Investing in Southern Europe

Why is emerging as the most attractive destination for international investors

forvis mazars x Mergermarket

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Foreword

Southern Europe now a magnet for international dealmakers

Southern Europe – comprising Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Portugal and Greece – stands out as a beacon of opportunity for M&A in EMEA. With GDP growth exceeding that of Europe's traditional markets in the north of the region – as well as steady domestic demand and a high level of political stability – it is hardly surprising that Southern Europe has become a magnet for dealmakers, and will continue to draw investment in the months and years ahead.

While diverse in terms of targets, the region possesses distinctive unifying characteristics, which are proving extremely attractive to strategics and sponsors alike. First, it has a robust (and often undervalued) mid-market that is ripe for consolidation and which generates reliable deal flow, even in times of economic stress. Second, it is home to a large number of family-owned businesses and offers an abundant supply of succession-driven assets. Third, valuation multiples are competitive versus Northern Europe and the US, a major draw for dealmakers.

The purpose of this study is to explore the M&A landscape of Southern Europe at regional, national and sector levels, as well as oulining the the key drivers for M&A in the region – both currently and going forward. First, we examine the current state of play and the factors shaping the overall M&A market, as well as reviewing the region's biggest deals of H1 2026.

Next, we focus on the region's six constituent countries – with analysis of the top deals, as well as the trends and drivers shaping national M&A markets.

We also consider the region's vast mid-market – and why a growing number of bidders see Southern Europe as a value play.

Pharma, industrials and technology were among the sectors that witnessed a surge in aggregate value in H1 2026. Our sector analysis explores the factors behind this, and how – perhaps surprisingly – baked goods was the hottest consumer story of H1.

The penultimate chapter focuses on the region's vibrant private equity (PE) landscape and delves into the factors that are making Southern Europe an increasingly attractive prospect for inbound acquirers. These include a ready supply of high quality mid-market companies, improving financing conditions and abundant opportunities to build scale.

The report concludes with a look ahead at what could be in store for the latter half of 2026 and beyond – with particular emphasis on future sectoral trends including a potential surge in transactions in the consumer and industrials and chemicals (I&C) markets.

Sylvain Rousmant
Financial Advisory Leader
Forvis Mazars in Italy

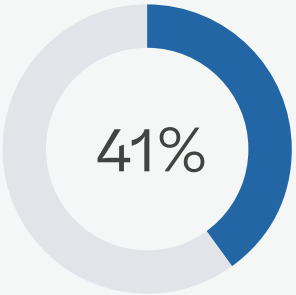
Key findings

€147.7bn

The overall value of deals in Southern Europe in H1 2026, up 37% compared to the same period in 2025.

1,858 deals

The number of M&A transactions in the region during H1 2026 – a 6% decline relative to the same period last year.



The most prolific **inbound dealmakers** targeting assets in Southern Europe were bidders from the US, who were involved in **139 deals** worth a combined **€23.7bn**, followed in value terms by acquirers based in the UK (€23.3bn). Overall, bidders from outside the region contributed €61.2bn worth of deals, accounting for around 41% of all activity.

330 deals

The **industrials & chemicals** sector was the busiest for M&A in Southern Europe in H1, with 330 deals announced. That figure is on par with H1 2025, but total value in the sector rose considerably year-on-year, more than doubling to €16.4bn, driven by a trio of large inbound transactions led by US bidders.

5 out of 10

At the top of the market, several of the largest transactions were driven by **private equity dealmakers**, especially large international sponsors. In fact, of the 10 biggest M&A deals announced across Southern Europe in H1 2026, five involved PE buyers, including the third and fourth largest deals overall.

608 'for sale'

Looking ahead, Mergermarket reporting indicates that Southern Europe's **consumer sector** will generate a groundswell of M&A over the coming quarters. Of the 608 'companies for sale' stories tracked by Mergermarket in Southern Europe in H1, more than a fifth (126) relate to consumer businesses.

Headline value rises sharply, with fewer but larger deals dominating activity

M&A volume in Southern Europe was subdued in H1 2026 with a total of 1,858 announced transactions, down 6% versus H1 2025, according to Mergermarket data. Despite this slim decline, the aggregate value of deals announced in the region surged to €147.7bn – up 37% from the €107.9bn total logged in H1 2025.

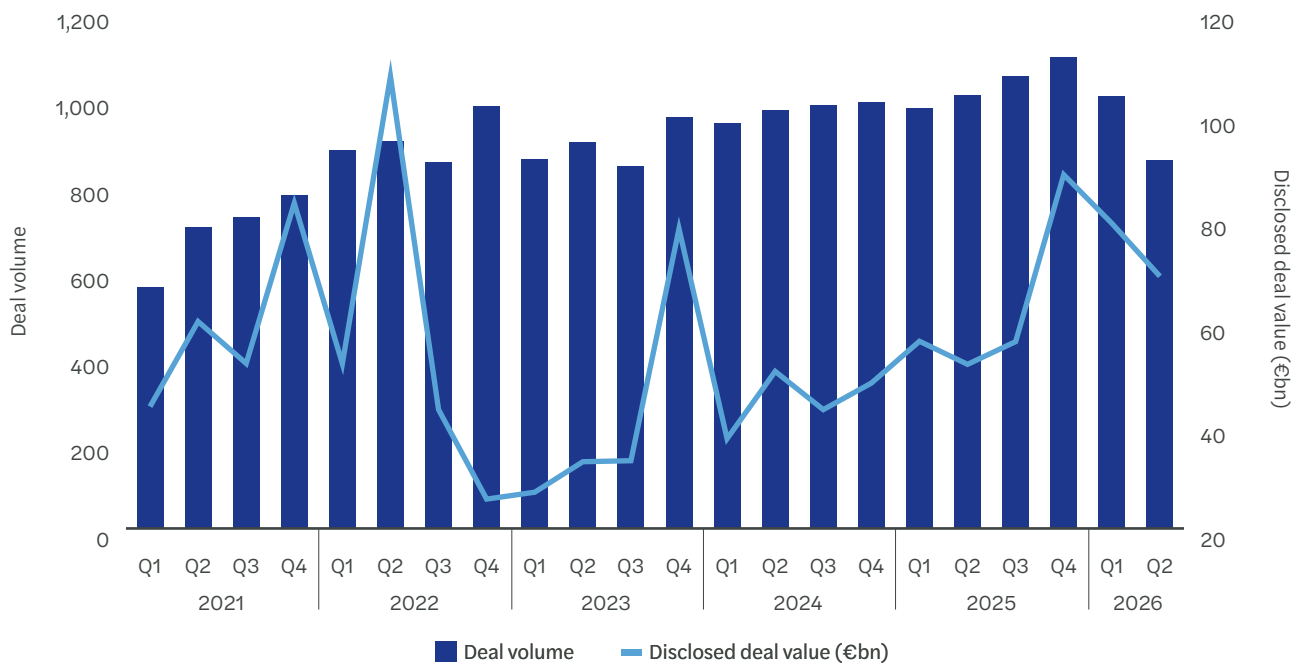
Though this strong H1 total-value figure aligns with the positive trends observed since early 2023, Q1 and Q2 2026 do mark the first period on recent record of consecutive quarterly declines in both deal value and deal volume. The 855 deals announced in Q2 represent the lowest quarterly figure since Q3 2023.

The long-term direction of travel, however, remains positive. Following a dip in activity in H2 2022, Southern Europe's deal market has been on a generally upward trajectory since early 2023, with occasional spikes in aggregate deal value such as those seen in the closing quarters of 2023 and 2025.

"Inorganic growth within each economic bloc tends to intensify in periods of geopolitical tension – advisers in the region are explicitly flagging stronger regional ties as a driver."

Sylvain Rousmant, Financial Advisory Leader at Forvis Mazars in Italy

Total Southern Europe M&A market



Italy stands out as Southern Europe's best-performing M&A market in H1 2026 with 754 deals announced, up 6.5% compared to H1 2025. Deal value rose even more sharply, more than doubling year-on-year to €87.1bn. Italy's totals account for 41% of all Southern European M&A by volume and 59% of deal value through the first six months of the year.

"Italy's M&A market has genuinely earned its leading position – this isn't a one-off spike," says Maurizio Galati, Financial Advisory Director at Forvis Mazars. "Domestic consolidation has been the backbone, particularly in banking. Confidence among Italian dealmakers has strengthened as financing conditions have eased and valuation gaps between buyers and sellers have started to narrow."

Anglo-American and French bidders retain a key position at the top of the market. Besides acquirers from within the region, the most frequent bidders for Southern European targets in H1 were buyers from the US, who announced 139 deals worth a combined €23.7bn, followed by bidders from France (122 transactions announced, albeit worth just €3.9bn combined) and the UK (88 deals worth €23.3bn). Overall, bidders from outside the region contributed more than €61.2bn worth of deals in H1, accounting for 41% of all activity in Southern Europe.

Domestic bidders, meanwhile, remain a force to be reckoned with. Italian acquirers led the charge, accounting for 28% of deals by volume and 44% by aggregate value (€65bn) in H1. Rising global instability is among the factors fuelling dealmaking within the region.

"Inorganic growth within each economic bloc tends to intensify in periods of geopolitical tension – advisers in the region are explicitly flagging stronger regional ties as a driver," says Sylvain Rousmant, Financial Advisory Leader at Forvis Mazars in Italy. "My working thesis is that intra-Southern-European M&A will grow faster than the headline inbound figures over the next 12 to 18 months, concentrated in fragmented sectors – food & beverage, healthcare, and energy transition – where a regional consolidator logic applies."

The Southern Europe M&A market in focus

Top 10 M&A deals in Southern Europe in H1 2026

Announced date	Target company	Sector	Target country	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
08/06/2026	Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA (99.93% Stake)	Financial services	Italy	Intesa Sanpaolo SpA	Italy	30,595
22/03/2026	TIM SpA (79.9% Stake)	TMT	Italy	Poste Italiane SpA	Italy	21,420
26/03/2026	Recordati Industria Chimica & Farmaceutica SpA (100% Stake)	Pharma, medical & biotech	Italy	CVC Advisers Ltd; Groupe Bruxelles Lambert SA; Abu Dhabi Investment Authority Ltd; Canada Pension Plan Investment Board; Public Sector Pension Investment Board; StepStone Group LP; Capsol SpA; AlpInvest Partners BV; MGG Capital SAM; Andrea Recordati (Private Individual); Respighi BidCo SpA	United Kingdom	12,624
12/02/2026	Urbaser SAU (100% Stake)	Industrials & chemicals	Spain	Blackstone Inc; EQT AB; Blackstone Infrastructure Advisors LLC	USA	5,559
01/04/2026	Versigent plc (100% Stake)	Industrials & chemicals	Switzerland	Existing Shareholders	USA	3,205
26/05/2026	Terra Quantum AG (100% Stake)	TMT	Switzerland	Axiom Intelligence Acquisition Corp 1	United Kingdom	3,009
08/06/2026	Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA (635 branches & related assets and liabilities) (100% Stake)	Financial services	Italy	Unipol Assicurazioni SpA	Italy	3,000
29/06/2026	IRCA SpA (100% Stake)	Consumer	Italy	CVC Advisers Ltd	United Kingdom	3,000
28/01/2026	Port Terminals (10 CMA CGM-operated ports) (25% Stake)	Transportation	Spain	Stonepeak Partners LP	USA	2,005
06/03/2026	Lonza Group AG (Capsules & Health Ingredients business) (60% Stake)	Pharma, medical & biotech	Switzerland	Lone Star Global Acquisitions Ltd	USA	1,880

Biggest deals

Italian companies were targeted in five of the 10 largest deals announced in Southern Europe in H1, including the three biggest transactions overall. Switzerland generated three top-10 deals, while Spanish assets were targeted in two. The array of top-10 deals underlines the depth and diversity of the region's M&A market, with targets drawn from sectors including financial services, technology, media & telecoms (TMT), pharma, medical & biotech (PMB), industrials & chemicals (I&C), consumer and transportation.

On the buy-side, American bidders were the most prolific – US-based acquirers were behind four of the 10 largest deals. Italian bidders accounted for three, including the largest two deals of H1, both of which involved high-profile domestic assets. UK bidders led three top-10 deal announcements.

Southern Europe's largest announced deal of H1 2026 was the €30.6bn bid by Intesa Sanpaolo (Italy's largest bank by total assets) for Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena (MPS, the world's oldest bank). If successful, the deal would transform Intesa Sanpaolo into Europe's second-largest banking group by stock market value, eclipsing domestic rival UniCredit.

The region's second largest deal likewise concerned an Italian asset. In March, Poste Italiane, Italy's national postal service provider, launched a voluntary cash-and-share offer for Telecom Italia (TIM). Poste Italiane is negotiating the acquisition of all outstanding shares in TIM and is seeking to delist the company for a consideration of €10.8bn. The total value of the transaction including net debt is €21.4bn, according to Mergermarket data. The deal is expected to complete by the end of 2026.

In Southern Europe's third largest deal of H1, a consortium led by UK-based PE firm CVC launched a take-private of Italian pharmaceutical company Recordati, best known for its activities in speciality and primary care, as well as rare-disease treatments. CVC is already Recordati's largest shareholder, having acquired the founding family's controlling stake in 2018. The deal carries a consideration of almost €10.6bn, with a total value of €12.6bn including net debt.

US bidders were behind the next two biggest deals, both targeting I&C businesses. The largest of these is the proposed €5.6bn acquisition by US-based Blackstone and Sweden-based EQT of Spanish waste management infrastructure and environmental services specialist Urbaser. The next largest deal, the fifth-biggest of H1 2026, saw US-based but Swiss-headquartered Aptiv spin-off its electrical distribution systems business into Versigent, a new company that will be publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange in a transaction worth €3.2bn.

"Italy's M&A market has genuinely earned its leading position – this isn't a one-off spike. Domestic consolidation has been the backbone, particularly in banking."

Maurizio Galati, Financial Advisory Director at Forvis Mazars

Italian M&A soars to record-breaking heights

Italy, Spain and Switzerland stand out as the region's best-performing markets of H1 2026. Italy's performance was particularly strong, with both volume and value climbing to their highest levels on record. Portugal, meanwhile, is close to becoming one of the first countries to achieve 10 consecutive years of rising M&A volumes – but only if it can ignite dealmaking in H2.

Italy

Italy stands out as Southern Europe's largest M&A market in H1 2026, generating 754 deals – up 6.5% compared to the same period last year. These were worth a combined €87.1bn, an increase of 116% compared to H1 2025. These are the highest H1 volume and value figures on records stretching back two decades, according to Mergermarket.

Aggregate value was bolstered by Intesa Sanpaolo's bid for MPS. With an estimated deal value exceeding €30bn, that transaction accounts for more than a third of total Italian deal value in H1 and over 20% of all Southern European M&A activity.

Besides the three large Italian deals mentioned in the preceding chapter, Italy generated two further top-10 transactions in H1 in Southern Europe, one of which relates to Intesa Sanpaolo's bid for MPS. In addition to the larger Intesa deal, insurer Unipol has bid €3bn to acquire 635 MPS bank branches, for which it is preparing a €2.5bn capital increase to finance the transaction. Following the deal, Unipol intends to propose to BPER Banca – of which Unipol is the main shareholder – a merger with the Siena branches, from which a post-merger group would be created under the name Banca Monte dei Paschi. Outside financial services, Italy's next largest deal sprang from the consumer sector, with buyout firm CVC moving to acquire Italian speciality ingredients producer IRCA for €3bn.

The range of industries reflected in Italy's largest deals is indicative of a healthy breadth and depth of M&A activity. Seven different sectors are represented among Italy's top-10 deals, ranging from life sciences and energy to financial services and real estate.

While economic growth in Italy is currently lacklustre, Southern Italy – the Mezzogiorno – is bucking the trend, thanks in large part to major government and European Union stimulus measures. "Southern Italy – Campania in particular – is on buyers' maps more than it was 18 months ago, but it's a targeted, sector-led interest rather than a wholesale shift of the deal map," explains Maurizio Galati of Forvis Mazars.

Looking ahead, the prospects for sustained activity in Italy's M&A market are positive, with deals increasingly propelled by structural rather than cyclical drivers.

"Sector consolidation still has room to run, PE dry powder remains abundant, and corporates are using M&A to reposition portfolios around AI-readiness and operational transformation," observes Sylvain Rousmant of Forvis Mazars. "Dealmakers are cautiously confident rather than euphoric – a healthier foundation for sustained activity than the exuberance we saw in previous cycles."

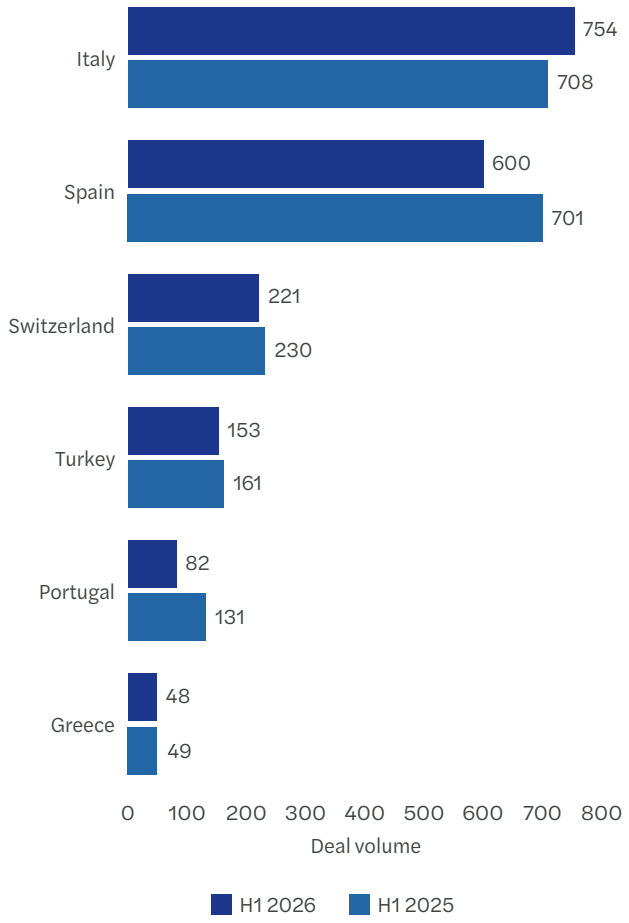
Spain

Spain was Southern Europe's next busiest market after Italy in H1 2026, with a total of 600 transactions announced worth almost €28.7bn. While volume is down 14% versus H1 2025, value is up 9% year-on-year.

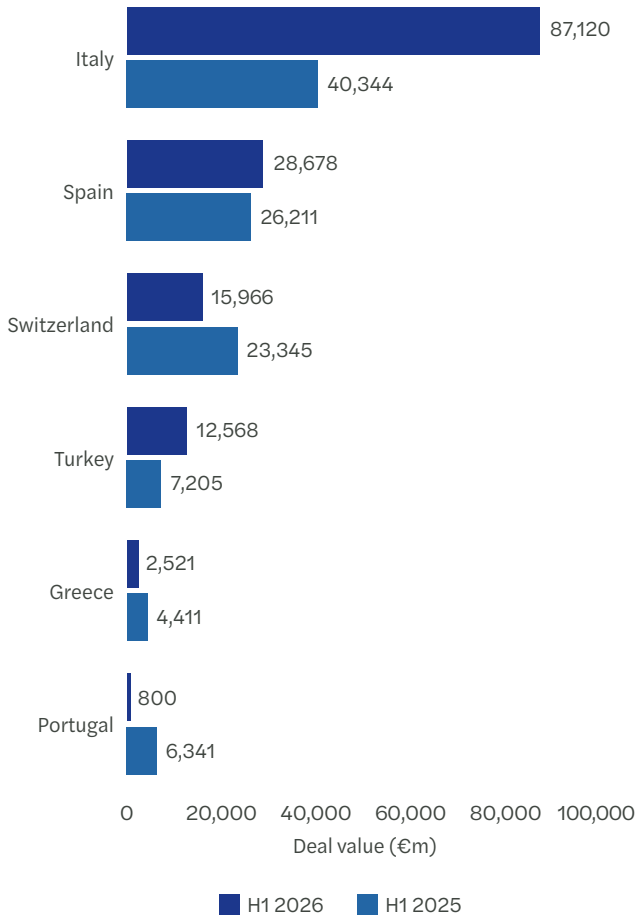
Spain generated two of the region's largest deals in H1, both of them PE-backed. The largest of these (and the fourth-biggest across the region) is the proposed €5.6bn acquisition of Spain-based waste management and environmental services provider Urbaser by infrastructure funds controlled by US-based Blackstone and Sweden-based EQT. Blackstone and EQT intend to jointly own and manage the company post-completion.

Spain's second-largest deal also involved an overseas bidder, with New York-based PE firm Stonepeak moving to acquire a 25% stake in a joint venture with shipping company CMA CGM in a deal worth just over €2bn. Stonepeak will acquire several major CMA CGM-operated port terminals worldwide as part of the deal, including four terminals in Spain. The deal is

Southern Europe M&A volume
by country, H1 2025 vs. H1 2026



Southern Europe M&A disclosed value (€m)
by country, H1 2025 vs. H1 2026



among the most valuable transportation transactions in recent years involving a PE sponsor.

Staying with large deals, H1 also saw the €1.82bn acquisition from Forvia of Spain-based Faurecia Interior Systems – which supplies components such as instrument and centre console systems for cars – by US-based Apollo. This was Southern Europe's second-largest automotive deal of H1 2026.

"Spain has become one of Europe's most attractive destinations for inbound M&A, combining a strong economic situation, a deep pool of high-quality mid-market companies, improving financing conditions and attractive long-term investment themes. At the same time, valuation levels remain broadly attractive," says Alberto Martínez, Financial Advisory Partner at Forvis Mazars in Spain.

"Spain has become one of Europe's most attractive destinations for inbound M&A."

Alberto Martínez, Financial Advisory Partner at Forvis Mazars in Spain

Around the Southern Europe region

Spain's four biggest M&A deals in H1 all involved PE sponsors, with inbound acquirers accounting for the largest three – underlining the growing allure of Spain's M&A market for global capital. Against this background, nearly 8% of all announced M&A transactions in H1 were PE exits, the largest share for any Southern European nation.

Interestingly, Spain generated more AI-adjacent transactions than any other country in the region in H1 2026 – albeit based on a relatively small number of deals. The largest of these – a business services transaction – was a €113m Series B funding round in Xoople, a Madrid-based startup that produces AI-ready geospatial data.

Switzerland

Switzerland was the region's third-largest deal market in H1 2026. Swiss assets were targeted in 221 announced deals (down 4% relative to H1 2025) worth a combined €16bn (a decline of 32%). Just over 17% of transactions in H1 2026 were buyouts – marginally ahead of Spain and the highest share for any country in Southern Europe.

While overall levels of dealmaking were subdued versus H1 2025, Switzerland nevertheless generated a clutch of larger transactions. These included three of the 10 largest announced in Southern Europe in H1, involving bidders from the US (two deals) and the UK (one deal). The deals seen in H1 2026 underscore the depth and vitality of the Swiss M&A market, embracing everything from automotive and technology, to pharma, energy and financial services.

In the largest Swiss deal, worth €3.2bn, Aptiv – a US automotive and industrial technology company whose corporate headquarters are in Schaffhausen, Switzerland – spun-off its electrical distribution systems business into a new company called Versigent, which will be publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

The second-largest deal of H1 was the merger of Switzerland-based deep-tech and quantum computing firm Terra Quantum with UK-based Axiom Intelligence Acquisition Corp 1, a publicly traded special purpose acquisition company (SPAC). The deal – worth just over €3bn – underlines the clamour for cybersecurity and AI-related assets, as well as the ability of Swiss deep-tech firms to access international capital.

Also in the top-10 were a trio of pharma deals. The two largest of these – both inbound buyouts – were the acquisition of a 60% stake in Swiss drug maker Lonza Group by US buyout firm Lone Star for €1.88bn, and the €1.86bn acquisition of an 80% stake in the animal health and nutrition business of DSM-Firmenich by UK-based CVC Advisers.

Inbound M&A is structurally significant for Switzerland, with foreign bidders accounting for 57% of deals by volume (126 transactions) and 89% by value (€14.3bn) in H1 2026.

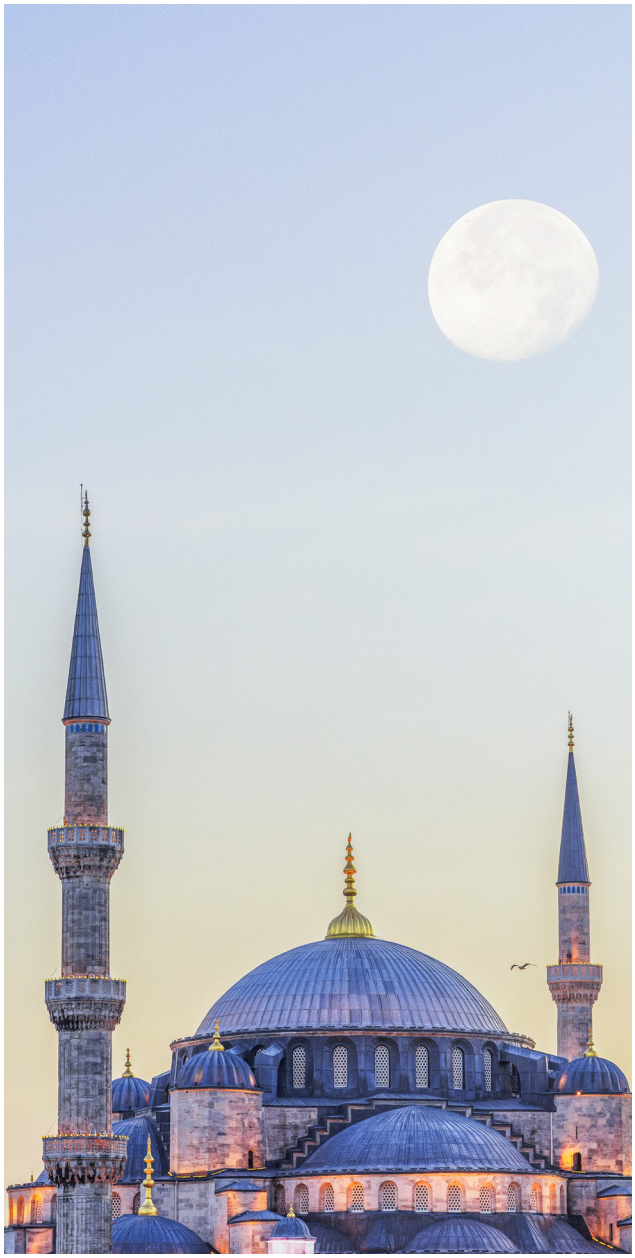
"For an economy of Switzerland's size, that is a remarkable level of international interest," says Antonio Rubino, Partner at Forvis Mazars in Switzerland. "It reflects what foreign acquirers are really buying: political and monetary stability, innovation capacity, highly qualified talent, and niche global market leaders – particularly in technology, healthcare and precision industries."

The strong franc raises the entry price for international acquirers, but Switzerland's wealth of resilient, high-quality assets ensures that this small, open economy remains a key feature in regional M&A.

Turkey

The tempo of Turkish dealmaking tailed off somewhat in H1 2026 with 153 M&A deals announced, down 5% compared to the 161 recorded during the same period last year, as elevated financing costs continued to weigh on leveraged transactions. In value terms, however, those 153 deals were worth almost €12.6bn, an increase of 74% versus H1 2025, and building on a rebound that began in Q4 2025. This leap in value was achieved in spite of Turkey not generating any top-10 transactions in the region.

"Despite there being fewer transactions, the higher aggregate deal value shows investors' ongoing interest in larger, strategically significant assets, while maintaining a disciplined and selective approach to acquisitions," says Ömercan Göncü, Head of Transaction Services at Forvis Mazars in Turkey.



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Around the Southern Europe region

Turkey's largest deal in H1, worth just under €1.4bn, marked the completion of a long spin-off process. In late 2022, Turkish commercial bank QNB announced its intention to separate Enpara Bank – a local company providing a branchless, digital-only banking platform – via a partial spin-off. The national banking supervisor granted an establishment permit for Enpara in Q3 2023, and QNB's board authorised applications for the spin-off transaction in Q1 2025. The spin-off was officially completed in Q2 2026.

The next biggest Turkish deal in H1 2026 saw industrial conglomerate Cengiz Holding take ownership of an 80% stake in the Çöpler gold mine and related properties in eastern Turkey from SSR Mining for almost €1.3bn. With its abundant mineral riches, Turkey is by far the biggest generator of mining-related transactions in Southern Europe. The Cengiz acquisition stands out as one of the most valuable mining deals on recent record – not only for Turkey, but for the entire region.

Turkey's third largest deal of H1 was the acquisition of a 20% stake in Astor Enerji, a leading manufacturer of transformers and switching products, by Enver Geçgel. The Geçgel family holds primary control of Astor Enerji.

Though Turkish assets attracted some interest from international acquirers in H1, including bidders from as far afield as Indonesia and Japan, the vast majority of M&A activity in Turkey was domestic.

Portugal

Portugal's M&A market is unique. In the highly cyclical world of dealmaking, it stands out as the only market in Southern Europe (and one of only a handful worldwide) in which M&A volumes have risen consistently or stayed the same in every calendar year – with no reversals – since 2016, according to Mergermarket figures.

Whether Portugal can continue this record-breaking run into a 10th consecutive year remains to be seen. Deal volume was notably down in H1 – 82 transactions were announced, representing a drop of 37% year-on-year. The total value of those deals was just €800m, a fraction of the €6.3bn recorded in H1 2025.

The bulk of that total came from one deal, with Sabseg Group – a specialised insurance brokerage and risk management services provider – receiving new investment from Spanish PE firm Miura Partners, while Schroders increased its stake from 2% to 20%. Overall, the deal values Sabseg at €600m. The second-largest deal – a leisure sector transaction – was the €140m acquisition of Caesar Park, a five-star hotel and golf resort located in Sintra, by Catterton Management and Cedar Capital Partners.

"While the Portuguese M&A market appears softer based on disclosed large transactions, we do not see the market as inactive," says Filipa Matias, Senior Manager of Transaction and Advisory Services at Forvis Mazars in Portugal. "Underlying lower-cap and mid-market activity remains present, although less visible in disclosed-value datasets, supported by selected PE-backed transactions, continued inbound investor appetite and consolidation dynamics in fragmented sectors. Activity remains particularly visible in sectors such as technology, business services, industrials and real estate-backed/hospitality assets."

Notably, each of the three largest transactions announced in Portugal in H1 2026 was led by an international bidder – involving dealmakers from the UK, Spain and the Netherlands – underlining the fundamental allure of Portugal's diverse M&A market for foreign acquirers.

Greece

Just 48 M&A deals were announced in Greece in H1 2026, roughly level with the 49 recorded in H1 2025. However, the value of those deals was just over €2.5bn, a drop of 43% compared to H1 2025. Despite this apparent softness, the Greek deal market did strengthen in the latter half of 2025 and carried that momentum forward into Q1 2026, as Mergermarket data show. Moreover, it is worth noting that the deal volumes recorded in H1 2026 and H1 2025 are the highest achieved in nearly 20 years.

Greece missed out on Southern Europe's top-10 deal table, but did generate the region's 14th largest M&A transaction of H1. In early January, Italy-headquartered pan-European bank UniCredit acquired a 20% stake in Athens-based Alpha Bank, bringing its total stake up to almost 30%. The deal consideration, according to Mergermarket, is just under €1.8bn.

"The UniCredit-Alpha Bank transaction sits alongside a broader run of recent large cross-border transactions – in energy, healthcare and entertainment, among others," says Christos Pitsounis, Partner at Forvis Mazars in Greece. "Cross-border isn't a side story in Greek M&A – alongside a genuinely active PE-backed mid-market, inbound M&A is the primary engine of deal volume."

Greece's second-biggest deal of H1 2026 – also involving a financial services asset – was the acquisition of a 100% stake in Evropi Holdings, a significant player in the insurance market, by Greece-based CrediaBank in a deal worth €257m. Meanwhile, US-based buyout firm Blackstone acquired a 10% stake in regional airport operator Fraport Regional Airports for €200m in the third-largest deal of H1.

Spain shines as Southern Europe's top mid-market performer

Mid-market M&A – defined in this study as M&A involving deals with an announced value of between €10m-€300m – followed a broadly positive and gently upward trend in Southern Europe between the start of 2023 and H1 2025. H2 2025 saw a spike in deal volume (376 transactions, the highest level since H1 2022) as well as a sharp rise in aggregate value (almost €30bn, far ahead of the half-year average of around €22.8bn recorded between H2 2022-H1 2025).

H1 2026 represented a return to the mean for mid-market M&A. Overall, 285 deals were announced, down slightly compared to the half-year average of 306 for the period H2 2022-H1 2025. Aggregate deal value for H1 2026 was €22.5bn – just below the average for the preceding period.

More specifically, these figures mark year-on-year declines of almost 10% in volume terms and 4% in value terms from H1 2025. In this respect, mid-market trends diverge from those of the broader and higher end of the M&A arena, where fewer but larger deals have been announced in recent quarters.

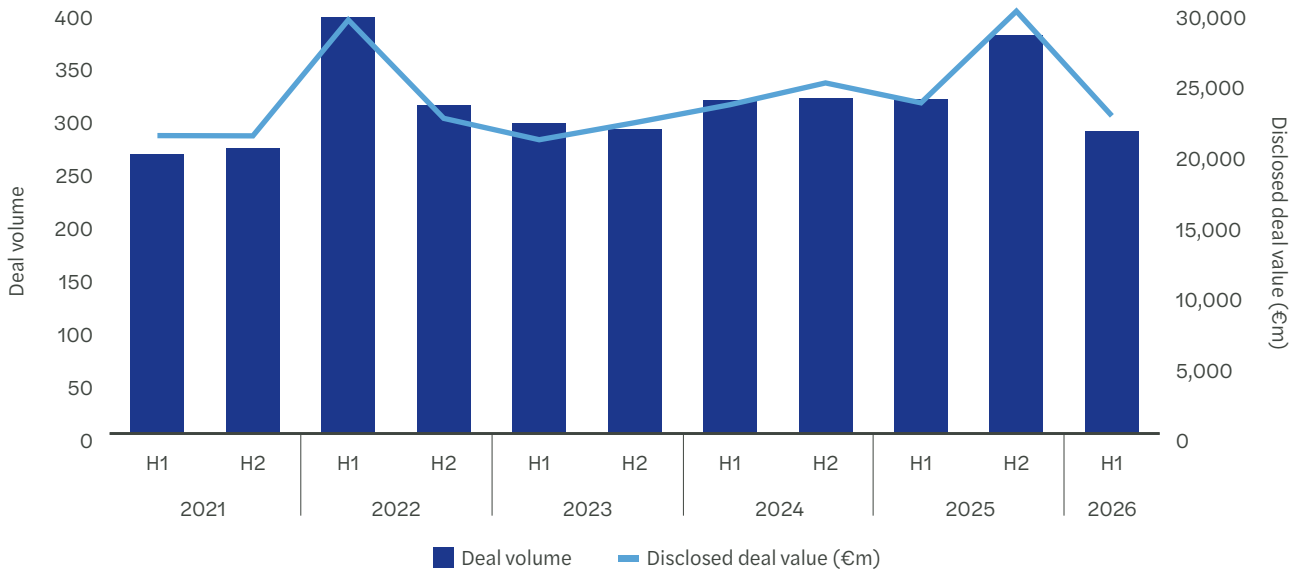
Spain stands out as the region's star performer in H1 2026 with 106 mid-market deals announced, worth a combined €10.2bn. Of the 10 largest mid-market deals announced in Southern Europe in H1 2026, eight involved Spanish targets, including assets in the leisure, consumer, real estate and financial services sectors.

Mid-market M&A is a bellwether of economic vitality and Spain's economy is growing three times faster than the euro area average.

"Spain's good economic performance creates confidence, offering a combination of economic strength and abundant mid-market investment opportunities," says Alberto Martínez of Forvis Mazars. "In this context, there is strong international investor interest."

Italy was the region's second busiest mid-market – a reversal of the ranking in the regional M&A arena as a whole, in which Italy takes the top spot. Italy generated a total of 87 mid-market deals in H1 2026 with a combined value of €6bn. Turkey, in a distant third place, generated 45 mid-market deals worth €3.2bn.

Total Southern Europe mid-market M&A deal activity



Top 10 mid-market M&A deals in Southern Europe in 2026

Announced date	Target company	Sector	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
08/01/2026	iPark Estacionamientos y Servicios de Movilidad SA (100% Stake)	Consumer	DIF Management BV	Netherlands	300
18/03/2026	Europastry SA (100% Stake)	Consumer	Ares Management LLC; MCH Private Equity Investments SGEIC SA	Spain	300
30/06/2026	Enjoy Wellness SL (100% Stake)	Leisure	DIF Management BV	Netherlands	300
14/05/2026	Disano Illuminazione SpA (100% Stake)	Industrials & chemicals	Ambienta SGR SpA; Patrizia Di Sano (Private Individual)	Italy	300
02/03/2026	BLESS Hotel Ibiza (75% Stake); TRS Ibiza Hotel (75% Stake); Grand Palladium Sicilia Resort & Spa (75% Stake)	Leisure	Grupo de Empresas Matutes	Spain	300
12/03/2026	Mining Assets (Çayeli mine) (100% Stake)	Energy, mining & utilities	Cengiz Insaat Sanayi ve Ticaret AS	Turkey	295
21/05/2026	Merlin Properties SOCIMI SA (Office building located 38 and 40 Alcalá Street, Madrid) (100% Stake)	Real estate	Ardian France SA; Lamar Development	United Arab Emirates	290
28/01/2026	Property Portfolio (Portfolio of retail parks in Spain) (100% Stake)	Real estate	Ares Management Corp	USA	279
27/03/2026	Bankinter Investment SGEIC SAU (27.5% Stake)	Financial services	Plenium Partners SL	Spain	275
24/02/2026	Culmia Desarrollos Inmobiliarios SLU (1,800 units affordable Housing Platform) (50% Stake)	Real estate	MEAG MUNICH ERGO AssetManagement GmbH	Germany	262

Turning to bidders, five of the 10 largest mid-market deals in Southern Europe featured acquirers from outside the region. These included bidders from Northern Europe, the US and the Middle East.

"Against the rest of Europe, Southern Europe is a value play," says Sylvain Rousmant of Forvis Mazars. "Regional mid-market multiples average around 5.3x EBITDA – attractive relative to Northern European and, especially, US comparables. That discount is exactly why US, UK and French capital is rotating in, and why intra-regional consolidators are active."

Focusing on specific sectors, TMT led the way in H1 with 50 mid-market deals announced in Southern Europe, followed by I&C with 44 transactions and real estate's 35. Overall, real estate generated the greatest aggregate value of mid-market M&A in Southern Europe in H1, with €3.9bn worth of deals announced, ahead of the more prolific TMT sector's €3bn total.

Surging value and lacklustre volume point to a bifurcated market

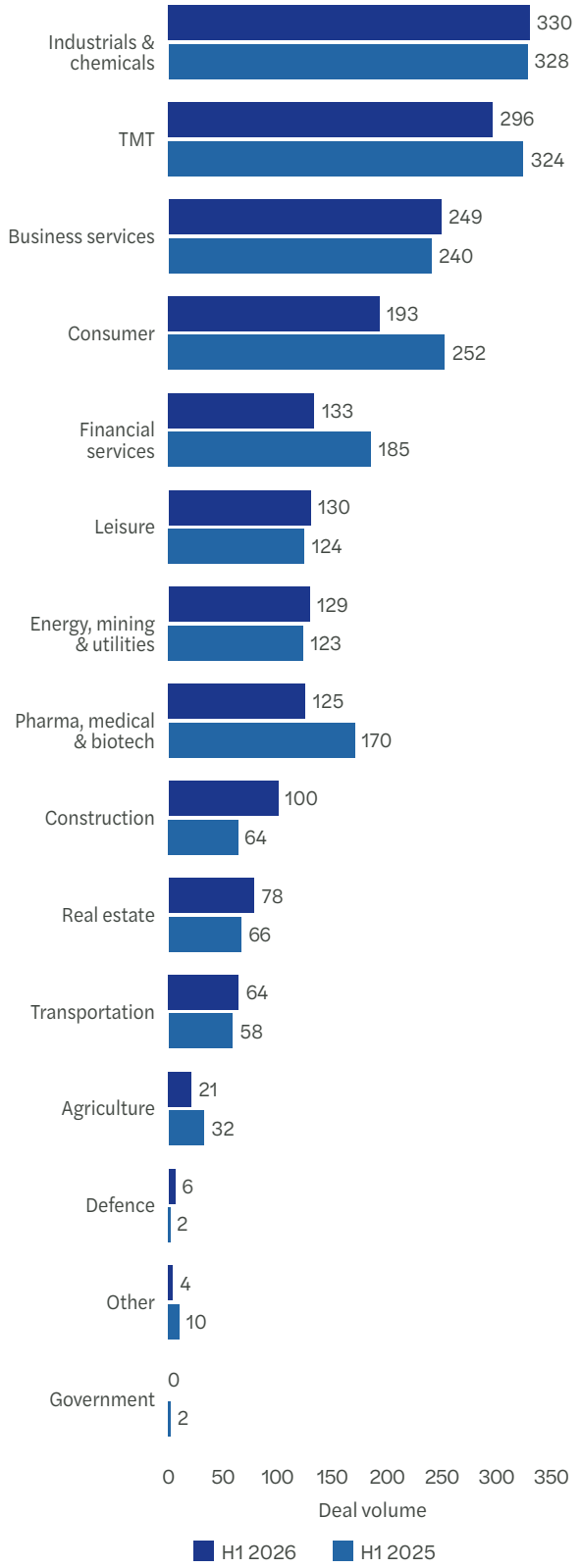
I&C was the busiest sector for M&A in Southern Europe in H1 2026 with 330 deals announced – a figure broadly level with the 328 announced in H1 2025. Despite this meagre growth in volume terms, the total value of I&C transactions shot up compared to the same period in 2025, more than doubling to €16.4bn – the fourth highest total across all sectors.

Ahead of I&C in value terms was PMB, which recorded deals worth €19.4bn, nearly tripling its aggregate value compared to H1 2025 (€7.5bn) despite suffering a noticeable shortfall in volume – the sector's 125 deals in H1 2026 represent a 26% decline year-on-year. TMT followed the same trend: although volume was down 9% year-on-year, aggregate value nonetheless soared, nearly doubling to €28.4bn.

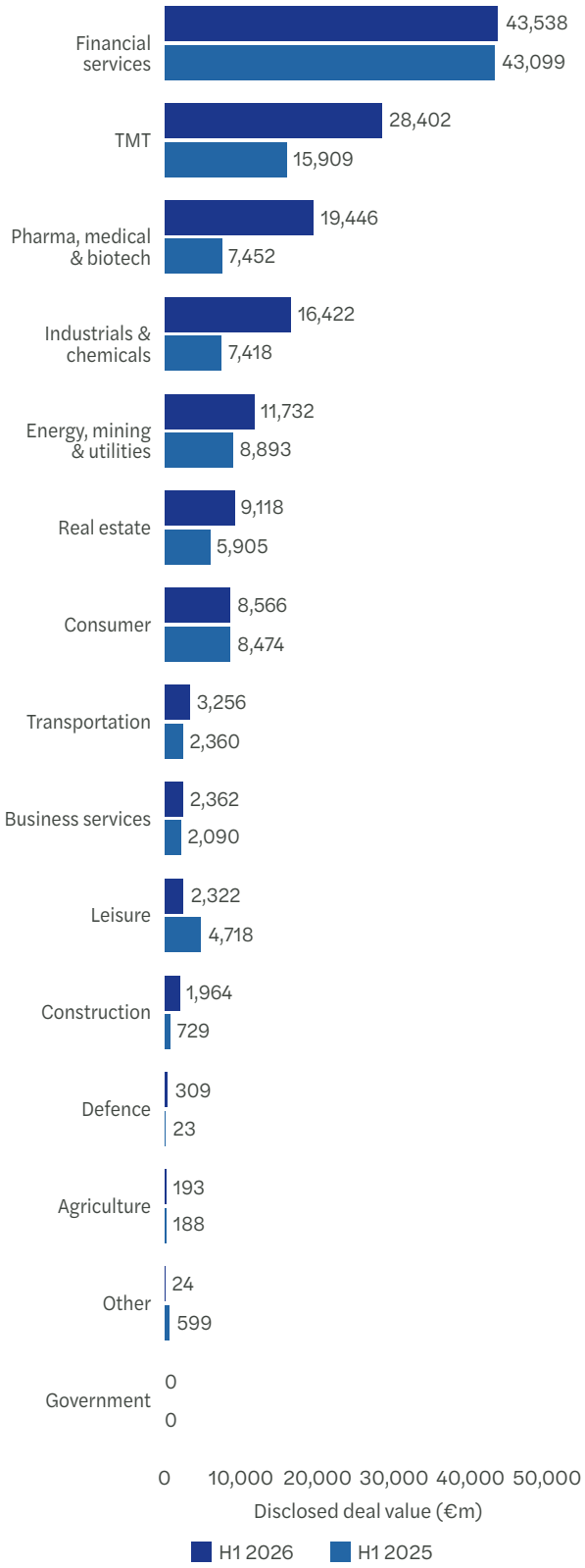
Financial services took the top spot in value terms, however, amassing deals worth €43.5bn – narrowly eclipsing the €43.1bn recorded in H1 2025. More than two-thirds of the value uplift came from a single strategic transaction: Intesa Sanpaolo's €30.6bn bid for MPS. Despite the slight year-on-year increase in value, volume fell significantly with just 133 deals announced – down by almost a third compared to H1 2025.

Though each industry bears unique characteristics, there are overarching themes which the most successful dealmakers will capitalise upon. As Alberto Martínez of Forvis Mazars puts it, "The sectors best positioned to continue M&A growth are those aligned with long-term structural trends: digitalisation, the energy transition, healthcare innovation and industrial transformation."

Southern Europe M&A volume by sector, H1 2025 vs. H1 2026



Southern Europe M&A disclosed value by sector (€m), H1 2025 vs. H1 2026



Sector watch
Technology, media and telecoms

Total deal value in Southern Europe's TMT sector soared to €28.4bn in H1 2026 – second only to financial services' gargantuan total and the highest H1 deal total for TMT since 2022. This was generated across 296 transactions, and was the second highest total across all sectors, trailing only I&C.

The total deal value marks a massive increase relative to H1 2025. Deal volume, however, was down slightly compared to the same period, indicating a bifurcated market with a smaller number of large deals buttressing an otherwise soft TMT M&A arena with little mid-cap activity.

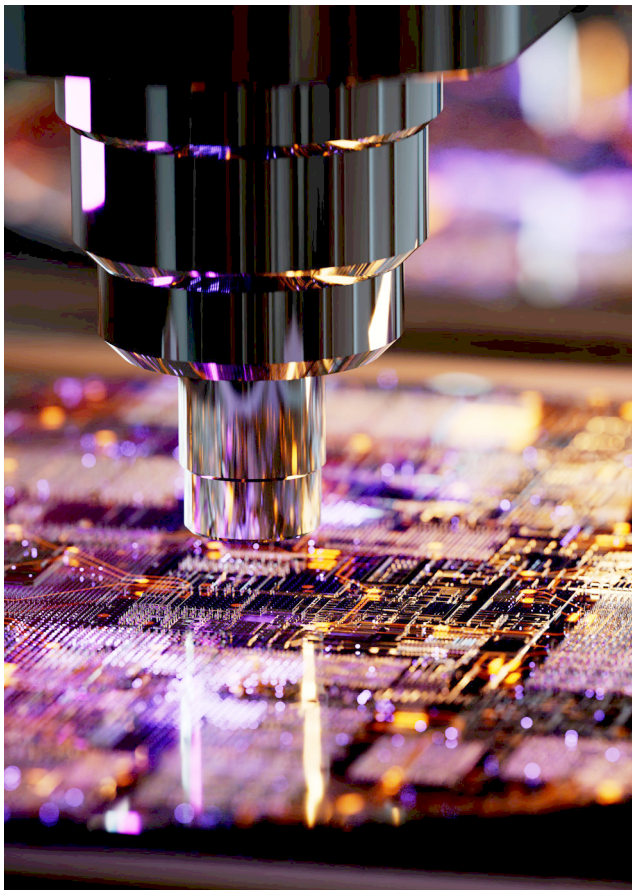
Underlining this point, Southern Europe's largest TMT deal – the previously mentioned Poste Italiane-TIM transaction – accounted for more than three-quarters of total TMT deal value in H1 2026. Only one other multi-billion-euro TMT deal was announced in the sector in H1. Italy was the region's largest TMT deal generator in H1 2026 with a total of 107 transactions announced.

The region's second-largest deal, worth just over €3bn, saw Axiom Intelligence – a UK-based SPAC – merge with Terra Quantum, a quantum computing company based in St. Gallen in Switzerland. Following the completion of the merger with Nasdaq-listed Axiom, Terra Quantum is expected to list on the index in the latter half of 2026.

Swiss assets were the targets of two other top-10 TMT deals, the largest of which was a €200m funding round by digital health specialist Oviva. Also in top-10 territory was a €194m fundraising by Swiss semiconductor design company, Kandou Bus. All three of Switzerland's largest TMT deals feature a strong AI component.

"Everything connected to AI and digital infrastructure is a growth engine – from software and data-centre-adjacent assets to companies whose business models are enhanced (or threatened) by AI," says Antonio Rubino of Forvis Mazars in Switzerland. "This is redirecting capital across all sectors."

While Switzerland trails both Italy and Spain in terms of TMT volume, tech is nevertheless a dominant feature of Switzerland's M&A market and accounts for more than a fifth of domestic dealmaking – the highest share for any country in Southern Europe.



"Everything connected to AI and digital infrastructure is a growth engine."

Antonio Rubino, Financial Advisory Partner at Forvis Mazars in Switzerland

Top 10 technology, media and telecoms M&A deals

Announced date	Target company	Target country	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
22/03/2026	TIM SpA (79.9% Stake)	Italy	Poste Italiane SpA	Italy	21,420
26/05/2026	Terra Quantum AG (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Axiom Intelligence Acquisition Corp 1	United Kingdom	3,009
19/02/2026	Loom Games AS (51% Stake)	Turkey	Scopely Inc	USA	433
06/03/2026	Lider Sistem Teknolojileri AS (100% Stake)	Turkey	Mia Teknoloji	Turkey	345
07/05/2026	Teltronic SAU (100% Stake)	Spain	Amper SA	Spain	225
22/01/2026	Oviva AG	Switzerland	Kinnevik AB; Sofina SA; EGS Beteiligungen AG; AP Moller Holding A/S; Stockholmsnorrskenet Management AB; Planet First Partners Gerant Sarl; Lunate Holding RSC Ltd	Sweden	200
23/03/2026	Kandou Bus SA	Switzerland	SoftBank Group Corp; Synopsys Inc; Cadence Design Systems Inc; Alchip Technologies Ltd; Maverick Silicon	USA	194
03/06/2026	Everyday Software SL	Spain	General Catalyst Group Management LLC; Atomico (UK) Partners LLP; Four Rivers Group LLC	USA	129
01/04/2026	Star7 SpA (100% Stake)	Italy	Argos Wityu SA	France	128
23/03/2026	GEDI Gruppo Editoriale SpA (100% Stake)	Italy	Antenna Group SA	Greece	110

Sector watch
Industrials and chemicals

Behind TMT in terms of total value but besting it for volume is I&C, which amassed 330 transactions in Southern Europe in H1 2026 worth a combined €16.4bn. Deal value is up 121% relative to H1 2025, when €7.4bn worth of I&C activity was recorded in the region.

H1 2026 saw an encouraging assortment of billion-euro-plus I&C deals – the best crop since 2022. The largest of these were Blackstone and EQT's €5.6bn acquisition of Spain-based Urbaser, and Swiss-headquartered Aptiv's €3.2bn spin-off of Versigent. Also in billion-euro territory were Apollo's €1.8bn purchase of Spanish automotive interiors specialist Faurecia, and the €1.1bn acquisition of a 20% stake in Turkey-based power specialist Astor Enerji.

Taken together, these four deals accounted for more than 70% of all I&C deal value in Southern Europe in H1. Though very large I&C deals are scarce in Southern Europe, those that were announced in H1 attest to the region's global appeal, attracting bidders from the US, the UK, Germany, Ireland and China.

Italy's vast industrial landscape is the powerhouse of I&C activity in the region, generating a total of 179 industrials deals in H1 2026. Indeed, almost a quarter of all Italian M&A in H1 involved I&C assets, the highest share for any country in Southern Europe.

Turkey's I&C landscape – although much smaller than that of Italy – is nonetheless a dominant feature of M&A in the country, accounting for more than a fifth of all deals in H1 2026. Despite inflationary pressures and relatively high borrowing costs – Turkey and Switzerland are the only Southern European countries that lie outside the euro area – the Turkish mid-market remains vibrant.

"Industrial manufacturing remains a key segment, supported by Turkey's strong export base, established supply chains and strategic location within European and regional manufacturing networks," says Ömercan Göncü of Forvis Mazars. "Companies offering differentiated products, international customer bases and resilient margins continue to attract both strategic and financial investors."

"Companies offering differentiated products, international customer bases and resilient margins continue to attract both strategic and financial investors."

Ömercan Göncü, Partner at Forvis Mazars in Turkey

Top 10 Industrials and chemicals M&A deals

Announced date	Target company	Target country	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
12/02/2026	Urbaser SAU (100% Stake)	Spain	Blackstone Inc; EQT AB; Blackstone Infrastructure Advisors LLC	USA	5,559
01/04/2026	Versigent plc (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Existing Shareholders	USA	3,205
27/04/2026	Faurecia Interior Systems Salc Espana SL (100% Stake)	Spain	Apollo Global Management Inc	USA	1,820
11/06/2026	Astor Enerji AS (20% Stake)	Turkey	Enver Gecgel (Private Individual)	Turkey	1,120
29/06/2026	CleverTech SpA (100% Stake)	Italy	CVC Advisers Ltd	United Kingdom	800
13/04/2026	Trasteel Holding SA (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Sizzle Acquisition Corp II	USA	683
16/01/2026	ATP Adhesive Systems AG (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Henkel AG & Co KGaA	Germany	328
16/05/2026	Istikbal AS (100% Stake)	Turkey	Pasali Group	Turkey	312
14/05/2026	Disano Illuminazione SpA (100% Stake)	Italy	Ambienta SGR SpA; Patrizia Di Sano (Private Individual)	Italy	300
23/01/2026	ACSM Shipping Co SLU (100% Stake)	Spain	Prysmian SpA	Italy	183

Sector watch

Pharma, medical and biotech

PMB was just the sixth busiest sector for M&A in Southern Europe in H1, with 125 transactions announced, down 26% compared to H1 2025. That total trails market leaders TMT and I&C, as well as the consumer, business services and financial services sectors.

Despite a markedly lower deal score, PMB mirrored I&C's strong performance in terms of value, with output nearly tripling compared to H1 2025. Overall, the sector's 125 transactions were worth €19.4bn, behind only TMT and financial services.

The biggest PMB deal announced so far this year in Southern Europe is the previously mentioned €12.6bn acquisition of Italian pharma company Recordati by a CVC-led consortium. Besides this, two other major PMB transactions were announced in Southern Europe in H1. The largest of these was Switzerland-based Lonza Group's €1.88bn divestment of its capsules and health ingredients business to US-based Lone Star, though Lonza will retain a 40% equity position in the business.

Trailing by just a small margin, with a deal value of €1.86bn, was the divestment by DSM-Firmenich, a Swiss chemical and biotech company, of its animal nutrition and health business. DSM will retain a 20% equity stake in the divested business, in partnership with acquirer CVC, which makes another appearance in the PMB top-10.

Although Switzerland is not the largest M&A market by volume as far as PMB is concerned – that accolade typically goes to Italy, albeit by a slim margin – it generates consistently high value. Indeed, the aggregate value of Swiss PMB deals over the past five years is almost three times that of Italy on a broadly similar number of deals. Switzerland maintained its stellar performance in H1, with six of the region's 10 largest pharma deals.

"By volume, TMT is consistently the most active sector. But by value, pharmaceuticals and life sciences dominates, reflecting the weight of Switzerland's global champions and their continued appetite for pipeline-driven acquisitions," says Antonio Rubino of Forvis Mazars. Beyond big pharma, mid-market PMB is also thriving in Switzerland: "Medtech, healthcare services and biotech continue to attract both strategic and financial buyers," observes Rubino.

"By value, pharmaceuticals and life sciences dominates, reflecting the weight of Switzerland's global champions and their continued appetite for pipeline-driven acquisitions."

Antonio Rubino, Partner at Forvis Mazars in Switzerland

Top 10 pharma, medical and biotech M&A deals

Announced date	Target company	Target country	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
26/03/2026	Recordati Industria Chimica & Farmaceutica SpA (100% Stake)	Italy	CVC Advisers Ltd; Groupe Bruxelles Lambert SA; Abu Dhabi Investment Authority Ltd; Canada Pension Plan Investment Board; Public Sector Pension Investment Board; StepStone Group LP; Capsol SpA; AlpInvest Partners BV; MGG Capital SAM; Andrea Recordati (Private Individual); Respighi BidCo SpA	United Kingdom	12,624
06/03/2026	Lonza Group AG (Capsules & Health Ingredients business) (60% Stake)	Switzerland	Lone Star Global Acquisitions Ltd	USA	1,880
09/02/2026	DSM-Firmenich AG (Animal Nutrition & Health business) (80% Stake)	Switzerland	CVC Advisers Ltd	United Kingdom	1,860
26/05/2026	LimmaTech Biologics AG (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Eli Lilly & Co	USA	671
16/02/2026	Lifenet SpA (80% Stake)	Italy	Societa Reale Mutua di Assicurazioni	Italy	600
09/01/2026	MediLink Therapeutics Suzhou Co Ltd (YL201) (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Roche Holding AG	Switzerland	490
01/04/2026	Takeda Pharmaceuticals International AG (PDE10A Inhibitor Balipodect) (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Axsome Therapeutics Inc	USA	233
12/02/2026	Health in Code SL (100% Stake)	Spain	Alantra Partners SA; Merieux Equity Partners SAS	Spain	155
04/05/2026	Windward Bio AG	Switzerland	Janus Henderson Group Ltd; Novo Holdings AS; SR One Capital Management LP; OrbiMed Advisors LLC; RA Capital Management LP; Omega Fund Management LLC; Pivotal bioVenture Partners LLC; Quan Capital; Sanofi Ventures; Blue Owl Capital Inc; Qiming Venture Partners; RTW Investments LP	USA	141
18/02/2026	Centro Medico Salus Baleares SL (100% Stake)	Spain	Vivalto Sante SA; Ribera Salud SA	France	120

Sector watch
Financial services

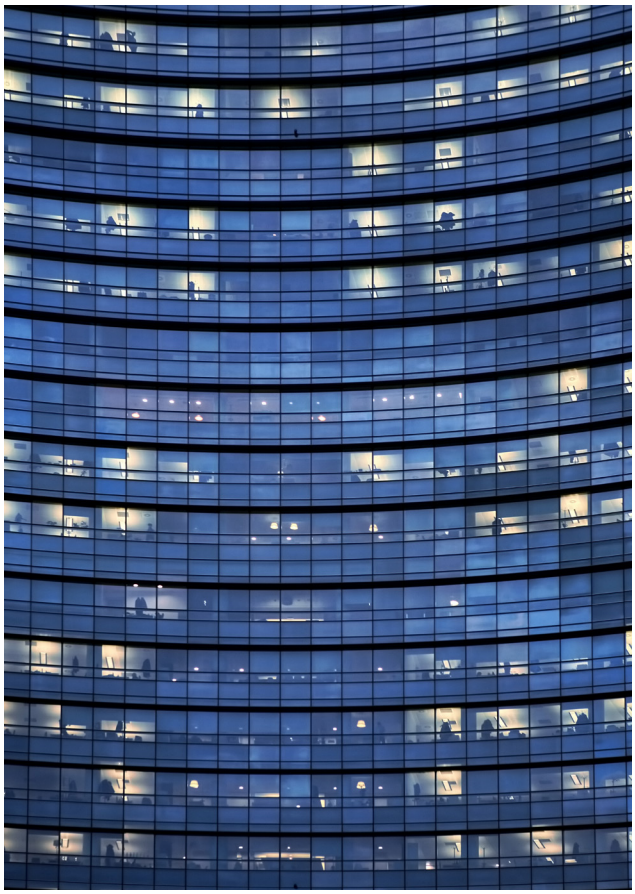
Financial services was by far the largest sector in total M&A value terms in Southern Europe, with deals worth €43.5bn recorded in H1 2026. This total accounts for almost a third of activity across all sectors by value – despite deal volume declining by 28% year-on-year, with 133 deals announced.

The sector's remarkable performance in value terms was buttressed by a series of transactions centred on Italian bank MPS. The most recent of these, mentioned earlier in this report, saw Intesa Sanpaolo and Unipol bid to acquire MPS and its 635 bank branches in two deals worth a combined €33bn. This follows an earlier transaction, in March 2026, in which MPS completed its merger with Mediobanca, acquiring the remaining 14% of the latter that it did not already purchase in 2025 for just over €1.8bn.

Under the proposal, Intesa would take MPS's recently acquired Mediobanca unit and, relatedly, its 13% stake in insurer Generali. Meanwhile BPER – of which Unipol is the main shareholder – would take MPS's banking activities. However, the fight for MPS may not be over. Before Intesa Sanpaolo's bid for MPS, Banco BPM had proposed to MPS's board a €50bn merger to 'create a new national champion' in Italy. BPM has not disclosed the financial terms of its proposal.

These deals shine a light on the wave of consolidation sweeping Europe's fragmented financial services sector as institutions – both banks and insurers – race to achieve scale and tackle rising compliance costs. Altogether, seven of the top-10 deals of H1 2026 involved consolidation in one form or another.

In addition to the deals described above were Italy-based Unicredit's acquisition of a 20% stake in Greece-based Alpha Bank for just under €1.8bn – representing an equity consolidation on the part of Unicredit – and the €750m acquisition of 100% of Italy's Banca Progetto by rescue vehicle Fondo Interbancario di Tutela dei Depositi.



Top 10 financial services M&A deals

Announced date	Target company	Target country	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
08/06/2026	Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA (99.93% Stake)	Italy	Intesa Sanpaolo SpA	Italy	30,595
08/06/2026	Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA (635 branches & related assets and liabilities) (100% Stake)	Italy	Unipol Assicurazioni SpA	Italy	3,000
10/03/2026	Mediobanca Banca di Credito Finanziario SpA (12.94% Stake)	Italy	Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA	Italy	1,802
09/01/2026	Alpha Bank SA (20.03% Stake)	Greece	Unicredit SpA	Italy	1,781
07/04/2026	Enpara Bank AS (100% Stake)	Turkey	Existing Shareholders	Turkey	1,378
17/03/2026	Tera Yatirim Menkul Degerler AS (19.4% Stake)	Turkey	Emre Tezmen (Private Individual)	Turkey	982
28/01/2026	Banca Progetto SpA – In Amministrazione Straordinaria (100% Stake)	Italy	Fondo Interbancario Di Tutela DEI Depositi	Italy	750
03/02/2026	Sabseg Group SL (100% Stake)	Portugal	Schroders plc; Existing Management; Miura Partners SGEIC SA	Spain	600
07/05/2026	Multi Investment Holding SA	Switzerland	Undisclosed Acquirer	Switzerland	524
27/03/2026	Bankinter Investment SGEIC SAU (27.5% Stake)	Spain	Plenium Partners SL	Spain	275

Sector watch
Consumer

The consumer sector was the fourth most active for M&A in Southern Europe in H1 with 193 deal announcements, down 23% year-on-year. Despite this dip in volume, aggregate deal value in the sector held steady. In fact, it rose marginally from €8.47bn in H1 2025 to €8.57bn in H1 2026, the seventh-highest total across all sectors.

Italy stands out as the region's largest generator of consumer M&A deals in H1 2026 with a total of 81 announcements, including the top two. The biggest of these was the previously mentioned €3bn acquisition of Italy-based food ingredients producer IRCA by UK-based buyout firm CVC.

Two other major consumer deals were announced in H1, both worth an estimated €1bn, according to Mergermarket reporting, and both involving French bidders. The largest of these saw luxury conglomerate LVMH raise its stake in Italian brand Loro Piana from 85% to 94% in a deal worth €1bn. "Luxury and premium consumer brands remain a structural strength for Italy," notes Maurizio Galati of Forvis Mazars.

Consumer – more than any other sector – is a barometer of shifting public tastes. Nowhere is this clearer than within the baked goods subsector. Indeed, three of H1's top-10 consumer deals involved baked goods assets in one form or another, including the CVC-IRCA transaction. Also of note was the €1bn acquisition by French bakery group Le Duff of Spanish pre-baked bread and pâtisserie company Panamar in the region's third's largest transaction. Meanwhile, Ares Management led a €300m continuation fund for Spain-based frozen bread and bakery business Europastry in the seventh-largest consumer deal of H1 2026.

> "Luxury and premium consumer brands remain a structural strength for Italy."
>
> **Maurizio Galati,** Director at Forvis Mazars in Italy

Turkish consumer assets proved to be extraordinarily attractive in H1 2026. While Turkey generated just 16 consumer deals during this period, three of these appear in the consumer sector top-10, with two attracting bidders from as far away as Indonesia and Japan.

The largest of these deals was the acquisition of an 89.29% stake in supermarket chain CarrefourSA Carrefour Sabanci Ticaret Merkezi by local retailer A101 Yeni Magazacilik for €693m. Staying in top-10 territory, H1 2026 also saw the €519m acquisition of Turkish personal hygiene firm Sanipak Saglik Yasam Urunleri in a deal led by Indonesia-based Asia Pulp & Paper. Also of note was the purchase of a 60% stake in Turkey-based white goods maker Arcelik Hitachi Home Appliances by Japan-based Hitachi for €222m.

Top 10 consumer M&A deals

Announced date	Target company	Target country	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
29/06/2026	IRCA SpA (100% Stake)	Italy	CVC Advisers Ltd	United Kingdom	3,000
27/01/2026	Loro Piana SpA (9% Stake)	Italy	LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE	France	1,000
23/03/2026	Panamar Bakery Group SL (100% Stake)	Spain	Holding Le Duff; Bridor SAS	France	1,000
17/04/2026	CarrefourSA Carrefour Sabanci Ticaret Merkezi AS (89.29% Stake)	Turkey	A101 Yeni Magazacilik AS	Turkey	693
23/03/2026	Sanipak Saglik Yasam Urunleri AS (100% Stake)	Turkey	Asia Pulp & Paper Ltd; Arch Peninsula Sdn Bhd	Indonesia	519
08/01/2026	iPark Estacionamientos y Servicios de Movilidad SA (100% Stake)	Spain	DIF Management BV	Netherlands	300
18/03/2026	Europastry SA (100% Stake)	Spain	Ares Management LLC; MCH Private Equity Investments SGEIC SA	Spain	300
27/05/2026	Artsana SpA (100% Stake)	Italy	InvestIndustrial SA; Catelli Srl	United Kingdom	258
21/04/2026	Arcelik Hitachi Home Appliances BV (60% Stake)	Turkey	Hitachi Ltd; Hitachi Global Life Solutions Inc	Japan	222
19/03/2026	AK Group AG (100% Stake)	Switzerland	Mobilezone AG; Mobilezone Holding AG	Switzerland	198

Global buyout firms head south in search of opportunities

Southern Europe recorded 338 PE deals (comprising buyouts as well as exits) in H1 2026, down 15% compared to H1 2025. In value terms, PE generated €48bn worth of deal activity in H1. That represents a year-on-year increase of 23%, underlining the impact of a handful of large PE deals. Indeed, the top-10 PE deals of H1 2026 represent more than two-thirds of aggregate PE value, with UK and North American bidders accounting for all but one of the 10 largest transactions.

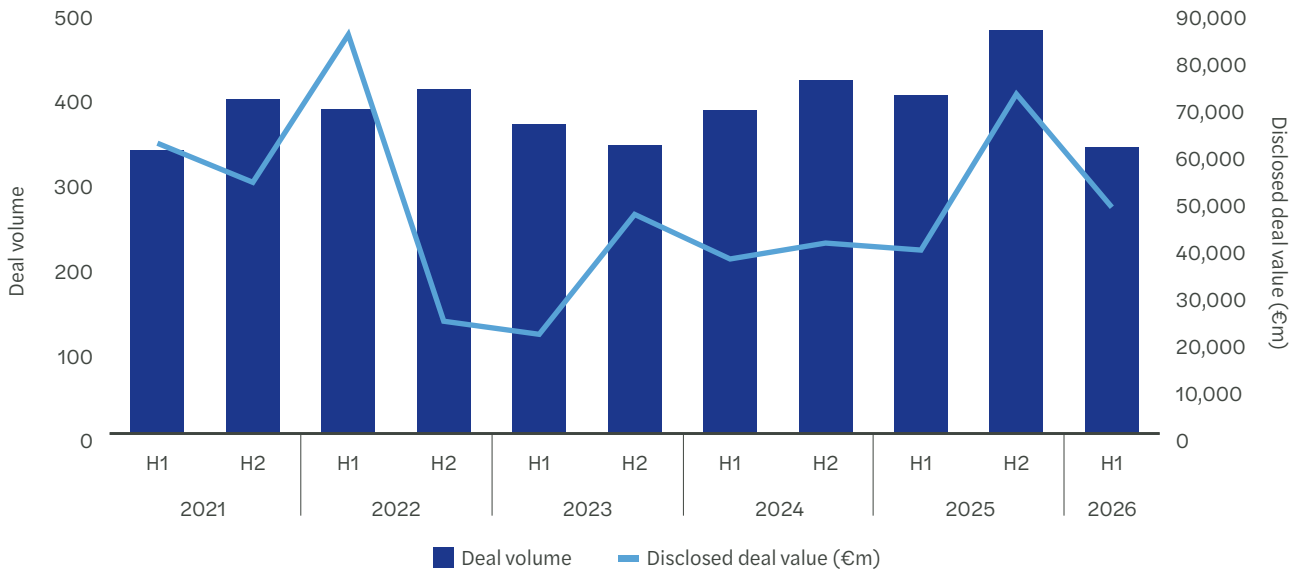
Competitive valuations are one of the big attractions for inbound acquirers, with Southern Europe typically offering lower entry multiples relative to the US and Northern Europe.

But this is only part of the story, says Maurizio Galati of Forvis Mazars: "What's really drawing UK and US sponsors south is the combination of under-penetration and untapped potential. Many Southern European markets – Italy and Spain especially – still have relatively low PE penetration compared to their economic size, meaning sponsors can genuinely be the first institutional capital into a business rather than competing in an auction."

Several structural factors add to the attraction of Southern Europe. These include fragmented sectors that are ripe for buy-and-build, plus a continuing wave of family-owned business successions. To round it off, the region offers an abundance of targets that are a natural draw for global capital – including energy transition, infrastructure, hospitality and tourism-linked assets.

"Despite lower PE deal volumes, global PE investors remain attracted to Southern Europe because it combines quality mid-market companies, improving financing conditions and clear opportunities to build scale," explains Filipa Matias of Forvis Mazars. "Domestic PE is also becoming more mature, although activity remains selective: local funds remain active in the lower and mid-market."

Total Southern Europe private equity deal activity



Top 10 private equity M&A deals in Southern Europe in 2026

Announced date	Target company	Sector	Bidder company	Bidder country	Disclosed deal value (€m)
26/03/2026	Recordati Industria Chimica & Farmaceutica SpA (100% Stake)	Pharma, Medical & Biotech	CVC Advisers Ltd; Groupe Bruxelles Lambert SA; Abu Dhabi Investment Authority Ltd; Canada Pension Plan Investment Board; Public Sector Pension Investment Board; StepStone Group LP; Capsol SpA; AlpInvest Partners BV; MGG Capital SAM; Andrea Recordati (Private Individual); Respighi BidCo SpA	United Kingdom	12,624
12/02/2026	Urbaser SAU (100% Stake)	Industrials & Chemicals	Blackstone Inc; EQT AB; Blackstone Infrastructure Advisors LLC	USA	5,559
29/06/2026	IRCA SpA (100% Stake)	Consumer	CVC Advisers Ltd	United Kingdom	3,000
28/01/2026	Port Terminals (10 CMA CGM-operated ports) (25% Stake)	Transportation	Stonepeak Partners LP	USA	2,005
06/03/2026	Lonza Group AG (Capsules & Health Ingredients business) (60% Stake)	Pharma, Medical & Biotech	Lone Star Global Acquisitions Ltd	USA	1,880
09/02/2026	DSM-Firmenich AG (Animal Nutrition & Health business) (80% Stake)	Pharma, Medical & Biotech	CVC Advisers Ltd	United Kingdom	1,860
27/04/2026	Faurecia Interior Systems Salc Espana SL (100% Stake)	Industrials & Chemicals	Apollo Global Management Inc	USA	1,820
19/03/2026	ENI Plenitude SpA Societa Benefit (10.27% Stake)	Energy, Mining & Utilities	Ares Management Corp; Energy Infrastructure Partners AG	USA	1,500
22/05/2026	Exolum Corp SA (25% Stake)	Energy, Mining & Utilities	Iconiq Capital LLC; Stoneshield Investments SL	Spain	1,250
31/03/2026	Property Portfolio (Fidere residential portfolio) (100% Stake)	Real Estate	Brookfield Asset Management Ltd	Canada	1,200

Biggest PE deals

With an aggregate value of €32.7bn, H1 2026's top-10 was among the most impressive of recent years, easily eclipsing the €19.5bn achieved in H1 2025 – and underlining the trend towards increasingly valuable deals.

As noted earlier, the biggest deals involving a PE player (buy-side or sell-side) were the €12.6bn acquisition by a CVC-led consortium of Italian pharma company Recordati; the €5.6bn bid by Blackstone and EQT for Spain-based Urbaser; and CVC's €3bn acquisition of Italy-based IRCA. Meanwhile, Stonepeak's €2bn port assets deal stands out as a relative rarity – high-value transportation assets seldom appear in the PE top-10.

In addition to the Lonza Group, DSM-Firmenich, and Faurecia deals, also discussed previously, H1 2026 witnessed a pair of major energy transactions. The largest of these was the €1.5bn acquisition by US-based alternative asset manager Ares of an additional 10.27% stake in renewable energy company Plenitude from Italian energy distributor Eni. The next largest was the sale of a 25% stake in Spanish energy logistics company Exolum to Dublin-based Stoneshield Investments (which will acquire 15% of Exolum) and San Francisco-based Iconiq Capital (the remaining 10%), for a total deal value of €1.25bn.

Also of note – and another relative rarity – was Canadian asset manager Brookfield's €1.2bn acquisition of Blackstone's Fidere residential property portfolio in Spain. As with transportation, real estate deals seldom make it into the PE top-10 and the Brookfield acquisition is the first billion-euro plus real estate transaction of recent years involving a PE-owned asset.

PE-favoured sectors

Riding a wave of large life sciences deals – which include three of the six largest PE transactions across all sectors – the PMB industry generated the highest aggregate PE deal value in H1 2026, with transactions totalling €17.7bn. This is nearly four times the total value logged in H1 2025 (€4.7bn) and by far the highest H1 total for any year in the post-pandemic period.

The next largest sector in PE value terms so far in 2026 is I&C, with €9.3bn worth of buyouts and exits in H1, more than doubling the output of H1 2025 (€4.3bn). Again, this is one of the highest aggregate H1 deal totals for the sector in recent years.

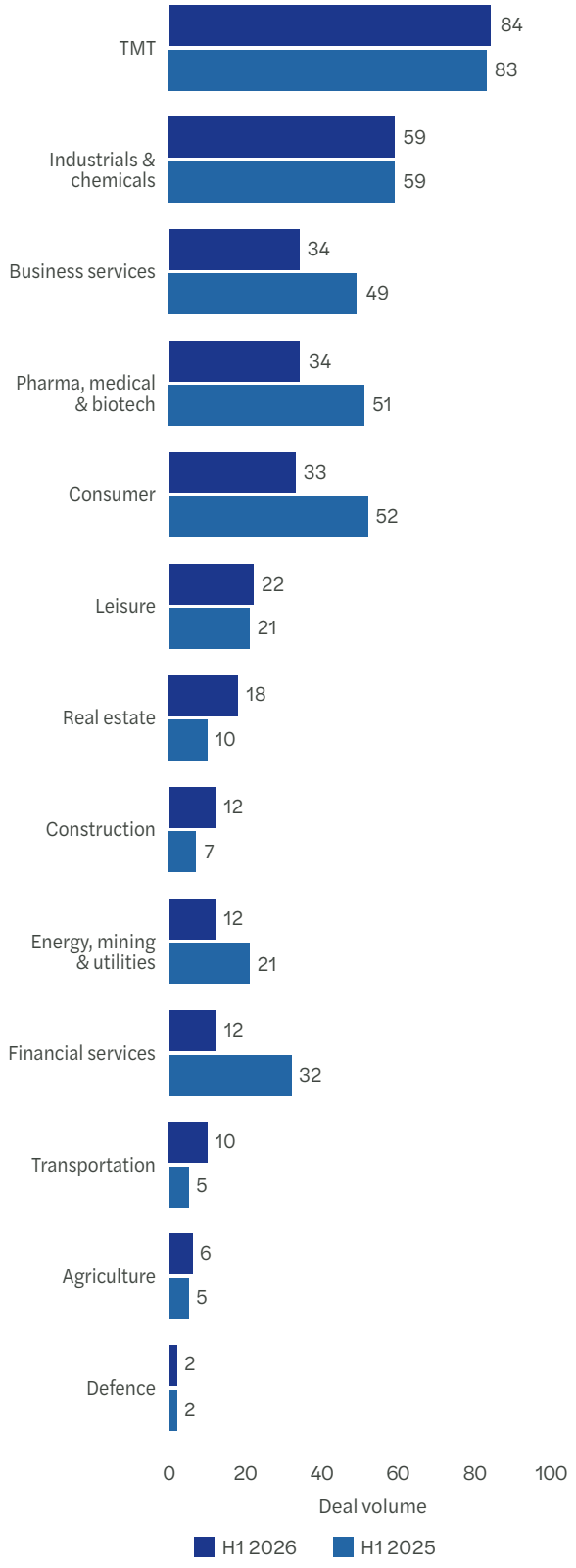
Two other large sectors enjoyed conspicuous increases in aggregate value relative to H1 2025. These are transportation (€2.2bn worth of PE deals in H1, more than four times the total logged in H1 2025, owing predominantly to the previously mentioned Stonepeak transaction) and real estate (€4bn). The latter saw an eightfold increase in aggregate value in H1, thanks in large part to residential property portfolio acquisitions in the region.

In volume terms, all major sectors either recorded a decline in PE dealmaking or remained broadly flat relative to H1 2025. The largest contributor remains TMT, with 84 deals announced – up by one from the 83 seen during the same period last year. This was followed closely by I&C with 59, unchanged versus 2025. Meanwhile, PE deal volumes in the business services, PMB and consumer sectors all declined by around a third year-on-year.

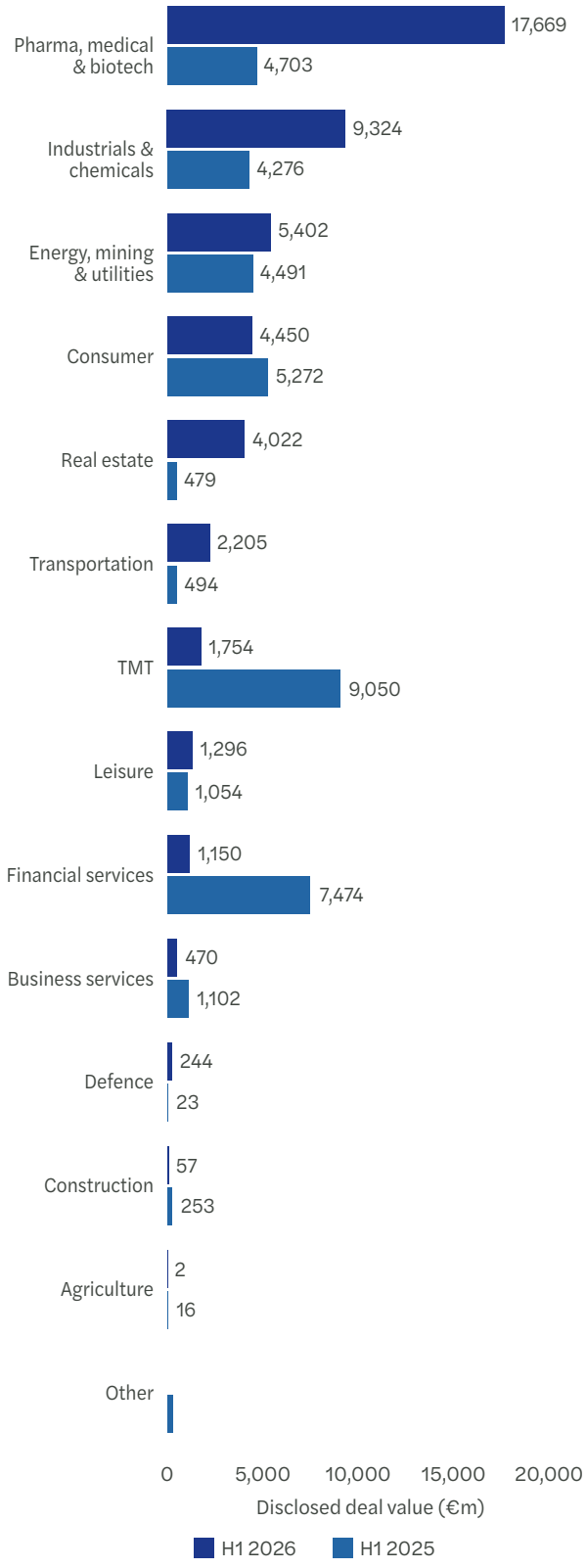
> "Despite lower PE deal volumes, global PE investors remain attracted to Southern Europe because it combines quality mid-market companies, improving financing conditions and clear opportunities to build scale."

Filipa Matias, Senior Manager at Forvis Mazars in Portugal

Southern Europe private equity M&A volume by sector, H1 2025 vs. H1 2026



Southern Europe private equity M&A disclosed value by sector (€m), H1 2025 vs. H1 2026



Strong fundamentals point to a broadly positive outlook for M&A

Despite a somewhat modest H1 performance, all the elements are in place for an M&A uptick in Southern Europe in the latter part of 2026. Financing conditions remain broadly favourable, the pipeline of succession-driven sales remains strong, and corporates are actively reshaping their portfolios. Meanwhile, pressure for PE exits continues to rise.

As noted earlier, geopolitical tensions could have the effect of boosting rather than supressing M&A – particularly intra-regional dealmaking – as businesses race to shore up supply chains in the face of continuing energy price pressures and US tariff uncertainty. And from a specifically PE perspective, ample stockpiles of dry powder should continue to fuel dealmaking.

Conversely, further monetary tightening by the European Central Bank risks widening valuation gaps between buyers and sellers, potentially slowing deal flow and putting the brakes on leveraged transactions.

"The most-closely-watched factor right now is energy prices," says Christos Pitsounis of Forvis Mazars. "If geopolitical conditions prevent prices from easing, the resulting inflation could prompt further ECB tightening. Financing costs and valuations would come under pressure across the board. This is the variable most likely to determine whether deal flow broadens or stays concentrated."

Meanwhile, trade tariffs could weigh on export-linked valuations, and increased scrutiny of local hazards could also shift pricing expectations. Bidders may increasingly focus on physical risk metrics in the aftermath of recent wildfires in Europe.

Looking ahead to what the future might have in store in terms of sector activity, Mergermarket's heat chart – which tracks 'companies for sale' stories related to assets in Southern Europe – suggests that the consumer sector will be especially busy in the near to medium term, amassing a total of 126 for-sale stories.

Close behind consumer is I&C, which garners 114 stories. For both of these sectors, the greatest share of activity is expected to appear in Italy, which contributes 62 consumer stories and 53 I&C stories. Italy, overall, contributes 237 for-sale stories, 39% of the total across all countries covered in this study.

Spain, in second place, generates 177 for-sale stories, accounting for 29% of the regional total. These reveal a healthy spread of activity across numerous key sectors – notably business services, TMT, I&C and consumer – each generating between 27 and 32 stories.

As these figures indicate, Southern Europe offers dealmakers a wealth of opportunities across numerous strategically-significant sectors. This abundance of prospects – at attractive valuations that are drawing increasing international investor interest – makes Southern Europe one of the most dynamic regions for M&A in EMEA.

Heat chart: ‘Company for sale’ stories in Southern Europe

	Consumer	Industrials & Chemicals	TMT	Business Services	Energy, Mining & Utilities	Pharma, Medical & Biotech	Leisure	Financial Services	Construction	Transportation	Real Estate	Agriculture	Defence	**Grand total**
Greece	4	1	1		1			1			1			**9**
Italy	62	53	25	23	13	9	17	14	8	9	1	3		**237**
Portugal	2	6	4	3	3	1	4	4	3	1	1	1		**33**
Spain	32	27	29	24	10	14	12	8	8	6	5	2		**177**
Switzerland	8	8	8	7	2	12	2	1	1	2			1	**52**
Turkey	18	19	8	4	13	5	6	12	4	4	5	1	1	**100**
Grand total	**126**	**114**	**75**	**61**	**42**	**41**	**41**	**40**	**24**	**22**	**13**	**7**	**2**	**608**

Based on Mergermarket data for ‘company for sale’ stories published between 01/01/2026 and 30/06/2026.

“The most-closely-watched factor right now is energy prices.”

Christos Pitsounis, Partner, Forvis Mazars in Greece

Forvis Mazars' global coverage

As at 1 January 2026

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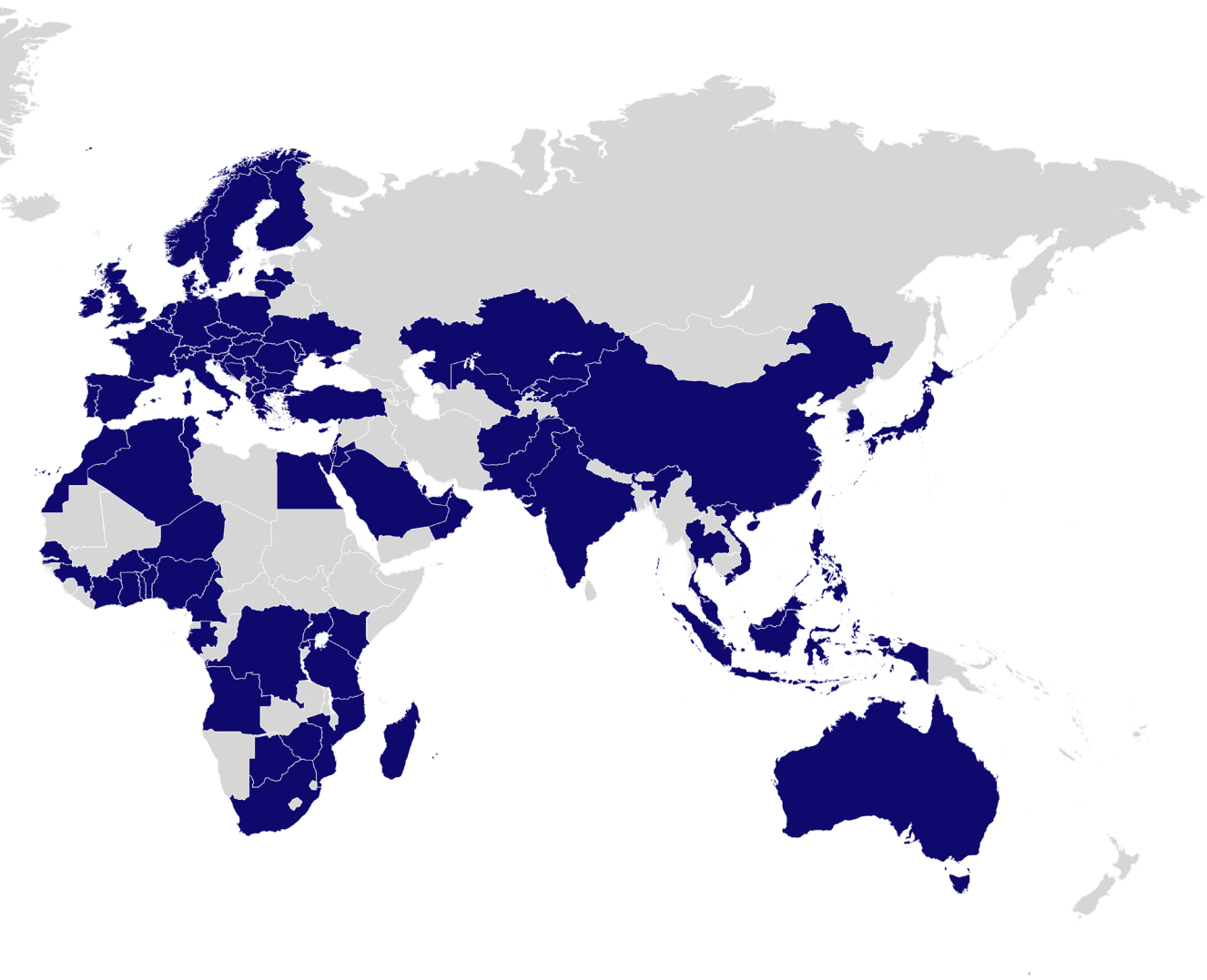

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