(English version)

Question for written answer E-000169/26
to the Commission
Dimitris Tsiodras (PPE)
(15 January 2026)

Subject: European Commission actions to support small and medium-sized enterprises through the European Competitiveness Fund

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are central to Europe's growth, but their growth potential continues to be limited due to barriers in accessing finance.

Despite some improvement, SMEs find it more difficult than large companies to secure funding for innovation projects, and there are significant disparities in SMEs' access to finance across EU Member States.

Strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs through targeted financial instruments under the European Competitiveness Fund, is crucial to enhance their economic sustainability and growth.

In light of the above, can the Commission say:

1. What measures is it pushing for SMEs to benefit from the European Competitiveness Fund?

2. Is it considering setting a specific target for SMEs or creating dedicated programmes and funding calls specifically for SMEs with a view to improving their access to such programmes and addressing barriers to their participation in them?

3. How will it ensure that funding is geographically balanced so that funding is given to projects across the whole EU?

Submitted: 15.1.2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné on behalf of the European Commission
(16 March 2026)

The European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) ([1]) will mobilise an unprecedented budget for boosting European competitiveness, including the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Thanks to the consolidation of several programmes into a single fund, the ECF simplifies the funding landscape for SMEs, provides for a single rulebook and offers a single access point to EU funding: the Single Gateway.

Moreover, the ECF InvestEU Instrument, building on the success of the InvestEU Programme ([2]), will support access to finance for SMEs and help de-risk their investments.

Evidence shows that direct financial support to SMEs is not enough on its own to support their scaling-up and that they need and benefit from dedicated advice at EU level.

In this regard, the ECF will establish the EU for Business Network, building on the Enterprise Europe Network, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and other networks, to simplify and streamline advisory and partnership services.

The ECF will also provide project advisory, building on the InvestEU Advisory Hub, unifying advisory support to project promoters, including SMEs, in structuring and improving their investment projects.

The ECF proposal does not set a specific target for SMEs, as this would reduce the flexibility of funding. Instead, each ECF policy windows will support dedicated, sector-specific actions targeting start-ups, SMEs and small mid-cap companies or calls for SMEs.

The ECF focus on value chains will also benefit SMEs, building on territorial strengths of Member States and regions, ensuring wide geographical coverage.

ECF tools such as the Value Chain Builder and the Tech Frontrunners will promote the participation of SMEs from across the EU in these projects.

([1]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025PC0555.
([2]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02021R0523-20251110.