

**Exhibit 6: Embedded Lending impacting the SME Lifecycle**



Source: Oliver Wyman analysis

## INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHTS

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Blue Owl capital is a leading alternative asset manager in the US, specializing in private credit, GP stakes, and real estate. Blue Owl finances, among others, high-risk, non-standard organizations that generally cannot obtain financing from banks. This can involve large commitments in risky industries, and the implementation of innovative financing structures to simplify or customize capital stacks. This can involve both equity- and debt financing, or even a combination of the two. Deals are often closed in a timespan of several days, as a result of streamlined KYC- and due diligence processes.



Shopify capital allows Shopify merchants to request loans and receive pre-approved offers directly on the Shopify platform. It leverages machine learning to analyse the sales data it already has access to for the underwriting procedure, and allows for flexible repayments based on a percentage of sales. Loans are funded by Shopify's partner WebBank in the US.



Qonto is a payment services provider (PSD2 license), offering business accounts to micro-businesses and SMEs. In recent years, Qonto has broadened its offering by embedding a BNPL solution and several business loan offerings in its platform. The BNPL solution is directly funded by Qonto itself, while Qonto operates a network of partners (fintech lenders & neobanks) to fund its business loans in a white label format. Credit assessments are conducted by Qonto's partners, many of which implement AI-driven credit scoring. Qonto facilitates the use of account data and transaction history to this end. Approvals are generally provided within 48 hours. In addition, Qonto has integrated accounting-, invoicing-, and accounts payable administration solutions with its business banking offering to facilitate businesses in their needs beyond banking.

This new access channel for SMEs fundamentally disrupts the deal sourcing and loan origination phases — as can be seen in exhibit 6 — and is influenced by the rise of independent software vendors (ISVs) evolving into comprehensive business operating platforms. Starting as single purpose software providers, these vendors have entered financial services from two directions:

**Horizontally oriented ISVs** focus on providing generic software solution that are designed for a wide range of industries and business functions, including bookkeeping, customer relationship management (CRM), enterprise resource planning (ERP) and human resource tools (HR). These are general purpose applications that work in many settings.

**Vertically oriented ISVs** take the opposite approach, offering specialized software tailored to the needs of a specific industry such as hospitality, beauty and wellness, retail and ecommerce, or fitness, and to niche segments within those industries such as restaurants compared to hotels within hospitality. They address unique challenges and requirements that horizontal software does not cover.

Both types of ISVs are increasingly incorporating financial services into their platforms. Combining an existing software relationship with embedded lending is powerful because the provider already knows the SME. This creates an efficient sales channel for loans. In our interviews, almost all SMEs said they either have applied for or would consider applying for a loan through their business software platform if it offered financing, citing convenience, efficiency, and speed as their primary reasons.

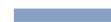
In addition to a strong sales channel, the software platform often has a detailed understanding of clients' business models, cash flows, and financing needs, or at least access to the data to build that understanding. This enables seamless applications and targeted offers. Shopify Capital is an example, as it uses sales data from the Shopify platform with other financial data to tailor loan terms.

Financial services platforms are also adopting embedded lending. We see two common approaches, each with a clear rationale. First, some providers want to offer loans to existing customers without taking on the licensing and regulatory burden required to lend directly. Payment services providers with a PSD2 license, such as Qonto, use an embedded model in which licensed lenders fund the loans and supply the balance sheet. These models show how banks can orchestrate broader SME services by integrating third party solutions into their journeys.

Second, lenders use embedding to enhance capabilities and expand their loan offerings. Traditional banks take this approach by embedding loan products or services from tech savvy financial providers into their own platforms. For example, Paragon Bank has partnered with Alfa (see 4.3) to digitize its end-to-end lending process. This approach lets banks benefit from better processing and underwriting while offering products they may not want to build internally. Bank and fintech partnerships are becoming a standard way of working in SME lending.

The embedded model offers diverse opportunities for credit providers to develop new sales channels, strengthen credit decisioning, and diversify their offerings. SMEs benefit from better lending solutions that are integrated into software they already use, which reduces the need to engage multiple providers and improves the experience. This model can also shorten application times, saving SMEs time and improving access to funding.

There are risks. Embedded lending invites new entrants such as neobanks and fintech lenders and raises the risk of disintermediation. Independent software vendors can own the SME client relationship by controlling the customer interface, which relegates banks to the background as commodity capital providers.

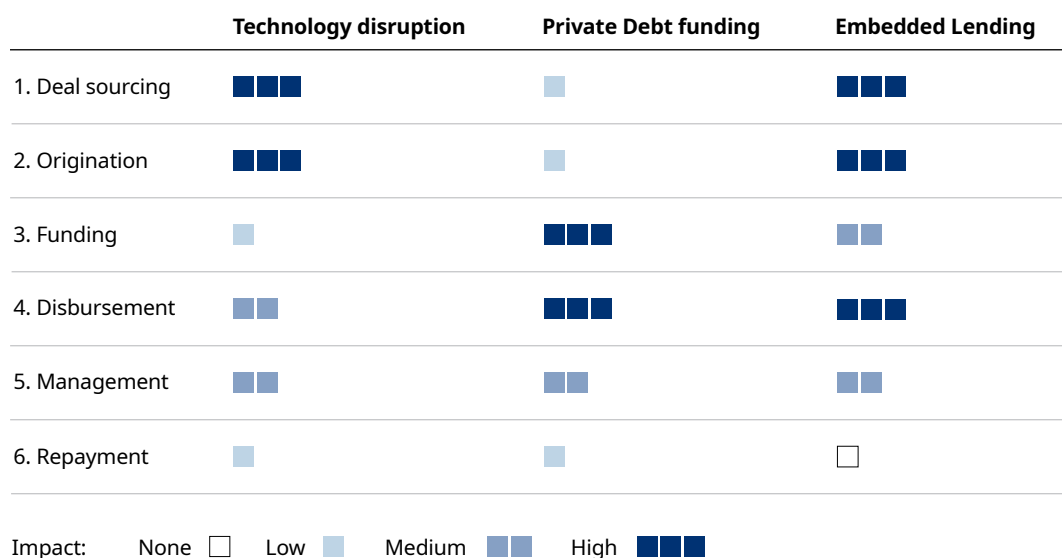


In embedded models, the platform owns the customer relationship and data, and the lender plays a secondary role, often as capital as a service. This inversion of the traditional lender borrower dynamic poses a structural threat to banks and fintechs that risk losing the customer interface.

## 2.2 HOW THE TRANSFORMATIVE TRENDS IMPACT THE SME LOAN LIFECYCLE

Three transformative trends in SME lending are changing the SME lending lifecycle end-to-end, especially in origination, funding, and disbursement, as shown in exhibit 7.

**Exhibit 7: Overview overall impact of trends on the SME Lending Lifecycle**




Source: Oliver Wyman analysis

Together, these trends foster a more modular and competitive lifecycle in which origination, underwriting, servicing, and funding can be managed by separate entities. Capital has become increasingly commoditized and mobile, flowing through channels that offer better data, technology, and borrower access.

As a result, incumbent lenders face challenges from digital competitors eager to attract customers with solutions tailored to their needs. This dynamic weakens the traditional perception of banks as the primary source of SME loans. To maintain satisfaction and loyalty, incumbent banks must compete on product enhancements.

Ultimately, these developments improve access and simplify financing for SMEs, which reduces the SME financing gap over time.



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Technological innovations have opened data access, transfer, and analysis. This enables a lifecycle that provides faster, more inclusive access to loans and improves the SME lending experience.

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The growth of private debt has diversified capital options available to SMEs. This expansion supports more flexible funding solutions that better match SME needs.

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The rise of embedded lending has expanded the ability of financial and non-financial players to provide SME lending. By modularizing loan capabilities, various entities can integrate enhanced SME lending services into their offerings and broaden or improve their portfolios.

# CASE STUDY

## **TEYLOR'S STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO THE THREE DISRUPTIONS IN SME LENDING**

Taylor, a Swiss based financial technology company, provides a compelling example of how a digital native player can operationalize the key shifts in the SME lending landscape. To date, Taylor has processed more than €5.5 billion in loan applications for more than one thousand SMEs in Germany. Following its recent acquisition of credit shelf AG and the Grenke factoring business, Taylor has broadened its product portfolio to include both term loans and factoring solutions and is now launching in seven European markets.

Rather than pursuing alternative credit models or underserved borrower niches, Taylor applies traditional credit principles, including financial statement analysis and risk-based pricing, through a fully digitized infrastructure designed to reduce the cost and time associated with SME credit origination, distribution, and funding. In recognition of its innovation and impact, Taylor was recently named one of the world's top fintech companies in Alternative Finance by CNBC.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> CNBC, 'The world's top fintech companies: 2025, 2025.

### **Digital Origination Infrastructure**

Taylor has developed a proprietary technology platform that digitizes the full SME loan origination process. This includes tools such as automated data extraction and document classification using optical character recognition and application programming interface integrations, and an artificial intelligence-based analyst copilot that supports case analysis and risk assessments by generating investment recommendations for credit teams and automated risk flagging based on financial metrics and behavioral indicators.

These capabilities enable consistent underwriting while reducing time to decision from several days to a few hours. Importantly, Taylor's model does not compromise data depth or analytical rigor. Instead, it replicates bank grade workflows in a digital format, enabling higher efficiency at scale. This approach is not limited to Taylor's own lending operations. Banks such as LBBW and akf bank have adopted components of Taylor's technology to digitize internal loan processes, which underscores the applicability of the platform across different institutional contexts.

### **Private Debt-Backed Funding Model**

Taylor operates a capital light model in which SME loans are funded through dedicated private debt vehicles rather than its own balance sheet. This funding structure allows the firm to match investor risk return profiles with SME credit demand while maintaining transparency and control through its origination and servicing platform.

Separating origination from capital provision allows greater scale and flexibility and positions Taylor as a facilitator between SMEs and institutional investors seeking access to alternative fixed income assets.

### **Lending-as-a-Service and Embedded Distribution**

Taylor supports multiple go to market models through white label and embedded lending infrastructure. In Switzerland, for example, the platform underpins Kredos digital SME lending proposition, allowing Kredos to offer loans under its own brand while outsourcing origination and underwriting processes to Taylor's infrastructure.

In addition to white label models, Taylor provides application programming interfaces and partner front ends for brokers, enterprise resource planning providers, and marketplaces, enabling seamless integration of financing into third party environments. This embedded approach reduces borrower friction and enhances product relevance at the point of need.

### **Strategic Implications**

Taylor's approach shows how fintech companies can align with the structural shifts affecting SME lending by combining digital origination tools that improve efficiency and consistency, flexible distribution models that capture demand across channels, and capital structures that leverage private debt.

Taylor demonstrates a scalable, modular response to the ongoing reconfiguration of SME credit markets. This model offers relevant insights for incumbent and challenger institutions seeking to navigate the evolving SME lending landscape.



# LOOKING AHEAD: ACCELERATION OF THE DISRUPTION

As outlined in chapter 2, SME lending has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Over the next few years, the convergence of rising customer expectations, rapid technological advances, and sustained growth in alternative capital sources will continue to change how SMEs secure funding. The impact is already visible in more advanced markets such as the United States and the United Kingdom, showing future scenarios in which speed, integration, and data driven decision making become the norm.

## **SME customer demand is shifting further toward digital solutions**

Recent trends show a continued move by SMEs toward digital options. Reliance on traditional banking sources is shrinking quickly. In the United Kingdom, the five largest banks and their subsidiaries provided more than 60 percent of SME financing in 2012. By 2024, those same banks and subsidiaries accounted for 40 percent, while approximately 60 percent of business loans came from challenger and specialist banks. This shift indicates that SMEs increasingly prioritize convenience, accessibility, and speed over legacy relationships with traditional institutions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> British Business Bank Report on Small Business Finance Markets 2024/25

In the European Union, both customer demand and the availability of digital first lending products vary by country. In the Netherlands, more than 40 percent of SMEs report difficulty in securing loans, compared with less than 15 percent in the United Kingdom or France. The higher adoption of alternative lenders in the United Kingdom is largely driven by two structural factors:

**(1) Interest rate spreads** — for example, in Germany, banks often offer SME loans at minimal or negative contribution margins, using credit products primarily to acquire and retain broader relationships, including accounts and deposits. As a result, non-bank digital lenders that rely on interest as a main revenue driver face a much larger price gap versus traditional banks. In the United Kingdom, spreads between banks and NBDLs are narrower, which enables fintech lenders to compete more effectively on price.

**(2) Role of financial advisors** — in the United Kingdom, SME financing is strongly shaped by a developed advisor ecosystem that regularly presents SMEs with a broader set of options, including alternative lenders. In Germany, many SMEs still rely almost exclusively on their long standing house banks for financing decisions. Across much of continental Europe, limited awareness and knowledge of alternative credit solutions continue to slow adoption. Countries with larger SME financing gaps present untapped potential for developed digital lenders, which are likely to enter these markets. As digital lending spreads, more European SMEs will recognize alternative solutions and demand these as the new normal.

### **Pace of technological innovation creates pressure on legacy systems**

Exponential technological progress will further widen the gap between incumbent lenders and digital competitors, with artificial intelligence at the center. Open banking initiatives, particularly under PSD2 and soon PSD3 and the financial data access (FiDA) regulation, enable access to real time transactional data. This data facilitates analysis of sales trends, receivables, and expenses, and supports cash flow-based underwriting that outperforms traditional balance sheet reviews. Leveraging this type of data for credit evaluations, referred to as “open lending” practices, is becoming increasingly popular. Automated credit decision making allows loans to be approved within seconds, while AI driven analytics enhance risk assessment, detect early warning signs, and dynamically adjust pricing. Companies such as iwoca have proven the commercial viability of this approach, approving loans within minutes and disbursing nearly one billion pounds in 2024.<sup>16</sup>


The emergence of open finance through the EU’s upcoming Financial Data Access (FiDA) framework — is further accelerating this shift. This European initiative extends the principle of data portability beyond payments to include loans, insurance, and investments, enabling lenders to access a much broader set of real-time financial data under customer consent. For SME finance, this means richer datasets for underwriting, faster onboarding, and a more competitive marketplace where data flows seamlessly between banks, fintechs, and third-party providers.

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<sup>16</sup> City A.M. Article from June 26th 2025

As FiDA expands the open-data infrastructure across Europe, it is expected to catalyze a wave of “open lending” models — ecosystems in which lenders, advisors, and data providers collaborate through standardized APIs to deliver faster, more personalized, and more transparent credit solutions.

Beyond approval, AI technology is also applied to portfolio management. Algorithms flag early warning signs in borrower behavior, trigger proactive customer outreach, and can restructure repayment terms to prevent defaults. These innovations will continue to tailor lending propositions to SME preferences. We have observed the first firms implementing fully automated loan processes from application to credit decision, and we expect this trend to expand. Additionally, Agentic AI is becoming more prevalent. Upcoming market examples center around both AI agents communicating with clients, for example offered by **Casca**, as well as AI co-pilots helping credit analysts detect anomalies, risk flags and scrape through thousands of data points in seconds (**IBIS world** has a chat bot that scrapes through industry reports often used in credit analysis processes).



Lending is shifting from a static process characterized by one off decisions based on a defined set of financial information to a dynamic, adaptive process tailored to client specific information. The shift from slow, document heavy processes to responsive, API powered experiences enhances operational efficiency and fundamentally changes SMEs’ expectations of finance providers. It is therefore expected that more fully automated SME loans, starting with micro loans, will emerge in the coming years.

## INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHTS

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FinTech iwoca leverages modern technology to create fully digital application processes to offer short-term working capital loans to SMEs. Its platform leverages real-time banking, accounting, and transaction data, bypassing the need for collateral and traditional documentation. Furthermore, it has implemented an automated credit decisioning model, often providing approvals within minutes.



Casca transforms traditional lending by automating the entire loan process, streamlining everything from prequalification to document extraction, KYC, financial statement analysis, and credit decisioning. Powered by conversational AI agents like "Sarah", the system interacts with applicants 24/7 via email or SMS, boosting lead conversion by up to three times and reducing manual effort by anywhere near 90%, while achieving a 12-day cut in loan cycle times. This level of automation and AI integration is effectively replicating the throughput of a 30-person loan team, makes Cascading AI stand out as one of the most advanced, real-world implementations of generative and applied AI in SME lending.

### **Further diversification of alternative funding sources**

In Europe, the private credit market has grown from about 36 billion dollars in 2008 to nearly half a trillion dollars in 2024, with major asset managers increasingly targeting the mid cap segment once dominated by banks. However, while global private credit firms such as KKR, BlackRock, and Apollo have driven growth in private debt markets, their activity within smaller SME lending segments remains limited. Today non-bank digital lenders such as Taylor and iwoca primarily refinance their portfolios through a mix of institutional investors and large banking partners such as Barclays and Citi. Dedicated private credit funds mostly participate in junior or mezzanine tranches within these structures. Looking ahead, it is uncertain whether private debt will play a larger role in the funding mix as NBDLs scale further, or whether these platforms will pursue deposit funded models to lower funding costs and improve capital efficiency.

### **Increased regulatory and macroeconomic scrutiny**

Regulation will also shape the speed and direction of SME lending transformation in Europe. The implementation of Basel IV is tightening capital requirements for banks, making SME lending relatively less attractive in traditional portfolios. At the same time, PSD3 and the evolution of open finance frameworks are set to expand accessible financial data beyond payment accounts, enabling richer datasets for SME credit assessment and new opportunities for embedded finance models.

A relevant upcoming development is the Consumer Credit Directive 2, which will extend harmonized European Union credit rules to a broader set of products, including some SME financing instruments. While the directive primarily targets consumer credit, its emphasis on transparency, responsible lending, and standardized pre-contractual information is expected to spill over into small business lending, especially for sole proprietors and micro enterprises that often fall between consumer and corporate regulation. This could increase compliance burdens for lenders but may also help level the playing field by ensuring that NBDLs operate under similar disclosure and marketing rules as traditional banks. In markets with high fragmentation and varying local standards, the directive's influence may improve borrower trust in newer digital platforms and accelerate adoption.

Macroeconomic factors such as fluctuating interest rates and uneven recovery patterns also influence the SME lending space. Both the United States and Europe are confronting elevated interest rates, which raise borrowing costs and make banks more risk averse. From 2023 to 2024, loan demand softened, and access tightened. United States SMEs face modest growth expectations of about one to two percent GDP, while European SMEs operate under more stagnation, with a growth forecast of about zero-point nine percent GDP, which compounds access challenge.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 'Trends in Small Business Lending: Europe vs. United States', ezboob website, 8 April 2025

Differences in approval rates should further increase the popularity of digital lending. According to Onyx, bank approval rates are significantly lower, between 14.3 percent and 20.1 percent, while NBDLs approval rates are about 26.1 percent.<sup>18</sup> This shift has coincided with visible increases in insolvencies across Europe in recent years, especially in the largest markets such as France and Germany. Looking ahead, this picture remains similar in many markets, with a slight decrease in insolvencies expected in 2026.<sup>19</sup>

Pressure on incumbent lending continues to rise. Banks and other incumbents face challenges on several fronts. SME clients expect a fast, digital, and seamless process. Online applications with automated credit scoring and responses within hours or minutes will become table stakes rather than differentiators. The rise of software platforms requires banks to rethink distribution as new channels can be built through partnerships, while disintermediation risk grows. The same applies to private debt. Banks should reconsider their capital role and view private debt providers not as a threat but as potential partners for co origination, fronting loans, or inspiration to set up their own private debt funds.

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<sup>18</sup> 'Alternative lending statistics you need to know', Onyx IQ website, 21 December 2022

<sup>19</sup> Allianz Global Insolvency Report 2025

# STRATEGIC RESPONSES FROM INCUMBENT LENDERS

Taken together, the trends in the previous chapters have introduced challenges for incumbent lenders and their SME lending businesses from several angles. In response, many banks have pursued different approaches to strengthen their SME value proposition, with financing as a core offering. As shown in exhibit 8, and similar to other financial domains where banks face disintermediation, three strategic directions emerge to address these threats: build, buy, or partner. Each option comes with distinct opportunities and risks. The following sections outline the characteristics of each approach, highlight recent market developments, and showcase real world implementations.

## 4.1 BUILD

The first option is to build an SME focused proposition in house. This approach aims to create tailored digital SME lending products that align closely with the bank's strategy. In theory, it also allows the bank to develop a solution that integrates with its existing information technology infrastructure. In practice, however, most banks that implement the build approach create a separate entity with its own technology stack. This avoids the limits of legacy systems and enables faster development of digital solutions, improving competitiveness.

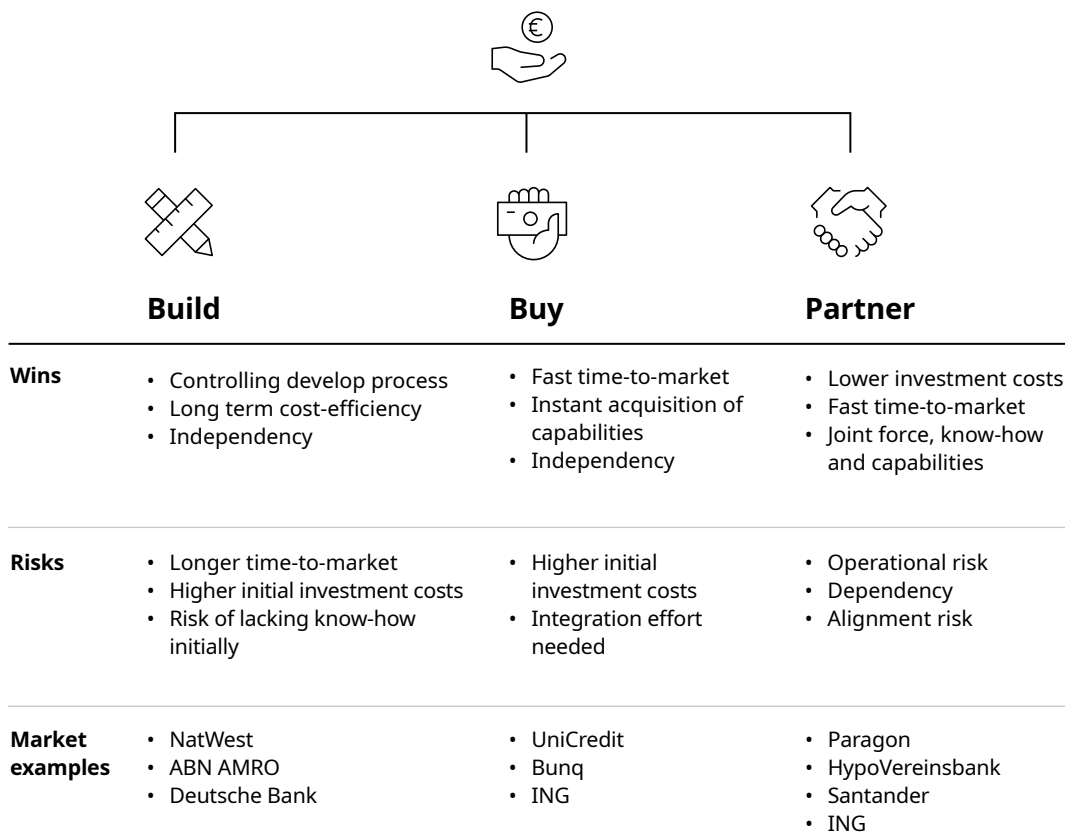
The primary risks of building relate to resourcing and prioritization, since developing a new platform in house requires significant time, investment, and capabilities. Starting from scratch, it often takes years before a solution is ready for market. Compared with buying or partnering, building carries higher execution risk. Incumbents also face dependencies on legacy systems that hinder modular extensions. For example, some major banks attempted to build digital banks but scrapped projects after misalignments between technology and customer needs, underscoring the uncertainty inherent in this approach.

Despite these risks, building offers substantial benefits. By controlling development, banks can craft solutions that fully align with strategic goals. Over time, building can deliver cost efficiencies because banks retain flexibility to update products without relying on third party vendors and avoid recurring licensing fees or revenue sharing. Successful builds can strengthen competitive advantages and foster a culture of innovation.

A key consideration is the level of integration of the SME lending practice with the rest of the organization. Integration spans organizational, technical, and marketing dimensions. The organizational dimension covers alignment with broader bank goals, collaboration, and licensing arrangements. The technical dimension captures system integration with the bank’s other legacy technology. The marketing dimension concerns whether the SME lending practice operates under its own brand or as an extension of the bank’s offering. In the market, we observe a spectrum. Historically, banks offered fully integrated SME lending solutions under the parent brand. More recently, banks have built autonomous ventures with distinct branding, such as Fyrst, Esme, and new10, often using only the parent’s banking license.

The build strategy suits banks seeking strong competitive differentiation. It is most likely to succeed when the bank has robust internal technology teams, an agile delivery culture, and deep SME lending expertise. It fits banks that want maximum control and have the support to tolerate longer timelines and higher upfront investment.

**Exhibit 8: Three Strategic Responses from Incumbent Lenders**



Source: Oliver Wyman analysis



## 4.2 BUY

Another option is to acquire a company with specific capabilities to enhance SME lending. This involves acquiring or investing in fintech companies that have demonstrated success in technology or distribution.

Buying typically requires higher upfront investment because high performing targets command premium valuations. UniCredit, for example, invested about 376 million euros in acquiring Aion Bank and Vodeno. Buying also poses integration risk and potential cultural misalignment. Ways of working can differ significantly between banks and fintech companies. Established bank processes in legal, risk, and compliance may contrast with the agile methodologies of a fintech company, which can create challenges during integration.

The main advantages of buying include acquiring a solution that is already operating and does not require internal development time. Banks also gain instant access to a customer base, talent, and technology. Buying creates opportunities to integrate innovative capabilities to the preferred level and quickly adapt to market demands with fewer dependencies.

The level of integration of the acquired SME lending business with the bank is also a crucial consideration in the buy approach. Higher integration can unlock synergies such as stronger cross selling and greater efficiency. However, it can also increase the risk of culture clash, which drives cost and employee churn. Pinpointing the right level of post transaction integration is central to success in employing a buy-strategy.

The buy approach suits banks seeking rapid time to market, for example those aiming to catch up quickly without diverting major internal resources. It is most likely to succeed when banks have strong mergers and acquisitions experience and can integrate acquired assets and capabilities effectively.

## INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHTS

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 UniCredit Bank

aion

|VODENO

UniCredit has acquired Aion Bank, a fully digital, licensed banking platform, and Vodeno, Aion bank's white label platform core banking technology provider. Combining Aion's license and Vodeno's technology, UniCredit has significantly enhanced its digital banking capabilities via the acquisition while avoiding dependency on third-party providers. UniCredit's strategic aim of the acquisition is to drive growth of its SME and retail banking divisions in Europe, while also expanding the Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) offering of Vodeno under its existing brand name.

ING 

LENDICO  
NEOSRA LIMITED

In 2018, ING acquired Lendico, with the primary aim of expanding its SME lending business in Germany and neighboring countries. ING acquired Lendico for its digital capabilities and existing solution. While originally a peer-to-peer platform, ING transformed the solution to start placing loan investments on its own balance sheet while only servicing pre-existing loans from other investors. Lendico remained its own business unit with its own brand name, allowing ING to leverage its existing reputation among SME lenders. However, the acquisition did not yield the expected results, as Lendico struggled to gain market traction. Consequently, ING decided to divest Lendico in 2020.

  
Capitalflow  
WE ARE WITH YOU

bunq  
BANK OF THE FREE

Capitalflow, an Irish SME lending company founded in 2016, was acquired by Dutch challenger bank Bunq in 2021 as part of a strategic move to expand its footprint in Europe. Bunq aimed to leverage Capitalflow's expertise and strong local ties to enhance Bunq's digital lending capabilities.

## 4.3 PARTNER

A third option is to partner with fintech companies to enhance SME lending. This model is attractive for banks that lack the resources or risk appetite for large builds or acquisitions, or that want to pilot new models before committing fully. Partnership is increasingly common as banks seek to remain competitive in a fast-changing digital landscape while minimizing financial risk. By partnering, the bank can share capital investment and risk with a partner while gaining access to technological capabilities from an agile fintech company, enabling faster deployment of innovative lending solutions.

Examples include the SME lender marketplace Kabbage, which previously partnered with ING Bank<sup>20</sup> and Santander<sup>21</sup> before Kabbage was acquired by American Express in 2021. More recently, Paragon Bank in the United Kingdom announced a partnership with Alfa to digitize its end-to-end lending.<sup>22</sup>

Partnerships carry operational risks, including potential misalignment between bank objectives and the partner's goals, which can lead to unclear expectations and friction. Banks may also face vendor dependency risk, which can limit their ability to pivot as market conditions change. Compared with building, which offers more control, and buying, which raises integration challenges, partnering requires strong communication and alignment to ensure both parties achieve their goals. Some partnerships have dissolved due to insufficient synergy or mismatched priorities, highlighting the need for diligent partner selection and governance.

Next to the risks, a partnership can also bring substantial benefits for incumbent banks, making it an attractive option for enhancing SME lending. This strategy often results in lower upfront costs and quicker time to market, as banks can utilize existing technologies developed by their partners. By leveraging fintech innovations, banks can rapidly improve service offerings and access external expertise while sharing risk.

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<sup>20</sup> 'ING invests in Fintech company Kabbage', official ING website, 14 October 2015

<sup>21</sup> 'Santander UK teams up with Kabbage to offer fast loans to SMEs', ft.com, 3 April 2016

<sup>22</sup> 'Paragon bank selects Alfa to accelerate SME lending transformation', Alfa website, 14 January 2025

## INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHTS

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### **FYRST** by Deutsche Bank

Fyrst is Deutsche Bank's digital brand built specifically for freelancers, sole traders, and small businesses in Germany. It offers fully online onboarding, business accounts with integrated invoicing/bookkeeping tools, and access to working-capital credit (e.g., overdrafts and business loans) delivered under the Deutsche Bank/Postbank umbrella for fast, data-driven decisions.


### **new10** by ABN AMRO

ABN AMRO's 100% subsidiary new10, is a fintech solely focused on SME lending. They provide ranging from €20.000 to €1.000.000. Based on an annual report or income tax statement and bank statements from the last 15 months, new10 makes a loan offer to the requesting party.

### **esme** Business loans by NatWest

Esme Loans was a digital lending platform launched by NatWest in 2016, specifically designed to cater to the financing needs of SMEs in the UK. In early 2021, NatWest decided to shut down Esme Loans as part of a strategic review, recognizing the complexities of merging its digital ambitions with existing bank operations.

While less prominent as with the other two strategies, the level of integration also plays a role in the partner approach. Finding the right balance to ensure the partner has access to the right systems, capabilities, and resources while preventing excessive spill-over and moral hazard to the partner organization is key to success in this strategic approach. Furthermore, the marketing dimension of integration plays a strong role in this strategy, where the relevance of the brand name and reputation of the parties involved is the most important determinant. If the involved players already have strong reputations in the SME lending field, brand names can be leveraged by strongly aligning the marketing approach of the solution with those of the parties.



The partner strategy is most suitable for banks seeking to combine their market access, brand, and broader expertise with a partner's niche technology capabilities, or when banks seek to minimize operational risk. It is most likely to succeed when the bank has strong partnership management capabilities to navigate relationship complexity and shared control.

## INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHTS

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**BANXWARE**

**HypoVereinsbank**

HypoVereinsbank, a subsidiary bank of UniCredit, and Banxware, a Berlin-based fintech, have established a strategic partnership focused on creating an embedded lending offering for SMEs, providing fully digital access to flexible credit solutions. In the partnership, HypoVereinsbank will provide advisory strength and regulatory compliance expertise while Banxware contributes with its seamless embedded lending interface. The partnership will offer rapid loans, with a value of up to EUR 250,000 and credit decisioning within one day, and 'flexfinanzierung' up to EUR 5 million with slightly longer decisioning times. The application process is fully digital. Through the partnership, HypoVereinsbank expands its reach through platform-native, digital sales channels.

**ING**

**Santander**

**Kabbage**

In 2015 ING and Santander both acquired equity stakes in the digital SME lender Kabbage. This partnership was aimed at expanding lending capabilities, enabling the provision of working capital up to GBP 100,000 for UK SMEs. As part of the partnership, ING and Kabbage will start a pilot in Spain, offering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) loans up to EUR 100,000. Kabbage's automated loan application and approval process is both accelerated and simple for customers. The partnership with both banks ended when American Express acquired Kabbage in 2020.

**paragon**

**Alfa**

In early 2025, Paragon Bank announced its decision to replace legacy systems and allow Alpha to power a new commercial lending programme aimed at streamlining the lending process end-to-end. With this change, Paragon Bank hopes to modernize its SME lending operations, diversify product portfolio and enhance user experience for both customers as well as brokers

# CONCLUDING: TAKE ACTION TO STAY COMPETITIVE

Traditional banks must decide whether to defend their role as the main provider of the customer interface, adapt through collaboration, or reposition themselves as product and infrastructure providers in a more diverse SME lending landscape.

Those that embrace modularity will be better positioned to thrive in an ecosystem that is no longer bank centric, but networked, disaggregated, and capital fluid. The optimal approach varies by bank, depending on size, resource base, digital maturity, and current position. To act strategically, traditional lenders should structure their transformation around a four-step action plan:

## Exhibit 9: Four-step action plan for incumbent lenders

### 1. Strategic Positioning and Ambition

- What is the bank's overall vision and ambition for SME lending (growth, product leadership, digital experience, ecosystem play)?
- How quickly does the bank need/want to scale in this segment?
- Is SME lending considered a core offering or complementary/proof-of-concept?

### 2. Market and Customer Segmentation

- What SME segments (micro vs. medium-sized) and what industry verticals does the bank currently serve or aims to serve?
- What are the evolving financial and non-financial needs of these SMEs?
- Are there underserved or high-growth niches that merit focus?

### 3. Capability Gap Assessment

- What is the current level of SME lending capability (product coverage, tech, talent, processes, customer base)?
- What are the bank's strengths and gaps relative to best-in-class SME lenders?

### 4. Build, Buy or Partner

- What budget, technology, and talent are needed for each approach? Are there constraints?
- Which approach aligns best with the bank's risk appetite and regulatory context?
- What are partnership options and/or M&A options to acquire capabilities?

Source: Oliver Wyman analysis

Along these lines, incumbents should shape their SME lending profile to determine a suitable approach to close gaps and improve the value proposition for SME clients. Whatever path is chosen, inertia is not an option. The SME lending landscape in Europe is being reshaped fundamentally, and only lenders that act decisively will secure a meaningful role in the next era of SME finance.



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**INNOPAY** — a business of **Oliver Wyman**, is well-positioned to help incumbent lenders navigate the necessary steps of their transformative journey in SME lending from strategy to hands-on implementation. Drawing on a large, international network of industry experts in SME lending, and significant experience guiding organizational transformations of traditional banks, **INNOPAY** is equipped with the necessary toolkit to facilitate banks in answering the key strategic questions of each step.

**Taylor Technologies** empowers banks, financial institutions, and digital platforms to digitize and scale SME lending through a modular infrastructure. Its proprietary platform combines white-label application flows, automated lead qualification, and a brokerage module that seamlessly connects lenders, brokers, and SMEs. With extensive experience in collaborating with incumbent lenders and a proven track record of processing over €5.5 billion in SME loan applications across Europe, **Taylor** equips its partners with the tools to accelerate digital transformation, improve customer experience, and unlock new growth opportunities in SME finance.

Oliver Wyman, a business of Marsh McLennan (NYSE: MMC), is a management consulting firm combining deep industry knowledge with specialized expertise to help clients optimize their business, improve operations and accelerate performance. Marsh McLennan is a global leader in risk, strategy and people, advising clients in 130 countries across four businesses: Marsh, Guy Carpenter, Mercer and Oliver Wyman. With annual revenue of \$24 billion and more than 90,000 colleagues, Marsh McLennan helps build the confidence to thrive through the power of perspective.

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