

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003439/26  
to the Commission  
Georgios Aftias (PPE)  
(2 September 2026)**

*Subject:* Direct financing of low-interest loans to small and medium-sized enterprises from the Social Fund

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the European economy. In my home country, Greece, there are approximately 680 000 small and medium-sized enterprises. Despite their key role in creating new jobs and boosting competitiveness, they face difficulties in accessing bank loans and microcredit.

There is an urgent need to move immediately and decisively towards strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises, which have essentially been excluded from bank lending. These enterprises have outstanding liabilities. Immediate European intervention and support are required. Such an initiative will give them breathing space, as due to their structural problems they cannot secure financing from the banking sector and are looking for a way to cover their financial obligations.

In Greece, the Microcredit Fund is financed by the European Social Fund and the NSRF 'Competitiveness' programme (2021-2027). The initial objective is to support over 3 500 small businesses across the country. However, economic conditions have deteriorated due to the war in the Persian Gulf. Therefore, increasing the funds available and strengthening the financial instruments are imperative.

In view of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Will it increase the microcredit financial instruments to support small and medium-sized enterprises?
2. Will it enable Member States to take decisive action to support small and medium-sized enterprises effectively?

Submitted: 2.9.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission  
(14 October 2026)**

The Commission recognises the important role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in supporting employment and competitiveness.

In the 2021-2027 programming period, financial instruments are co-financed by the European Social Fund Plus <sup>(1)</sup> and other cohesion policy funds where this is provided for in the relevant programmes and in line with the rules of shared management.

Hence, decisions on programme priorities, allocations and reinforcement of financial instruments are taken in the context of implementation and any amendments thereto, in partnership with the Member States concerned; there is therefore no automatic increase at EU level of microcredit instruments, but the Commission remains ready to examine duly justified proposals from Member States to strengthen such support.

The Commission also supports microfinance in Greece through the InvestEU Social Window <sup>(2)</sup>. The Council of Europe Development Bank and the European Investment Fund <sup>(3)</sup> act as InvestEU implementing partners.

The existing framework already gives Member States significant flexibility to support SMEs effectively with measures that facilitate access to finance, skills development and employment support, provided that such measures are consistent with the objectives of the relevant programmes and the applicable legal framework.

SMEs benefit from preferential treatments under state aid rules. The Commission has also developed specific aid categories to support the financing of SMEs under the General Block Exemption Regulation <sup>(4)</sup>.

The Commission will continue to work closely with Member States to ensure the effective use of the available programme resources and, where appropriate, programme amendments to respond to changing economic circumstances.

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<sup>(1)</sup> <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en>.

<sup>(2)</sup> [https://investeu.europa.eu/investeu-programme/investeu-fund/about-investeu-fund\\_en](https://investeu.europa.eu/investeu-programme/investeu-fund/about-investeu-fund_en).

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.eif.org/>.

<sup>(4)</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/651/oj/eng>.