

EN

E-001089/2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto
on behalf of the European Commission
(19.5.2026)

The Commission is committed to supporting Member States in central and eastern Europe through cohesion policy investments. The 2014–2020 *ex post* evaluation of cohesion policy funds¹ showed that, while existing support in these areas has not yet been sufficiently scaled to address business growth and internationalisation, investments have laid vital foundations for growth and innovation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) offer a clear path forward in the next programming period. Regions adopting S3 already demonstrate better business performance, particularly when combined with instruments such as the Innovation Investment Instrument (I3), alongside deeper synergies with Horizon Europe (HE) and InvestEU², for example by leveraging transfer mechanisms³ or providing alternative funding for projects awarded the Seal of Excellence.

Emerging European economies are among those which benefitted most⁴ from InvestEU-supported finance for investments and are specifically targeted by the European Innovation Council (EIC) Pre-Accelerator call⁵. To better target European financial support for these economies, the Commission announced the setup of the EastInvest facility, a dedicated financing platform for eastern border regions⁶.

In the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework, renewed support is proposed to continue with investments in innovation and industrial transition via the National and Regional Partnership Plans, which will continue allowing transfer possibilities, also to the European Competitiveness Fund.

¹ Commission Staff Working Document Ex post evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund for the programming period 2014-2020:

[https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD\(2025\)328&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD(2025)328&lang=en).

² The EU's flagship research and innovation programme: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en.

³ The transfer mechanism gives the Member State possibility to transfer up to 5 % of their resources under shared management to any other EU directly or indirectly managed instrument. The transferred funding can be used only for the benefit of the Member State concerned. For instance, a transfer can enable excellent HE proposals from the concerned Member State/region to participate in HE when budgetary constraints would otherwise prevent them from being selected for HE support. Additionally, the InvestEU Fund currently allows the possibility for Member States to transfer resources from their shared management funds to a Member State Compartment and hence increase financing (from equity to venture debt and risk sharing loans) in their country to support high-growth companies or other investments.

⁴ On a gross domestic product/per capita weighted basis.

⁵ The Commission is supporting companies in the EU region also by the EIC Pre-Accelerator call targeting specifically small and medium sized enterprises and startups in widening countries. The goal of this initiative is to increase the business, investor and technology readiness of high potential deep-tech startups from the widening countries preparing them to successfully apply for the EIC Accelerator and secure other forms of investment. The first edition of this call was organised in 2025 with more than 1000 applications, 70 companies have been funded and 320 awarded with Seal of Excellence to help them access alternative or complementary EU and national funding sources. The next EIC Pre-Accelerator call is planned in 2027.

⁶ Communication on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine:

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/themes/eastern-border-regions_en.