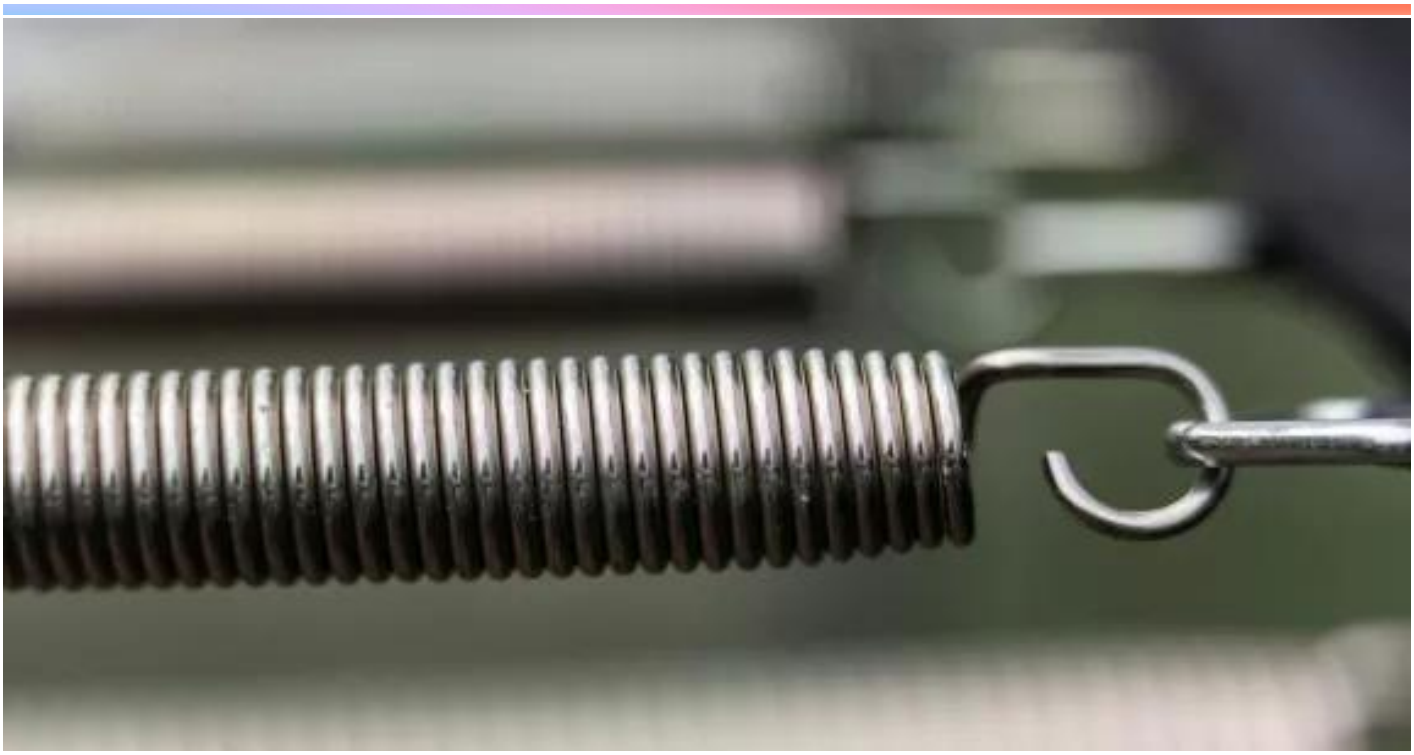


Strategic resilience for manufacturers

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Resilience and agility help manufacturers to minimise risks and create new value

Volatile energy prices, uncertain access to critical raw materials, and components and geopolitical shifts that are putting pressure on entire value chains... The Belgian manufacturing sector currently faces extremely challenging conditions, in which predictable markets have given way to uncertainty.

Many companies are adopting a wait-and-see approach. While this is an understandable reaction, in today’s context it is not a neutral choice. Companies that do nothing often find that dependencies increase, margins shrink, and their strategic room for manoeuvre narrows.

The key question for management is no longer whether the strategy needs to change, but how quickly they can adapt in order to limit future losses and find a new equilibrium. Enter strategic resilience. This is about more than just absorbing shocks: it helps businesses to systematically address vulnerabilities, reduce dependencies, and above all create new, more robust and complementary revenue streams.

Companies that learn to deal with uncertainty today don’t just strengthen their position. They also avoid the need for drastic and often more expensive measures in the future.

Building strategic resilience in four steps

Strategic resilience doesn’t happen by itself. Companies can manage their risks while creating new value by taking a structured approach:

1. Identify dependencies clearly

Strategic resilience begins with understanding. Many vulnerabilities currently stay under the radar because they can be spread across various areas: energy, materials, suppliers, data, or technology.

This means that the question is not just what you depend on, but above all:

- In what areas would disruption directly affect your continuity?
- In what areas do you have few alternatives today?

By making these dependencies visible, you create an initial means of actively managing risks rather than simply enduring them.

There is an additional opportunity here. Many Belgian manufacturers possess in-depth knowledge of their products and their applications. That knowledge only becomes truly strategic when you use it to resolve issues faced by the product user.

Companies that understand where their customers (and their customers’ customers) are vulnerable, or realise that they are struggling to manage their own risks, can position themselves as partners rather than suppliers. In this way, they also reduce their own dependencies. Because the chances of success increase when partners work towards shared goals.

2. Strengthen your core business and protect your revenue model

Many companies naturally focus on efficiency within their existing revenue model, but in an uncertain context that isn’t enough. The challenge is to make your core activities less vulnerable.

A first step here is to add layers around your product that are hard to copy, such as:

- Services (maintenance, repairs, or upgrades)
- Long-term customer relationships based on performance rather than delivery

This shift stabilises revenue and reduces dependence on volatile markets.

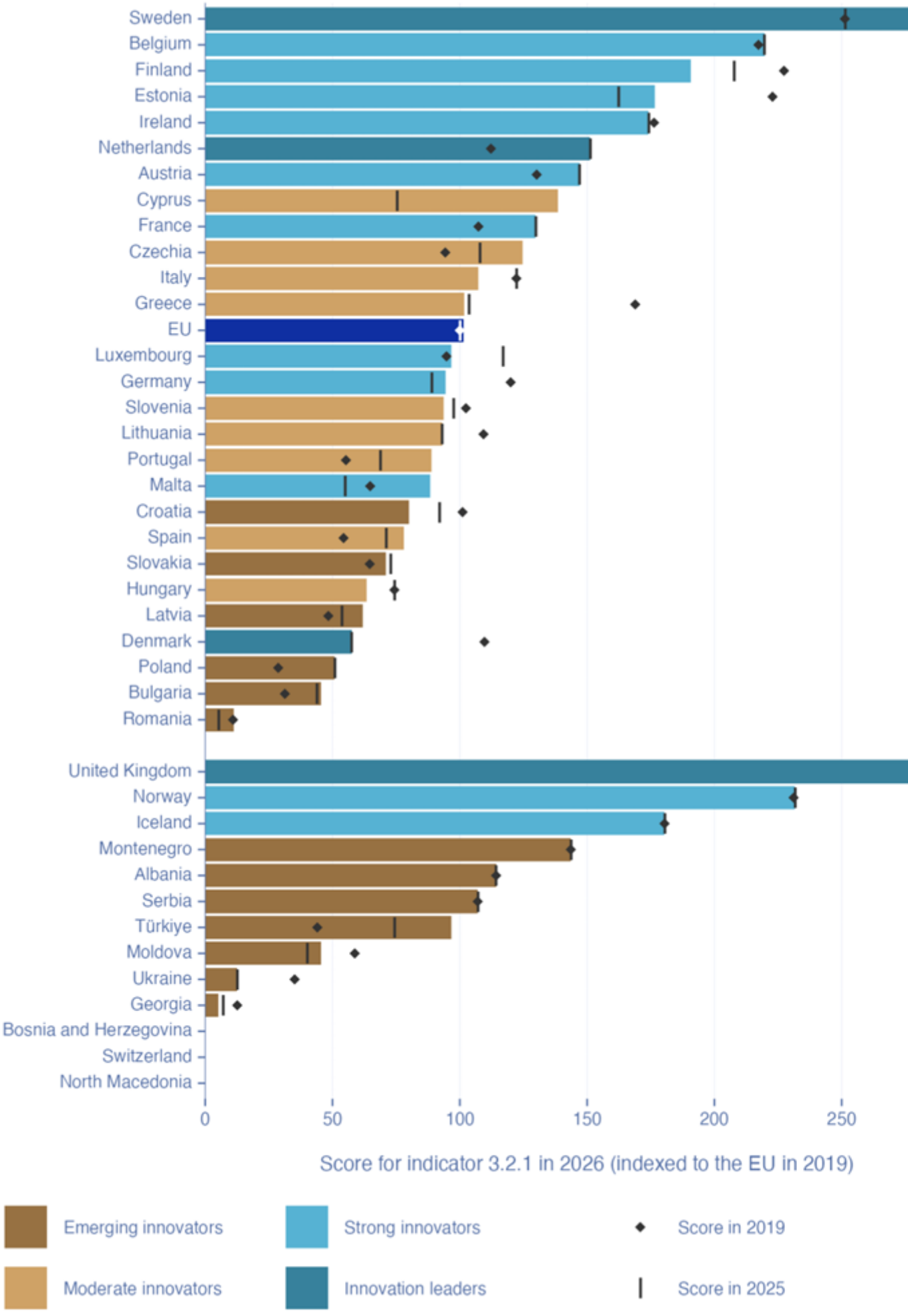
In addition, targeted innovation remains essential. Not as an end in itself, but as a way of developing new possibilities in a controlled manner. By experimenting on a small scale and learning quickly, you can minimise risks and build up new knowledge and skills step by step. In doing so, you lay the foundations for future breakthroughs and new revenue models.

Cooperation is also a key driver of innovation and resilience. No company has all the knowledge, technology, and capacity in-house to respond to rapidly changing challenges at the same time.

By working strategically with customers, suppliers, knowledge partners, and other companies, you gain access to complementary expertise and can share the risks associated with innovation. For SMEs in particular, external knowledge collaboration is strongly linked to better innovation performance.

Partnerships built around shared long-term goals go one step further. They not only strengthen innovation capacity but also give partners greater room to adapt together when circumstances change.

Innovative SMEs collaborating with others



Belgian SMEs perform particularly well in innovation-focused cooperation (source: European Innovation Scoreboard 2026).

Stronger together

How does this work in practice? Discover how companies strengthen their resilience and unlock new opportunities through circular collaboration.

Explore the examples

3. Develop hybrid and agile strategies

In a volatile world, it is risky to rely entirely on a single solution – whether an energy source, a material, or a market.

Agile organisations therefore deliberately build in alternatives. For example:

- Multiple supply options
- Different technological pathways
- A combination of revenue from products and services

At first glance, this hybrid approach may seem more complex, but it actually increases the scope for manoeuvre. It prevents organisations from becoming paralysed when circumstances change.

Circular strategies also contribute to that agility. As well as new production, companies are focusing on repair, upcycling, remanufacturing, the reuse of parts, and rental, both in the short and long term. This enables them to:

- Reduce reliance on a single market segment
- Reduce reliance on a single supplier
- Spread one-off and recurring income more evenly to avoid cash flow problems

This also calls for a different approach to management. Local optimisation at departmental or business unit level can undermine the flexibility of the company as a whole. Resilience can only be achieved when the entire organisation is able to adapt, even if this seems less efficient at a local level. The whole outperforms the sum of its parts.

How does this work in practice?

Discover how Q-lite used a circular approach to make its business model more robust and respond more effectively to changing market conditions.

Read the Q-lite case study

4. Be sure to implement the revised strategy

Many organisations are managing to adapt their strategy to this new reality. But that's often where it ends. The real challenge only begins after that. Because although the need for change is clear from a rational point of view, putting it into practice often proves more difficult.

New strategies bring with them uncertainty. They call for different ways of working, new partnerships and, at times, letting go of existing certainties.

A gap therefore opens up: the strategy evolves, but the organisation remains largely the same. Just when change is needed to avoid future losses, it is held back because it is perceived as too drastic or too risky. The result is predictable: a lack of effectiveness and a growing mismatch with the rapidly changing environment.

Strategic resilience therefore calls for more than just new strategic choices: it also requires a focused shift in the way companies work, cooperate, and make decisions.[2]

Strategy & organisation

When strategy & design are aligned with business environment, **performance can be exceptional**

When external business environment changes, **strategy and organisation no longer fit**

Often the **strategy is formulated** but organisation design has not changed. The company **lacks core capacity to implement the strategy**



innovation forward



External business environment and context

[2] Peter Senge ‘The necessary revolution’ (MIT, Boston 2008)

From strategy to implementation

Need inspiration to take the next step? Explore real-life cases from Circular Economy Connect and deepen your knowledge with our e-learning module.

View the cases Start the e-learning

Leadership in complex situations enables strategic resilience

The shift won't happen by itself: leadership plays a key role in strengthening strategic resilience. Leaders don't need to have all the answers, but they do need to show the way forward in a context of uncertainty.

In this context, leadership means:

- Highlighting the biggest risks
- Framing change as a necessary step to avoid future losses
- Creating space for controlled experimentation
- Striking a balance between short and long term, stability and innovation, efficiency and flexibility

Leaders make a difference by guiding the organisation through the process step by step. Not through large-scale, all-encompassing transformations, but through focused measures that build trust and reduce dependencies.

This is how leadership becomes the lever that converts strategic intentions into tangible change and ensures that organisations don't get bogged down in analysis, but actually start to make progress.

Explore circular leadership

How do you successfully lead an organisation through change and uncertainty? Discover the principles of circular leadership and how they strengthen strategic resilience.

Explore the insights

Circular strategies support strategic resilience

The challenges facing manufacturers today may seem new, but many of the solutions are not.

Insights from digital transformation, systems thinking and the circular economy now offer practical tools for reducing risks and preserving – or even increasing – value.

Strategies aimed at extending product lifespans, such as reuse, repair or remanufacturing, combined with services such as upgrading and condition monitoring, help companies to:

- Become less dependent on new raw materials
- Retain value for longer
- Generate extra and sometimes recurring sources of income

In addition, a local presence and decentralisation increase control over critical activities, such as maintenance and refurbishment. They also reduce systemic risks while strengthening the relationship with the customer.

What is often seen as being about sustainability turns out in practice to be primarily a strategy for reducing vulnerabilities and creating greater stability. It is precisely here that the strength of these methods lies: they combine economic logic with strategic resilience.

Taking action to become strategically resilient

For many companies, then, the biggest challenge today is not the lack of expertise, but turning that expertise into targeted action.

Waiting for the situation to stabilise is not an option. Companies taking small, purposeful steps today to reduce their dependencies and increase their flexibility can build a lead that will be difficult to catch up with.

Sirris and Agoria support businesses in this regard with practical tools and training programmes:

- Accessible self-assessments and e-learning modules
- Co-creative learning environments such as CE Connect
- Tailored support through circular transformation programmes

The first step doesn’t have to be a big one, but it will determine the extent to which your organisation is prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

Get involved in the Circular Accelerator on extending product lifespans

Would you like to work with other companies on extending the life of products and technical systems? Sirris and Agoria are preparing a Circular Accelerator in which companies will develop practical case studies focusing on maintenance, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing, spare-part harvesting and new service models.

The accelerator brings together companies from different stages of the value chain to share knowledge, test solutions and develop economically viable partnerships aimed at extending product lifespans.

Would you like to contribute your ideas or take part in a pilot project?

Contact Patrick Cosemans or Thomas Vandenhaute to find out how your organisation can contribute.

Get in touch about the Circular Accelerator

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