iManage
Making knowledge work

Focus on Europe

Analysis of Knowledge Work Maturity

Contents

Section 1

Taking a closer look at Europe's knowledge work economy

If an organization is actively involved in the professional production, analysis, interrogation, sharing, and commercial use of unique knowledge, then it operates in the knowledge work economy.

In this economy, knowledge is the new currency. The importance of building a business environment that enables knowledge professionals to take full advantage of the collective intelligence of the organization cannot be overstated.

At iManage, this is why we commissioned the industry's first framework for measuring your progress toward becoming a knowledge-driven organization. The resulting **Knowledge Work Maturity Model™**, is a data-driven approach that is based on a survey of more than 2,000 knowledge organizations across 44 countries.

Taking a deeper dive into the research used to create the Knowledge Work Maturity Model (KWMM) allows us to focus our attention squarely on Europe and to compare insights across different European countries.

For example, how are the top business challenges that organizations face in Northern Europe different from those in Western Europe? How much importance do organizations in Spain assign to being knowledge-driven versus organizations in Poland or Sweden?

Understanding the current state of knowledge maturity and how to advance it allows European businesses to better tackle the challenges inherent in today's global knowledge economy, while planning for an environment where technologies like AI play an increasingly vital role.

Section 2

Top concerns and business challenges of European knowledge workers

What exactly are the top concerns and business challenges facing European knowledge work organizations? What do they have to say on the matter?

The KWMM research indicates that knowledge professionals across Europe are universally concerned with *the ability to better meet customers' changing expectations and preferences*, and with *better managing risk* (this includes elements like cybersecurity, data privacy, and systems reliability).

While these were universal concerns, Europe was hardly of one mind when thinking more broadly about other goals and areas that required their attention — and there were notable differences by subregion. Figure 1 helps lay out some of these differences and make them explicit.

In **Eastern Europe** — represented predominantly by **Poland** in this study — the top additional areas of concern were *enhancing the ability to innovate and meeting new standards in regulatory requirement and compliance.*

Contrast that to **Northern Europe,** which in this study comprised **the UK, Ireland, Iceland, Denmark,** and **Sweden.** The top additional concerns here were around *improving employee productivity and collaboration,* and *better supporting collaborative work.*

Meanwhile, **Western Europe** — defined as **the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland,** and **France** — primarily focused on *using technology to deliver a best-in-class customer experience and digitally transforming the business.*

Southern Europe — consisting of **Spain, Italy, Serbia** and **Montenegro** — had similar priorities as its neighbors, as well as *reducing costs through operational efficiencies.*

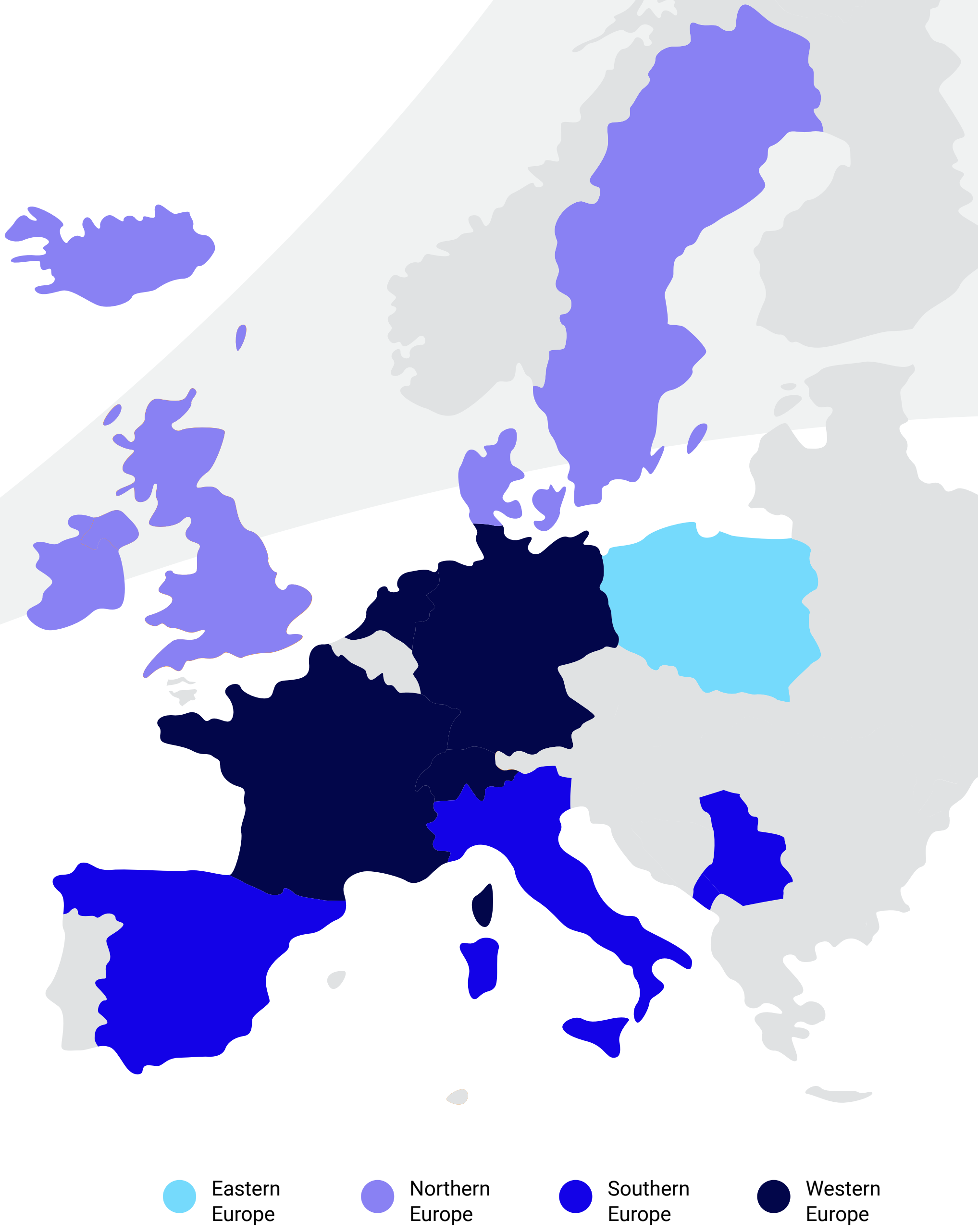


Figure 1: Thinking more broadly about your company's goals, which of the following would you say are the top goals of your company right now?

	Region			
	Eastern Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Western Europe
Improve employee productivity and collaboration	37%	40%	42%	35%
increase competitive differentiation	23%	30%	19%	24%
Become more agile/increase speed-to-market	33%	32%	26%	25%
Enter new markets	19%	20%	29%	20%
Open up new channels to sell products or serve customers in current markets	35%	25%	29%	25%
Enhance your company's ability to innovate	41%	37%	31%	27%
Be more data-driven in the way your company makes decisions	34%	31%	28%	37%
Better manage risk (e.g., cybersecurity, data privacy, systems reliability)	38%	41%	40%	44%
Reduce costs through operational efficiencies	36%	38%	40%	42%
Better support collaborative working (e.g., across departments/regions, supply chain)	31%	40%	23%	35%
Better meet customers' changing expectations and preferences	54%	48%	40%	41%
Better meet employees' changing expectations and preferences	33%	37%	29%	33%
Meet new standards in regulatory requirement and compliance	41%	38%	39%	34%
Use technology to deliver a best in class customer experience	33%	35%	41%	42%
Increase flexible working options in the business	37%	36%	39%	28%
Digitally transform the business	38%	31%	40%	43%

The bottom line? Regardless of region, these European knowledge organizations recognized that they had challenges in front of them that required their attention if they were to continue delivering the best possible business outcomes.

Section 3

Address concerns and challenges to retrain your focus on knowledge

We saw that the top concerns and business challenges facing European knowledge work organizations varied by region, and their priorities for addressing these concerns varied, as well.

The top areas that knowledge professionals in Europe expected to make the biggest impact on these challenges were *to evaluate and optimize existing digital tools or technologies,* followed by *reorganizing the company structure to align with goals* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: What changes or priorities are needed to address your top concerns?

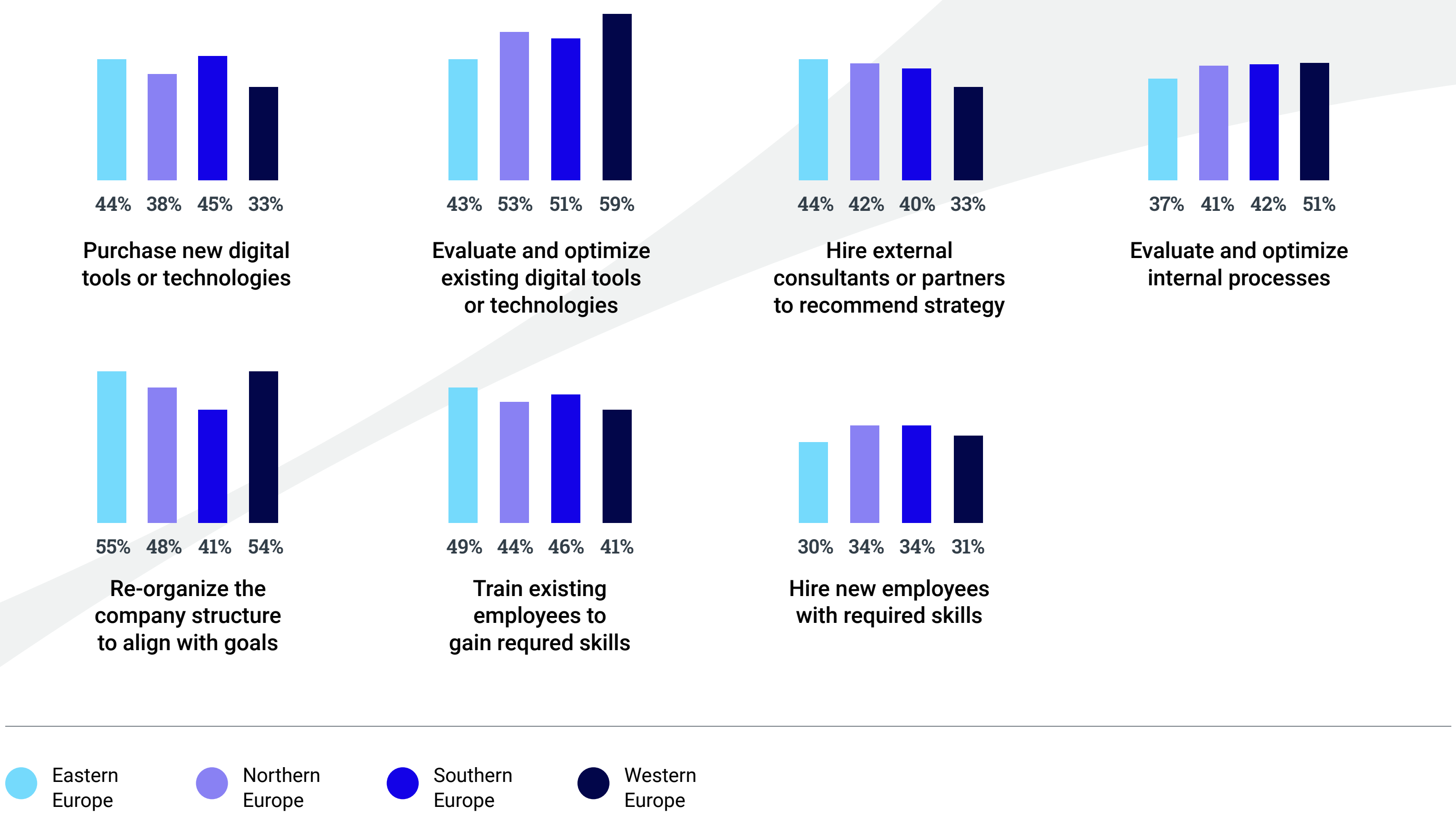
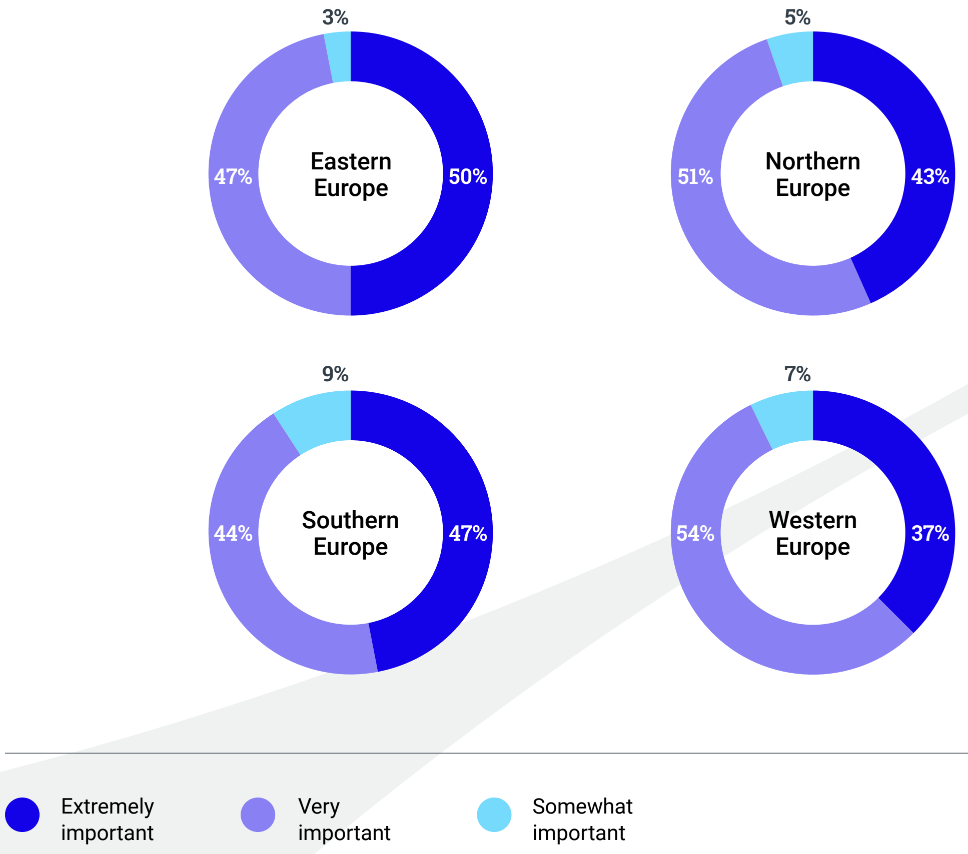


Figure 3: How important do you think the adoption of technology to enable optimizations and improvements in knowledge work will be to your company in the next 5 years?



The prioritization of these two areas makes sense. Anecdotally, people understand that they need the right people, the best process, and end-user adoption around existing technology versus simply throwing more tech at the problem.

This isn't to downplay the importance of technology; it remains a critical pillar. The KWMM research reinforces the notion that tech adoption is growing in importance (see Figure 3).

Poland had the highest number of respondents who deemed tech adoption as "extremely important" (50%), and the lowest number of respondents who indicated it is only "somewhat important" (3%). Contrast that with countries like the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and France, where only 37% viewed it as "extremely important" — although a whopping 54 percent regarded it as "very important".

What is driving this response? In large part, we see past workarounds falling out of use as knowledge organizations begin to adopt the standard processes so vital to the proper creation and governance of knowledge work products. This is particularly the case as knowledge work output becomes the new currency that fuels modern, digitally-enabled organizations.

Section 4

Understanding the impact of prioritizing knowledge

What is the importance of being a knowledge-driven organization? And what is the impact of being perceived as one? Again, a look at the KWMM numbers helps to paint a picture. Start with whether an organization's clients/customers actually perceive that organization as being knowledge-driven (see Figure 4):

Figure 4: Our customers/clients believe this company is knowledge-driven.

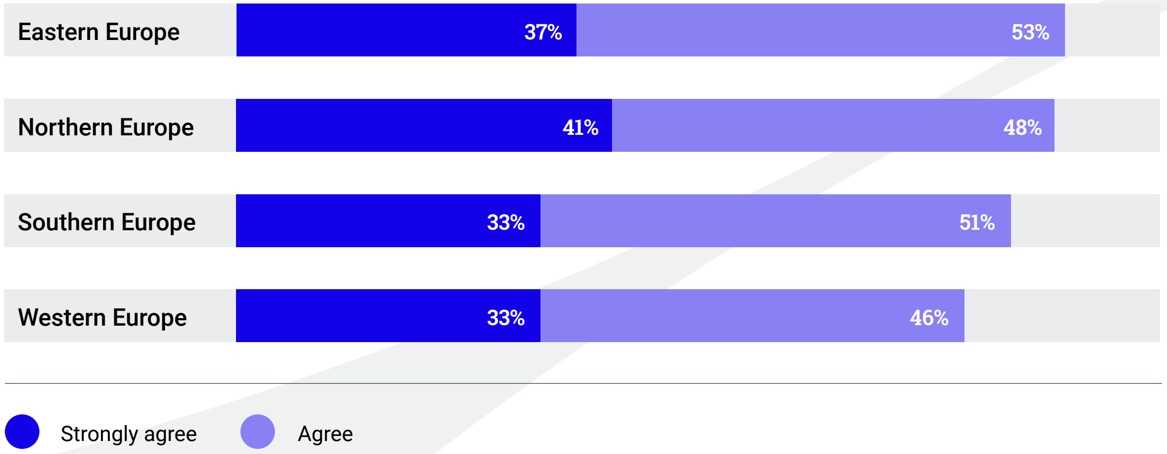
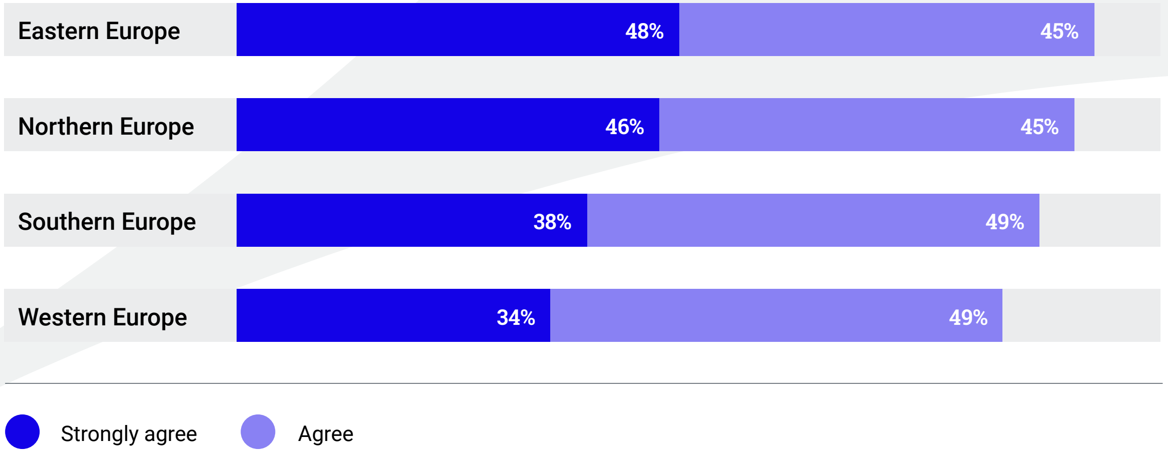


Figure 5: We are proactive in the work we do for our customers.



Note the difference between the subregions. Northern Europe (41%) and Eastern Europe (37%) rank higher than their peers in Southern and Western Europe when asked if their clients and customers perceive them as being knowledge-driven.

It is especially interesting how the perception that a company is knowledge-driven seems to align with an organization's internal business goals, as detailed in Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8 (see following page).

These countries also tend to score higher in being proactive in the work they do for customers (see Figure 5). Almost half (48%) of the respondents in Poland **strongly agree** with this sentiment, as do a large body (46%) of those in the UK, Ireland, Iceland, Denmark, and Sweden.

Figure 6: We constantly evolve how we work with customers to meet their changing needs.

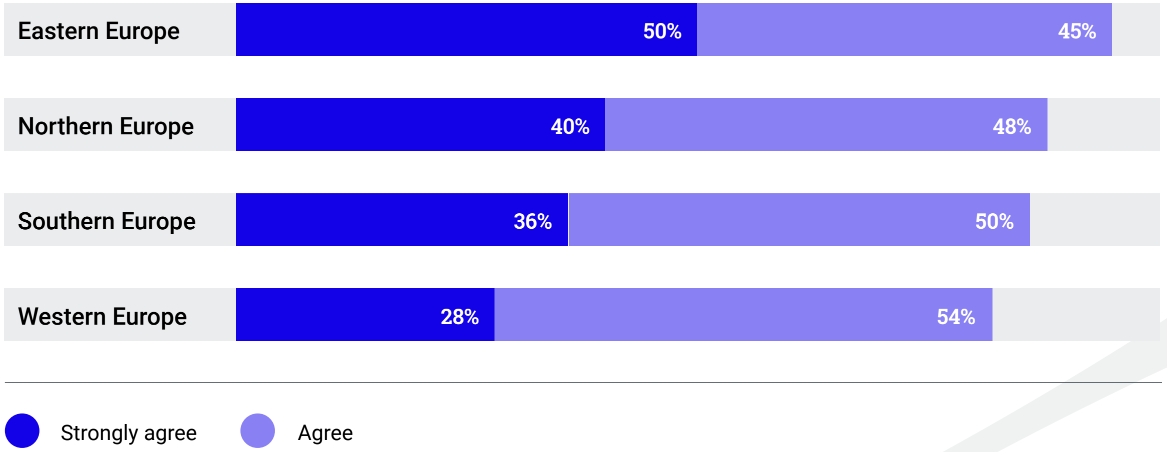
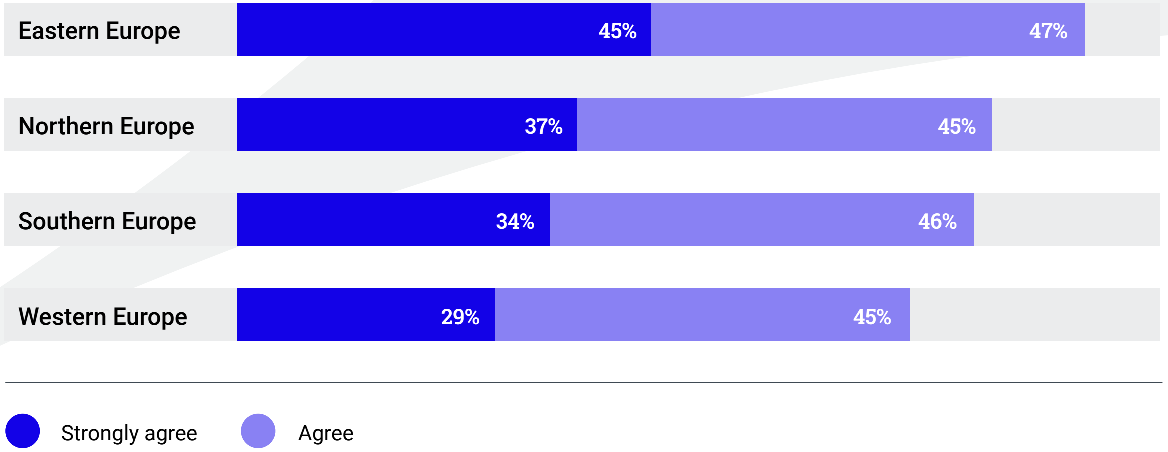


Figure 7: Knowledge workers would recommend this company to other knowledge workers.



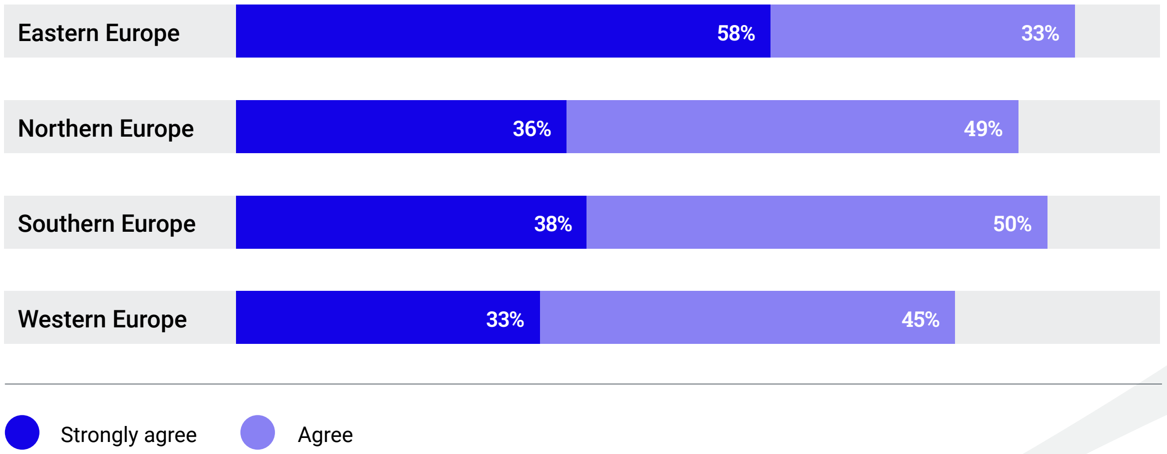
In regions where customers perceive the business as knowledge-driven, respondents confirm that "We constantly evolve how we work with customers to meet their needs." In Eastern Europe the combined total of agree and strongly agree is 95 percent, with Northern Europe right behind at 88 percent.

The qualitative data from the KWMM research backs up this sentiment on the importance of evolving to meet clients' needs, as this response from a European knowledge worker illustrates:

"We recognize that technology competence has moved from purely understanding technology to also comprehending the diverse range and application of technologies essential for delivering services to our clients."

Similar to the observations in Figure 6, in the regions whose customers perceive the businesses as knowledge-driven, respondents also score higher on measures such as *"Knowledge workers would recommend the company to other knowledge workers."* There is a virtuous cycle at work here: companies who value a knowledge-driven culture attract knowledge-driven people. Again, Eastern Europe and Northern Europe scored the highest number of **strongly agree** responses here.

Figure 8: Employees believe this company is knowledge-driven.



Do the employees themselves believe the organization is knowledge-driven? As it happens, yes — the correlation with being viewed as a knowledge-driven organization filters down to the employee experience as well (see Figure 8).

Poland scored highest on the **strongly agree** response here with 58 percent. Spain, Italy, Serbia, and Montenegro had the second highest number at 38 percent. But the combined numbers for “Agree” and “Strongly agree” yield similar results for all regions, with Western Europe trailing by only a few percentage points.

The findings detailed in Figures 5–8 suggest that there are tangible goals that create a pathway for organizations to be seen as knowledge-driven by their clients and customers. Continually evolving how you carry out your work and making sure your employees view the organization as knowledge-driven are just two examples.

Amidst all these markers, however, we note that knowledge workers across Europe still see room for improvement in making the fullest use of the collective intelligence of the organization. This leads us to a growing focal point of knowledge organizations in their quest to stay on the cutting edge and deliver the best business outcomes: artifical intelligence, or AI.

Section 5

How knowledge-first organizations set the stage for AI

Knowledge-driven organizations have already adopted AI functionality (see Figure 9), and this is to be expected. Higher positive responses overall from Eastern Europe, and to a slightly lesser degree from Northern Europe, stand out.

This continues to align with the findings that a high proportion of the organizations in Poland, as well as the UK, Ireland, Iceland, Denmark, and Sweden, are perceived as knowledge-driven.

To use AI effectively in automating processes and workflows, organizations need to first understand, document, and optimize those workflows. It requires that they establish a programmatic approach to the creation, management, and accessibility of critical work product — as well as a commitment to preserving and democratizing knowledge. And we would expect the organizations viewed as knowledge-driven to have an advantage when it comes to using AI-enabled technologies.

Put another way, there are key interdependencies that underpin a knowledge ecosystem and the effective use of AI, and this is perhaps what we are seeing with these findings.

Meanwhile, how has AI changed the way European knowledge work organizations complete their work? Figures 10 and 11 on the following page tell more of the story.

Figure 9: There are AI functionalities in the systems I use.

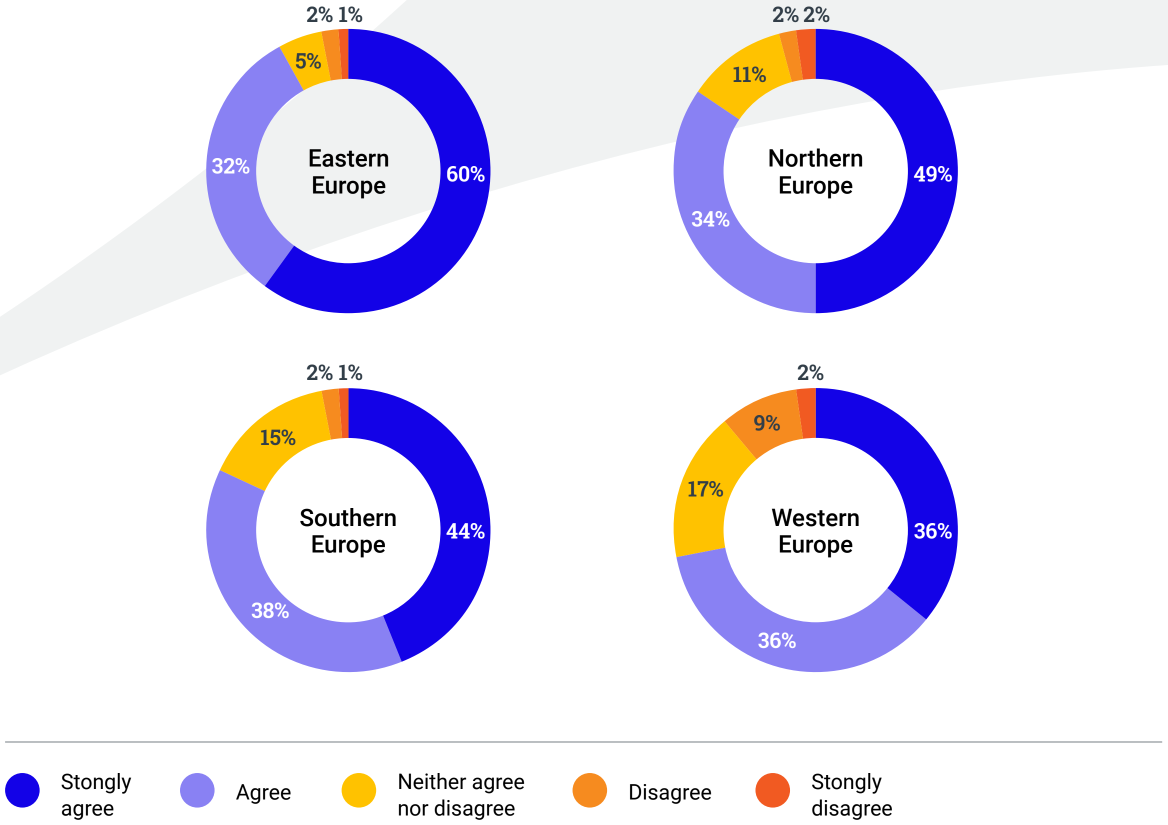


Figure 10: The process for completing my work has not changed in years/ever.

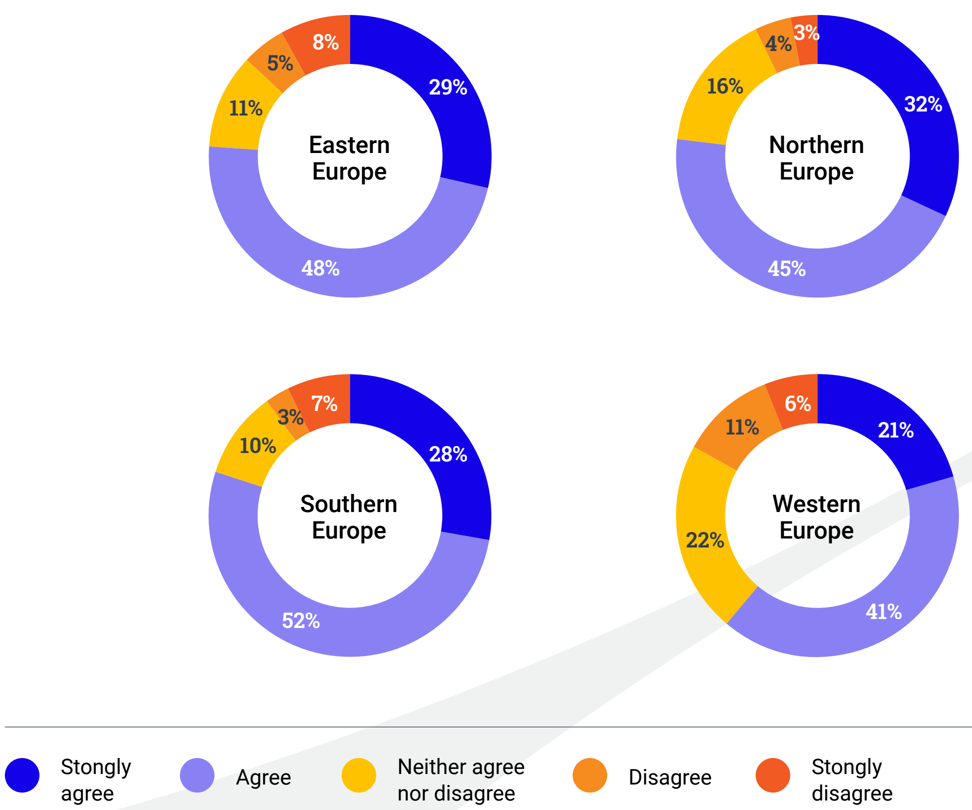
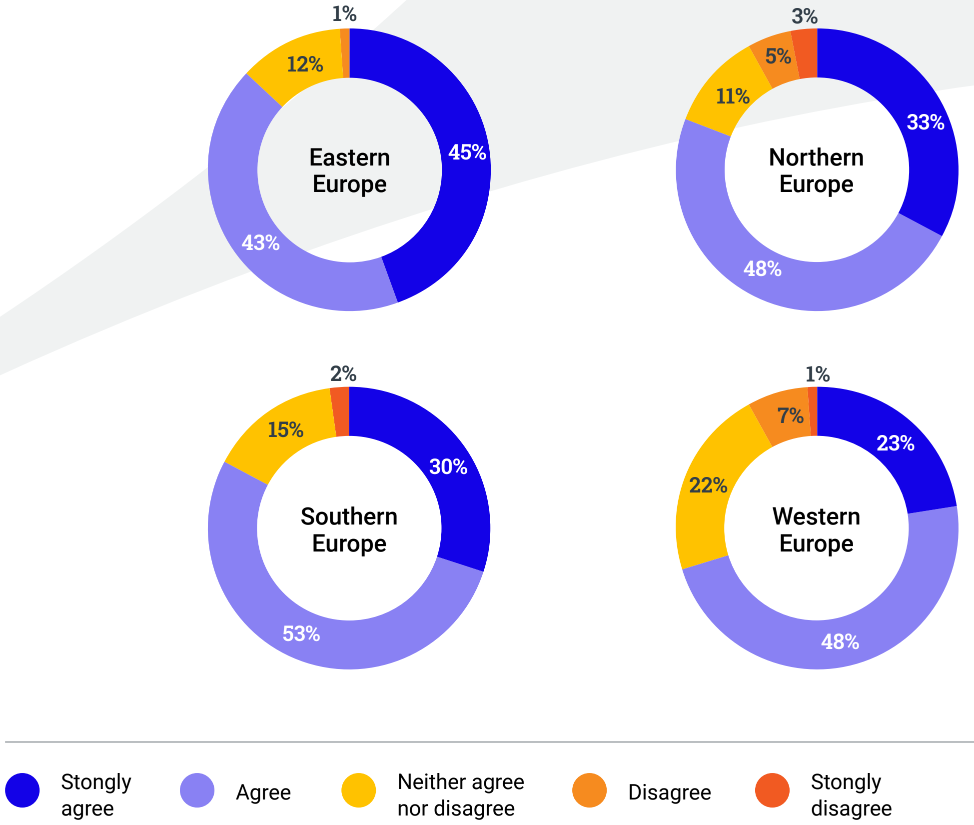


Figure 11: The work I do is easier now than it was a few years ago.



While most respondents across subregions agree that their work is easier now, 41–52 percent also agree that their process for completing work has not changed. A reasonable explanation for this apparent contradiction is that technology has had an impact here, making the workflow less arduous.

Once again, Eastern (45%) and Northern (33%) Europe have the highest percentage of respondents who strongly agree with the statement, *"the work I do is easier than it was a few years ago."* But when combining **strongly agree** with **agree,** Southern Europe vaults to 83 percent of respondents — prevailing over Northern Europe's combined 81 percent but still falling short of Eastern Europe's combined 88 percent.

There is significant opportunity and potential in how AI is predicted to improve modern work. However, it still requires all organizations to invest time in understanding workflows — as well as establishing effective data creation and management practices. And results for considering best practices when automating tasks or implementing AI were directionally positive and very consistent across the regions (see Figure 12).

Here, countries like Poland, the UK, Ireland, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Serbia, and Montenegro all come out strong on the **strongly agree** response, compared to their neighbors in Western Europe, whose comparatively small 29 percent made them somewhat of an outlier.

Figure 12: My company's best practices are considered when automating tasks or implementing AI.

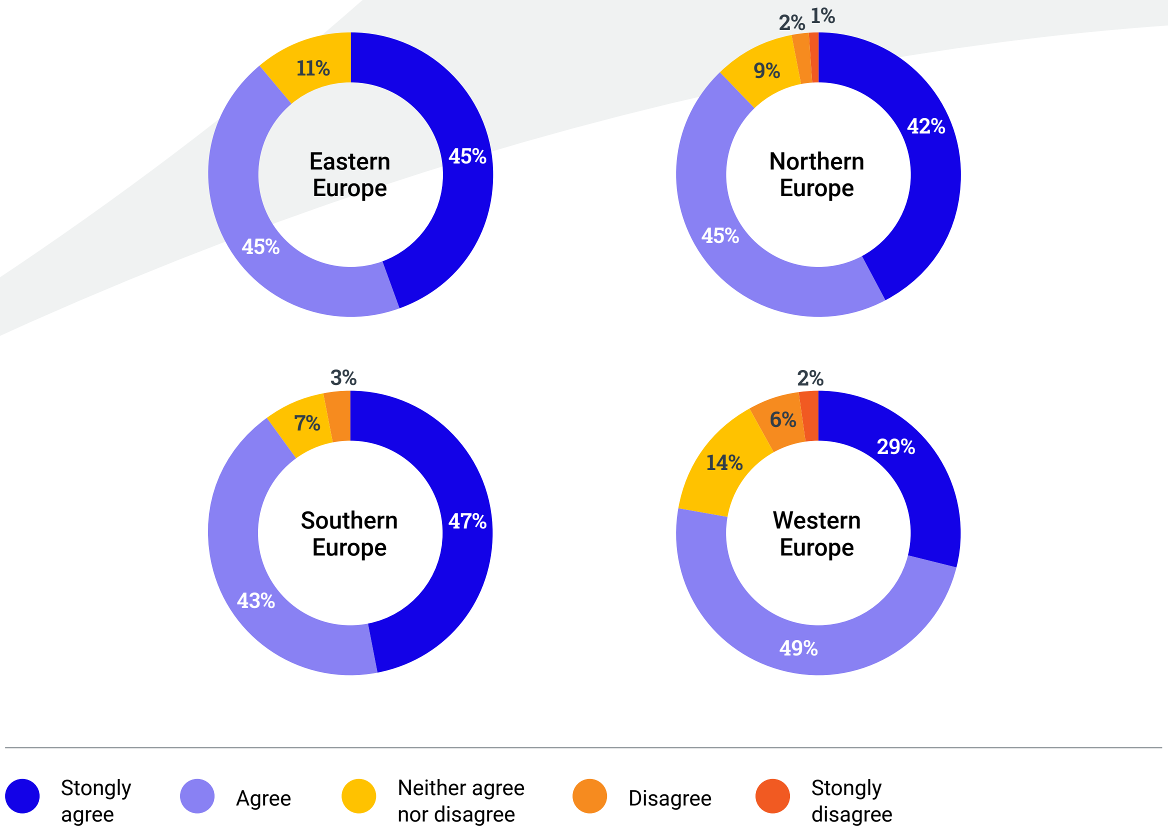
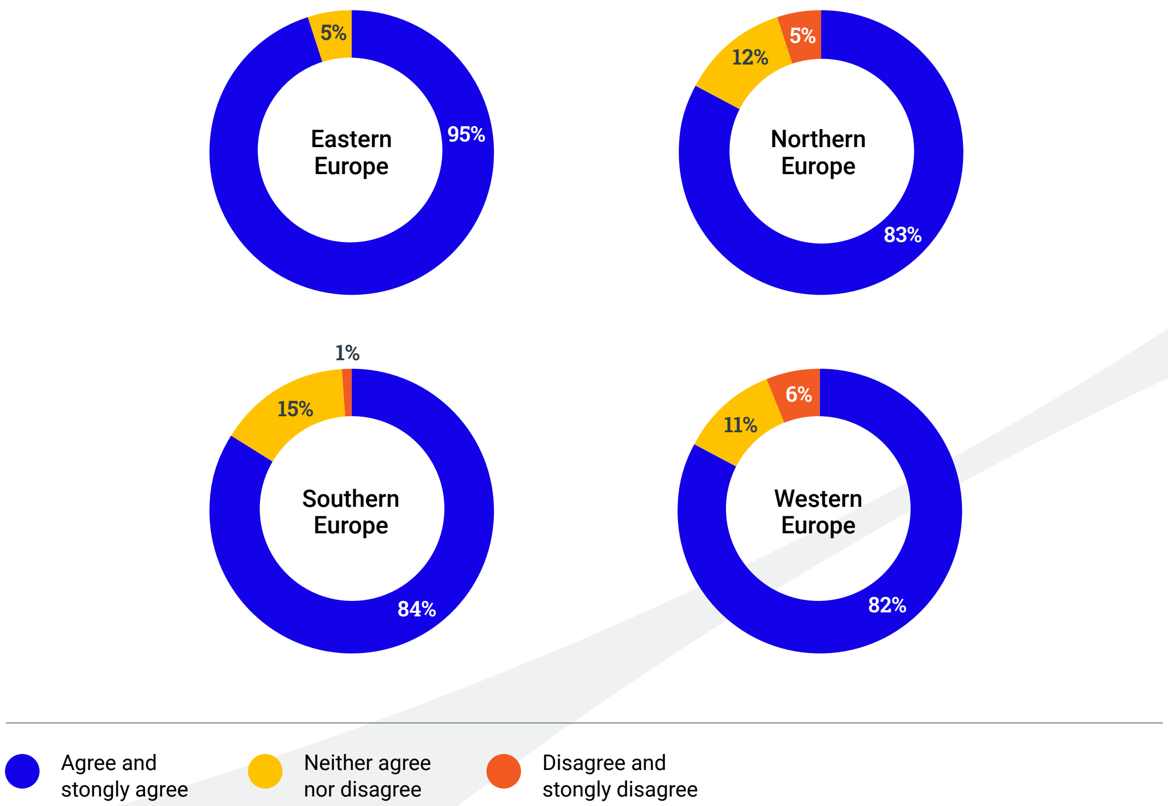


Figure 13: Workflows are automated so that I can focus on value-add tasks.



Meanwhile, when asked if *"workflows are automated so they can focus on high value add tasks,"* results were consistently high across the board: a large portion of respondents (ranging from 82%–95%) responded with either **agree** or **strongly agree** (see Figure 13).

Despite this emphasis on automation and AI, European knowledge work professionals still spend a large portion of their day completing mundane or repetitive administrative tasks. This speaks to the opportunity that AI-enabled technologies can bring to the organization.

This sentiment came through loud and clear in the qualitative data of the KWMM research. Respondents noted AI's ability to streamline workflows and shift focus to higher value tasks — benefitting professionals and clients alike.

This is the AI-enabled future that European organizations are headed toward if they can first lay the groundwork of putting in place the people, processes, and technology to become a knowledge-driven organization.

"I am not yet worried it will replace us as lawyers. **I think it will make our life easier** ... and allow us to focus on sophisticated work and communication with clients."

"It can help to **reduce costs,** and will also be good for creating more work/ life balance among our lawyers by hopefully **reducing mundane tasks**. It can also help us in delivering the best results in shorter deadlines."

"It will not deprecate our work quality — it'll free resources from our staff so we're better able to **focus on high-value work.**"

"Right now, in arbitration, some firms are using AI to **cull through disclosure material —** which can really help to speed the process up and reduce labour."

"We foresee using this tool **as a complement to our services** to allow the shift from service based on data vs. service based on history and intuition."

Section 6

A clear path to realizing knowledge maturity benefits

As knowledge work evolves at an ever-quickening pace, European knowledge work organizations need to ensure that they can capitalize on any opportunities this rapid evolution brings.

Strategic investment in people and culture, software, processes, and workflows is key. Implementing best practices for how the business collects, manages, governs, and accesses their content, data, and work product is equally critical.

As the KWMM research demonstrates, many organizations across Europe are already well on their way, while others still have work to do. But for all of them, there is a clear pathway toward increasing their knowledge maturity and becoming a knowledge-driven organization that can harness the collective intelligence of the organization and realize its economic benefits.

Curious where your organization falls on the path to knowledge maturity? Find out today! Get access to our modeler and other resources that help lay the groundwork for future success.

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