



certified
sharing
company

A New Standard Ownership in Business

Executive Summary

Certified Sharing Company is a new European standard for companies who commit to a fairer, more inclusive economic model; one where employees are co-owners of the businesses they help build.

As inequality deepens and the next generation demands transparency, fairness, and impact from employers, the Sharing Company certification offers both a moral and competitive advantage.

Developed by Share Council and The Share Foundation, this certification recognizes companies that shared (future) ownership and economic rights with employees and other stakeholders. Through a rigorous but accessible assessment, companies are awarded 0–4 stars based on the depth of ownership-sharing practices.

Our goal? To close the capital wealth gap for 137 million SME employees in Europe. This white paper outlines the challenges, our shared philosophy, and how certification can help catalyze the systemic change our economy needs.

Introduction: A System tilted too far

Capital inequality has never been more extreme. In Europe, 64% of wealth belongs to just 10% of the population. Globally, the top 1% own over half of all household assets.

But this isn't just a numbers problem — it's a societal fault line.

A younger generation of workers is no longer satisfied with opaque hierarchies and one-directional value extraction. They seek meaning, impact, and a seat at the table.

As outlined by economists like Thomas Piketty, one of the key drivers of inequality is the unequal access to **passive income** — especially income derived from ownership. Capital grows wealth, and ownership determines who benefits.

That's why **ownership matters**.

Certified Sharing Company responds to this crisis with a simple but transformative idea: every employee deserves the right to co-own the business they help build. By making ownership accessible, normalizing equity sharing, and supporting a cultural shift in business, this accreditation offers a tangible step towards a fairer economy.

↘ What is a Certified Sharing Company?

A Certified Sharing Company is a company that has made a verifiable commitment to share (future) ownership with employees or other stakeholders. This includes not only equity but also the legal and governance structures that enable meaningful participation.

Certification itself, regardless of the star rating, is a powerful milestone. It represents a company's alignment with a growing movement to redistribute capital and recognize employees as co-creators of value. Whether you receive a star rating or not, your company is contributing to systemic change by validating ownership-sharing as a business norm.

We do offer a rating system to recognize the depth and breadth of sharing practices:

While 4 stars represent the most advanced stage “full legal voting rights for all”, our focus is on 3-star companies. These are organizations that offer true ownership to all employees and actively remove barriers to entry by providing financial support to make ownership possible.

Certified Sharing Company will review:

- Legal rights and obligations of participants
- Participation scope: how widely is ownership shared?
- Governance clarity and transparency

But again, certification alone is impactful. Every Certified Sharing Company strengthens the case for inclusive ownership in business and brings us closer to closing the capital wealth gap.

The certification is open to any company whether or not they use the Share Council platform.

↘ Rating System

Rating	Ownership Type
No Star	Options, SARs, Loans or Bonds
★	True ownership for a limited group
★★	True ownership for everyone
★★★	True ownership for everyone + financial support
★★★★	True ownership + voting rights for everyone (not actively marketed)

Our primary focus is on the 3-star level.

Why? Because that's the one that truly advances our mission: inviting all employees to become co-owners and providing the financial support needed to make that possible. It's the clearest path to reaching our bold goal of enabling ownership for **137 million SME employees across Europe**.

4 stars represent the next frontier: full voting rights for all. But 3-star companies are already radically shifting capital dynamics and that's where we're building momentum.

Why Certification Matters

Ownership-sharing is no longer niche, it's strategic.

Certified Sharing Companies benefit from:

- **Attracting and retaining talent:** especially among younger generations who prioritize fairness and inclusion.
- **Greater alignment and loyalty:** when employees are co-owners, they think and act like co-entrepreneurs.
- **Brand credibility:** externally with partners, internally with teams
- **Resilience:** companies with broad ownership are proven to perform better in times of crisis.

Certification also adds your voice to a growing movement, one pushing for systemic change in how companies operate and who benefits from their success.

The Broader Movement

Europe's economy runs on SMEs. Over 94% of all companies are small or medium-sized, employing more than **137 million people**. Yet the vast majority of those workers hold no stake in the value they help create.

That's the gap we aim to close.

The Certified Sharing Company movement is part of a larger wave pushing for inclusive capitalism, ethical entrepreneur and a new normal for equity, justice and a voice in business.

We believe this movement will define the future of work and of capital.

↘ How to Get Certified

If your company shares (or plans to share) ownership with employees or stakeholders, you may be eligible.

Here's how it works:

- **Apply online** at sharingcompany.org
- **Undergo a legal and participation review** with our team
- **Receive your 0-4 star certification**
- **Join our public index** of Certified Sharing Companies

It's a chance to lead by example, attract aligned talent, and help build the ownership economy.

↘ Join the Movement

We believe that the future of business is shared. The Sharing Company certification is one step toward making that future the norm, not the exception.

Let's close the capital gap. Let's raise the standard. Let's recognize the companies who share.

Certified Sharing Company

An initiative by Share Council and The Share Foundation

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