

Proposed MFF has potential to respond to current challenges

Doubts on funding and the ability of the Commission to deliver on its objectives

Brussels, 16/07/2025 – In a first reaction to the proposal for the next Multiannual Framework, SMEUnited sees its potential to deliver on the current challenges. It covers all areas where SMEs expect support for growth, competitiveness and the twin transition. However, the association has doubts whether the funding reach SMEs to deliver the announced objectives and asks to get involved in further planning to ensure that SMEs' expectations are met.

Everything will depend on the details of the various elements and the future annual work programs of the different actions. Therefore, SMEUnited asks to be represented in a future Strategic Stakeholder Board, ensuring that SMEs' interests are respected.

On the different elements of the European Competitiveness Fund, SMEUnited stated:

- The SME objectives can only be realised if funds for SMEs are ringfenced and cannot be deployed by larger enterprises like mid-caps, which have more resources to apply for such funds.
- The inclusion of SMEs as target in InvestEU is welcomed. However, a potential SME Window needs sufficient funding and has to provide SME specific Financial Instruments like loan guarantees and risk financing for innovation and transition.
- The specific focus on strengthening SMEs' competitiveness and providing them with business advice and access to infrastructure and facilities is supported. It is detrimental to ensure SMEs can benefit from new technologies and create fair competition and a level playing field.
- SMEs agree with aiming for digital leadership, which must cover the entire digital scope. AI Factories, cloud technologies, 6G, must reach SMEs in every area and should not remain infrastructures in main cities accessible to a small number of companies. Furthermore, the digitalisation of the public sector is detrimental to work towards simplification and a data-based single market.
- Clean Transition and Industrial Decarbonisation includes rightly the green transition of European SMEs. The combination of targeted funding with integrated business advice and support will help SMEs decarbonise, become more climate resilient, and mainstream circular business models. However, further attention on new opportunities for SMEs in emerging green sectors,

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EDITORS' NOTES: SMEUnited is the association of Crafts and SMEs in Europe with 65 member organisations from over 30 European countries. SMEUnited represents national cross-sectoral Craft and SME federations and European SME branch organisations. SMEUnited is a recognised employers' organisation and European Social Partner. SMEUnited was formerly known as UEAPME.
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implementing nature-based solutions and pollution prevention would help ensure a more holistic and future-proof approach.

In addition, SMEs welcome the more integrated approach as regards cohesion policy and rural development, which allows a more encompassing approach for structural developments in such regions. *The proposed framework must firmly anchor simplified and streamlined access for SMEs.* SMEUnited, therefore, welcomes the Commission's commitment to upholding the Partnership Principle to ensure effective implementation.

A future European Social Fund should aim for activation of the potential workforce, support its employability and increase mobility within the labour market.

Finally, SMEUnited sees the proposal to collect own resources from companies as a counterproductive and wrong signal in times of decreasing competitiveness, ongoing trade conflicts and the need to master the twin transition.

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