

WELCOME TO

## Start on Sustainability

Welcome to our Start on Sustainability project, a program designed to help Europe's small businesses adopt environmentally friendly practices. Our aim is to provide knowledge, tools, and support to make sustainability a practical reality for these vital contributors to the EU economy.



### COPERNICUS GLOBAL CLIMATE REPORT

The [Copernicus Global Climate Highlights Report 2024](#), published today, confirms 2024 as the warmest year on record and the first to exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for the annual global average temperature. Last year was also the warmest for all continental regions, including Europe, except Antarctica and Australasia.

The EU is committed to supporting global climate action and becoming climate-neutral by 2050. It has agreed on [targets and legislation](#) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and the Commission has already recommended a 90% net GHG emissions reduction target for 2040. The Commission published a [Communication](#) in April 2024 on how to effectively prepare the EU for climate risks and build greater climate resilience.

As also highlighted in the [2023 European State of the Climate Report](#) and the [European Climate Risk Assessment](#), the European continent has been warming twice as fast as the global average since the 1980s, becoming the fastest-warming continent on Earth. European land in the Arctic remains the fastest-warming region on Earth, and changes in atmospheric circulation are favouring more frequent summer heatwaves. Likewise, glaciers are melting and there are changes in the pattern of precipitation.

## STEPPING UP CLEAN ENERGY USE

Following the [revision](#) of the Ambient Air Quality Directive, several Member States will need to deploy additional efforts to comply with the more stringent air quality 2030 targets, as the EU has aligned its standards more closely with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) air quality guideline levels.

In this situation, correctly identifying the drivers behind air pollution is crucial for selecting and recommending cleaner alternatives to current practices.

Despite a gradual shift to less polluting energy sources for heating in the EU, combustion devices emitting pollutants still dominate the energy mix, accounting for 97% of heat production in 2022, according to a [JRC study](#).

The EU has adopted a comprehensive strategy to combat air pollution, combining regulatory measures, strategic initiatives and a strong emphasis on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

The EU’s updated energy framework, reflected in the recent revisions of [Renewable Energy Directive](#), the [Energy Efficiency Directive](#) and the [Energy Performance in Buildings Directive](#), along with the [Net Zero Industry Act](#), provides a strong policy signal to support clean heating solutions. It promotes the adoption of efficient district heating and heat pumps while setting the path for the gradual phase-out of fossil fuel-based boilers.

