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## ***Employee share ownership in Europe in 2025***

**The European Federation of Employee Share Ownership (EFES)** releases the new "Annual Economic Survey of Employee Share Ownership in European Countries in 2025".

**1. The paradigm shift in European employee share ownership gained further traction in 2025.** As far as employee share ownership is concerned, the dynamic is shifting from large companies to SMEs. The context and objective are not so much to share profits as to meet the need for business succession. Great Britain is becoming Europe's number one, while the continent and France in particular, are fading into the background.

**2. When it comes to employee share ownership in large European companies, the paradox is increasingly glaring.** Everything indicates that companies want it. Everything indicates that employees want it too. Companies are increasing the number of employee share plans. In terms of value, records continue to be broken. 497 billion Euro held in 2025, or 45,000 Euro for the average employee shareholder.

Yet overall, the number of employee shareholders is falling, employee ownership stake is stagnating, and the democratisation of employee share ownership is crumbling. As a result, the plans are becoming less and less effective. The plans and policies behind them are becoming increasingly undemocratic.

On the positive side, an increasing number of large European companies are introducing employee share ownership plans and seeing a greater uptake in employee share ownership. In 2025, 95% of large companies had some form of employee share ownership and 59% had democratic plans for all their employees.

However, the number of employee shareholders has dropped to 6.5 million, still below the level of 6.9 million reached in 2011. The rate of democratisation of employee share ownership continues to fall. Today, only one employee in five is a shareholder in their company, compared with one in four previously. Finally, employee shareholding in large European companies has stopped growing. It represents 3.07% in 2025 versus 3.04% in 2013.

**3. A strong employee ownership movement is now taking hold in European SMEs, starting in Great Britain.** In 2025, the UK was rapidly moving towards a situation where one in ten SMEs would be 100% employee-owned.

For employee share ownership worldwide, this marks a true revolution. In fact, for almost two hundred years, numerous frameworks and models have been tried and tested to develop employee ownership in SMEs. Today, for the first time in the world, we have succeeded in setting up a model that outperforms all others. Since 1974, the world's best-known model had been the ESOP plan in the United States. The *Employee Ownership Trust* formula introduced in the UK in 2014 now appears to be by far the most effective.

The new Annual Survey will be available from March 26 on the EFES website on

<https://www.efesonline.org/Annual%20Economic%20Survey/2025/Survey%202025.pdf>

**Notes to editors:**

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**The European Federation of Employee Share Ownership (EFES) is an international not for profit organization. EFES is the voice of employee share ownership in Europe. It was established in 1998 as the umbrella organisation of employee shareholders, companies and all persons, trade unions, experts, institutions looking to promote the development of employee share ownership in Europe.**

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