

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000530/26
to the Commission
Michał Dworczyk (ECR)
(6 February 2026)**

Subject: Lack of geographical balance in EDF and underrepresentation of eastern flank countries

The European Defence Fund (EDF) was established as a tool to support the development of a common European technological and industrial base for defence. However, the interim evaluation of the EDF ⁽¹⁾ raises serious doubts as to whether the fund's objectives are being met in a fair and balanced manner. The EDF's past operations have led to a clear concentration of projects, funding and coordination roles among large industrial groups from a handful of Member States, specifically France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden.

Meanwhile, entities from other EU countries, including central and eastern Europe, rarely play leading roles in EDF projects and have a limited influence on the lines of research and development of key defence technologies. Their involvement is often limited to the role of partners or subcontractors, with no real access to strategic decisions, know-how and future European value chains.

This disproportionate concentration of resources and influence continues to perpetuate the asymmetries in defence capabilities in the EU, instead of gradually reducing them. The eastern flank countries of the EU and NATO, which have the highest expenditure on security and defence and invest heavily in developing and modernising their armed forces, should be given a real opportunity to participate in European projects on an equal footing.

1. How does the Commission intend to take into account the specific role and needs of eastern flank countries when designing future calls and evaluation criteria for EDF projects?

2. As part of ongoing calls and calls for 2027, will the Commission introduce compensation mechanisms or additional criteria that would ensure a more geographically balanced distribution of coordination roles and funding?

Submitted: 6.2.2026

**Answer given by Mr Kubilius on behalf of the European Commission
(24 March 2026)**

The European Defence Fund's (EDF ⁽¹⁾) general objective is to foster the competitiveness of the entire European defence technological and industrial base.

All eligible entities established in Member States and EDF associated countries can apply for funding through annual calls for proposals on equal and fair competitive terms and conditions, which are prepared with full transparency and in close coordination with the Member States. Proposals are selected for funding based on the same set of award criteria, as set out in the EDF Regulation ⁽²⁾.

The geographical distribution of EDF beneficiaries remains, to date, uneven across Europe. The EDF, like the other EU defence industrial programmes, pursues an objective of inclusiveness by fostering transnational cooperation and also incentivising the entry of new players in the defence sector.

It remains that the levels of participation in the programmes depends significantly on the respective size, structure and maturity level of each national defence technological and industrial base.

Each Member State is characterised by a different history and legacy in terms of its defence-relevant industry, with specific features and strengths.

Nevertheless, the particular attention paid by defence programmes on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) plays in support of the broadest possible access to EU funding.

In addition, the European defence innovation scheme ⁽³⁾, which is funded with around 20% of the EDF annual budget, provides a range of measures designed to support innovation and SMEs.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/777936/EPRS_BRI%282025%29777936_EN.pdf.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/697/oj>.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, pp. 149-177.

⁽⁴⁾ https://eudis.europa.eu/index_en.

As a result, as highlighted in the EDF interim evaluation report ⁽⁴⁾, 43% of unique participants in the EDF are SMEs, a significant proportion of which are established in Central and Eastern Europe.

⁽⁴⁾ COM(2025) 299 final of 17.6.2025 — https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission/edf-interim-evaluation-report_en.