



European  
Commission

# Overview of EU Instruments contributing to the Internationalisation of European Businesses (2023)

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs

Directorate A Strategy and Economic Analysis

Unit A3 International Value Chains

*E-mail: [GROW-A3@ec.europa.eu](mailto:GROW-A3@ec.europa.eu)*

*European Commission*

*B-1049 Brussels*

**OVERVIEW OF EU INSTRUMENTS  
CONTRIBUTING TO THE INTERNATIONALISATION  
OF EUROPEAN BUSINESSES (2023)**

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# Introduction

*The goal of this overview is to facilitate access to information relevant for the European Union (EU) stakeholders pursuing business internationalisation on available funding EU instruments (both direct and indirect).*

*The overview is a result of the joint effort of several European Commission services.*

*The list includes regional and bilateral specific instruments which can help EU businesses in their goal of internationalisation. It also provides additional information in shape of relevant hyperlinks. The overview does not cover general enabling framework, such as free trade agreements.*

*This overview also responds to recommendation 1(a) of July 2022 European Court of Auditors Special report<sup>1</sup>: “The Commission should make information available about existing instruments and projects receiving EU co-funding in the field of internationalisation”.*

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<sup>1</sup> European Court of Auditors Special Report (July, 2022) [“SME internationalisation instruments: A Large number of support actions but not fully coherent or coordinated”](#)

# Overview of Instruments by Geographic Focus: Direct and Indirect

The principle of the geographical display is to allow for more coherent and user-friendly access to specific support instruments which have Global, Regional and Bilateral focus. We have categorized these instruments into categories of Direct and Indirect support instruments. This display allows for a quick differentiation between the types of instruments. The links below allow the user to have a direct access to the instruments.

**Direct** (*support to Business internationalisation*)

**Indirect** (*support for better framework conditions, business environment and information*)

## **Global**

[Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme](#)

[Cluster internationalisation](#)

[Preparatory Action - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Global](#)

[Global Action to support EU Space Programmes](#)

[Access2Markets](#)

[SME Trade Defence Helpdesk](#)

[Technical Barriers to Trade Enquiry Point](#)

[Financial Instruments](#)

[Promotion of Agricultural products](#)

[European Investment Bank \(EIB\)](#)

[Life Programme](#)

[European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#)

[EIC Overseas Trade Fairs Programme 2.0](#)

[Horizon Europe \(and ongoing Horizon 2020 projects\)](#)

[Enterprise Europe Network](#)

[European Business Organisations](#)

[Promoting Trans-European Tourism Products in Third Countries](#)

[EU-Business Fora \(national and regional\)](#)

[Access2Markets](#)

[Team Europe Partnership Portal \(TEPP\)](#)

[Promoting Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems \(Global - in particular Korea, India, Mexico, Brazil, USA, Canada\)](#)

[International Urban and Regional Cooperation in the Americas, Asia and Australasia](#)

## **Africa**

[EU Business Fora in/with Africa](#)

[International intellectual Property \(IP\) SME Helpdesk](#)

[The African Union \(AU\)-EU Innovation Agenda](#)

### ***Southern Mediterranean***

[MED SMEs - Support to an enabling business environment for MSME development & financial inclusion](#)

[EBSO Med – Enhancing Business Support Organisations and Business networks in the Southern Neighbourhood](#)

[EU Initiative for Financial Inclusion/NIP](#)

[EU-OECD programme to enhance investment policies and investment promotion in Southern Mediterranean region](#)

[Euro-Mediterranean Trade and Investment Facilitation Mechanism](#)

[EU-ILO programme to strengthen trade and investment policy reforms, in particular their links with job creation and quality of work created](#)

[Trade and Competitiveness Facilities/NIP](#)

[Green for Growth Fund \(GGF\)](#)

[SwitchMed – support to a transition to a circular economy in Neighbourhood South](#)

## **Asia**

[International Intellectual Property \(IP\) SME Helpdesks](#)

[EU Gateway/Business Avenues in South East Asia](#)

[IP Key Southeast Asia, Latin America II](#)

[Responsible Business Conduct for green, digital and resilient supply chains in Asia](#)

[EU-Asia Cooperation on \(Phyto-\) Sanitary \(SPS\) and Food Safety Regulation in Asia](#)

### **China**

[International IP SME Helpdesks](#)

[SME Centre in China](#)

[Water Platforms in India and China](#)

[EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform](#)

[IP Key China, Southeast Asia, Latin America II](#)

[Seconded European Standardization Experts in Third Countries](#)

### **India**

[International Intellectual Property \(IP\) SME Helpdesks](#)

[Water Platforms in India and China](#)

[EU-India Innovation Centre](#)

[EU-India Resource efficiency initiative in India](#)

[Seconded European Standardization Experts in Third Countries](#)

[EU India Cooperation with the International Solar Alliance](#)

### **Japan**

[EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation](#)

[Support facility or the implementation of EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement \(EPA\)](#)

[Business to Business Cooperation with Japan and the Republic of Korea](#)

### **Korea**

[Business to Business Cooperation with Japan and the Republic of Korea](#)

### **Taiwan**

[European Business and Regulatory Cooperation Programme \(Taiwan\) \(EBRC\) II](#)

## **Europe**

### **Neighbourhood East**

[EU4Business initiative](#)

[EU4Business: Connecting Companies](#)

[EU4Business: Eastern Partnership Trade Helpdesk](#)

[EU4Business: From Policies to Action](#)

[Structural Reform Facility – World Bank Component](#)

[Structural Reform Facility – Strengthening Fiscal Governance in Eastern Partnership Countries](#)

[EU-EBRD Country-specific Investment Climate Reviews and Action Plans for Eastern Partnership \(EaP\) countries Phase 2](#)

[Horizontal assistance: SIGMA](#)

[EU4Business 2022: access to finance \(A2F\) in the EaP countries](#)

### ***Pre-accession countries***

[The Western Balkans Investment Facility](#)

[Technical assistance for the Economic Reform Programmes in the Western Balkans and Türkiye](#)

[EU-OECD support to competitiveness and sustainability in the Western Balkans & Türkiye](#)

[Horizontal assistance: SIGMA](#)

### ***Latin America and the Caribbean***

[AI-Invest Verde](#)

[International Intellectual Property \(IP\) SME Helpdesks](#)

[IP Key China, Southeast Asia, Latin America II](#)

[Aviation Partnership Project in Latin America and Caribbean](#)

[European and Latin American Business Services and Innovation Network](#)

[Low Carbon and Circular Economy Business Action in the Americas](#)

[EU-Americas Partnership on Raw Materials \(Latin America\) Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and Caribbean](#)

### ***Brazil***

[Ongoing Horizon 2020 projects: the European Network of Research and Innovation Centres and Hubs \(ENRICH\) with the USA, Brazil and Africa](#)

### ***North America***

[Ongoing Horizon 2020 projects: the European Network of Research and Innovation Centres and Hubs \(ENRICH\) with the USA, Brazil and Africa](#)

[Low Carbon and Circular Economy Business Action in the Americas](#)

# Overview of programs in Support of internationalisation

## Single Market Programme (SMP)-SME Pillar

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- **More information:** [Single Market Programme](#)

The SME Pillar of the Single Market Programme (SMP) (2021-2027) provides support for strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of the Union's enterprises (facilitating access to markets, promoting entrepreneurship and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, promoting the modernisation of industry and the strengthening of industrial ecosystems). A number of actions supported under the SME pillar provide advisory and capacity-building services to support SMEs with access to international markets. The SME Pillar provides support for services such as the Enterprise Europe Network, Cluster collaboration projects and the Intellectual Property (IP) SME helpdesks. The SME pillar of the SMP is open to third countries' participation as defined under Article 5 of the SMP Regulation.

**Programs include:** Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), International Intellectual Property (IP) SME Helpdesks, EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation, EU SME Centre in China, European Business Organisation Networking Third countries, Cluster internationalisation initiatives for SMEs, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Global, Promoting trans-European Tourism Products in Third Countries, Ready4EU.

## Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument–Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe)

- **Sectoral Classification:** Development
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- **More information:** [NDICI](#)

The programme groups together a number of EU budget instruments from the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework, including the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). In addition, sub-Saharan African, Caribbean and Pacific countries formerly covered under the off-budget European Development Fund (EDF) are now also covered by the EU budget. Having such a comprehensive instrument allows the EU to carry out better, more coordinated external action and to deliver better results.

With an overall allocation of €79.5 billion, the NDICI - Global Europe instrument will cover the EU cooperation with all third countries, except for the pre-accession beneficiaries and the overseas countries and territories from the geographic programmes.

## EX European Neighbourhood Instrument

- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I

- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- **More information:** [ENI](#)

European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) replaces the European neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). It promotes enhanced political cooperation and economic integration between the European Union and neighbour countries. ENI is mainly supporting SMEs that are operational in the neighbourhood region.

Concerning the **South Mediterranean area**, the following regional programmes in support to **private sector development** in the region are of particular interest to European enterprises:

**Programs include:**

- i. **Neighbourhood South:** MED SMEs – Support to an enabling business environment for MSME development & financial inclusion, EBSO Med – Enhancing Business Support Organisations and Business networks in the Southern Neighbourhood, EU Initiative for Financial Inclusion/NIP, EU-OECD programme to enhance investment policies and investment promotion in Southern Mediterranean region, Euro-Mediterranean Trade and Investment Facilitation Mechanism, EU-ILO programme to strengthen trade and investment policy reforms, in particular their links with job creation and quality of work created, Trade and Competitiveness Facilities/NIP, SwitchMed – support to a transition to a circular economy in Neighbourhood South, Green for Growth Fund (GGF)
- ii. **Neighbourhood East (Eastern Partnership):** Eu4Business initiative, EU4Business: Connecting Companies, EU4Business: Eastern Partnership Trade Helpdesk, EU4Business: From Policies to Action, Structural Reform Facility – World Bank Component, Structural Reform Facility – Strengthening Fiscal Governance in Eastern Partnership Countries, EU EBRD Country-Specific Climate Reviews and Action Plans for Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, EU4Business 2022: access to finance (A2F) in the EaP countries, Horizontal assistance: SIGMA

**International Partnerships**

- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- **More information:** [International Partnership](#)

The EU support focuses on sectors with strong multiplier effect on partner countries' economies such as sustainable agriculture, sustainable energy and infrastructures. The Commission encourages also responsible investments and promotes private sector engagement through inclusive business practices and in the context of companies' core activities.

The EU multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027, new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe reinforces these efforts in partner countries. One of its implementing features consists of the European Fund for Sustainable Development+ (EFSD+).

**Programs include:** AL-INVEST Verde, EU Business Fora - national and regional (see annex for more detailed description), [Team Europe Partnerships Portal](#) (TEPP)

# Global

## Access2Markets

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** From 2020
- **More information:** [Access2Markets \(europa.eu\)](#)

The Access2Markets platform was launched in October 2020, and it is the main portal of DG TRADE that offers users, such as EU SMEs, a wealth of information to gain the valuable and practical knowledge needed to better help in their internationalisation efforts. Access2Markets is available free of charge, with no registration required, in all EU official languages and displays information to users in a clear, easily understandable manner.

To best help our stakeholders, Access2Markets hosts individual tools such as the **MyTradeAssistant for Goods and ROSA, The Rules of Origin Self-Assessment tool, Access2Procurement, MyTradeAssistant for Services and Investment** and the **Single-Entry Point**, that focus on specific needs of users.

- The **MyTradeAssistant for Goods and ROSA tool** offers EU SMEs a powerful tool to search for their product by name or HS code and learn of the information that is key to their business in relation to export (e.g., the Access2Markets portal covers tariffs, taxes, procedures and formalities for 135 export markets, rules of origin, statistics, and trade barriers). Similarly, this tool offers SMEs the key information needed for their import activities into the EU (e.g., tariffs, taxes, import requirements, rules of origin and statistics from all over the world).
- **ROSA, the Rules of Origin Self-Assessment tool** of Access2Markets, offers guidance in simple steps to determine the rules of origins of a product in order to benefit from the lower or zero import duties of an EU trade agreement.
- In addition, **Access2Procurement** was launched to help businesses to understand in a few simple steps whether the procurement in question is covered by the aforementioned agreements and if their company is eligible to participate in the government procurement tender outside of the EU.
- In 2022, the **MyTradeAssistant for Services and Investment** was added to the Access2Markets platform providing information on the requirements EU companies should comply with to export services and access markets outside the EU. It also offers information on sources that can be consulted and on authorities responsible in third countries that can be contacted. Currently, the tool covers which offers provide users the information they would need to export legal services and maritime for under the EU-United Kingdom and EU-Canada agreements, and accounting under the EU-United Kingdom agreement, with further expansion planned gradually.

- Access2Markets also hosts the **Single-Entry Point** which is the first point of contact within the European Commission's trade department for all EU stakeholders and businesses to submit complaints they might be facing on market access issues or potential trade barriers in third countries or who find non-compliance with sustainability commitments related to the Trade and Sustainable Development or the Generalised Scheme of Preferences.

## Cluster internationalisation initiatives for SMEs

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [International | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)

The Cluster internationalisation initiatives for SMEs under COSME and Single Market Programme (SMP) contributes to establish and support pan-European cluster consortia to accelerate the development of more world-class clusters in all COSME participating countries by facilitating cluster internationalisation in a more strategic manner at EU level and by reinforcing cluster cooperation to better support European SMEs in global competition. The programme includes:

- **“Cluster Go International”** action aimed to support the establishment of a number of "European Strategic Cluster Partnerships - Going International" (ESCP-4i) that will lead to international cluster cooperation in fields of strategic interest. This action contributes to encourage European clusters to work concretely together to exploit synergies across borders and sectors as well as develop a joint internationalisation strategy with common goals towards specific third markets. These partnerships provide a vehicle to help European SMEs involved in clusters contribute to the emergence of new industrial value chains and take a leading position globally. In 2020, 24 partnerships started receiving funding for a period of two years. The latest, fourth, generation of the programme, provides support for 14 partnerships between 2021 and 2024.
- **The European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)** represents the European hub connecting the cluster community within and beyond Europe and supports international cluster cooperation through (a) the mapping and profiling of cluster organisations and a partner search tool facilitating networking between cluster across Europe from and beyond Europe. The Platform includes currently around 1200 clusters registered, including many from 3<sup>rd</sup> countries.
- **International cluster matchmaking events** organised under the programme help creating cooperation with clusters and business organisations from third countries. Since 2016, such meetings were organised with USA, Taiwan, Iran, Mexico, Brazil, Thailand Ukraine, Canada, MENA region and Singapore.

## Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS



- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- **More information:** <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>

The Enterprise Europe Network is the world's largest support Network for SMEs with international ambitions. It helps European SMEs find the right partners to innovate and grow internationally. It is a one-stop shop, helping SMEs to develop their business in new markets, source or license new technologies, and get access to EU finance and EU funding. The Network has more than 450 partners (SME support service providers) in about 40 countries<sup>2</sup>. Network partners have been selected in EU Member States and in the SMP participating countries via a call for proposals, as well as in other third countries via an International Network Partners (INPs) call for proposals.

The Network's services:

#### **Business co-operation**

- Services to develop trans-national (within the EU) and international (beyond the EU) commercial co-operation between SMEs.

#### **Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge**

- Help SMEs increase their innovation capacity services for the trans-national and international transfer of technology, knowledge and research cooperation.
- For EEN partners based in countries participating in the Horizon 2020 programme, provide specific services to help SMEs in their regions enhance their innovation management capacities.
- Help SMEs to participate in EU programmes for R&I (and Horizon Europe).
- The Network also offers specific services to help SMEs find appropriate finance, including support for further developing investment readiness, brokerage activities linking SMEs with private investors, assistance for applying for risk finance under EU schemes managed via financial intermediaries, and a range of other innovation support activities and services.

#### **Internationalisation beyond the EU**

- Help SMEs finding suitable business partners to expand their business and enter new markets, notably through matchmaking services and the provision of market information by EEN Business Cooperation Centres in third countries.

#### **Advice**

- Advice and information to EU-based SMEs to help them become more competitive, and to enable them to benefit from opportunities in the Single Market, including advice on EU legislation.
- Scale-up Advisors are helping scale-ups to develop their business outside their home country.

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<sup>2</sup> Since a number of contracts are still in process of being signed, the number is in flux.

### **Twin transition**

- EEN Sustainability Advisors help SMEs address sustainability challenges and opportunities, in particular on energy efficiency, circularity and green investments.
- The EEN supports SME's digitalisation by helping adapt their processes, use digital technologies and develop new products and services using new digital means. It does so in collaboration with other relevant European networks such as the European Digital Innovation Hubs.

### **Feedback**

- Providing feedback from EU-based SMEs to the Commission to ensure that future legislation responds to the companies' needs.

## **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme**

- *In the EU and COSME countries*
- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* <http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/index.php>

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) is a cross-border exchange programme aiming to facilitate the exchange of entrepreneurial and management experience between entrepreneurs from participating countries.

The exchange is implemented by a stay (duration of 1-6 months) of the newly established or potential entrepreneur with a well-experienced entrepreneur running an SME in another country. The exchange helps the new entrepreneur (NE) acquire the skills needed to establish and run a small firm. The host entrepreneur (HE) benefits from fresh perspectives on his/her business and gets the opportunities to cooperate with foreign partners and explore new markets. The programme in the past has been running under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP).

At the moment the programme has more than 160 local contact points in 34 participating countries.

## **The European Innovation Council (EIC)**

- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I
- **Duration:** Since 2014
- *More information:* [European Innovation Council \(europa.eu\)](https://european-innovation-council.europa.eu)

Funded under Horizon Europe the European Innovation Council (EIC) solicits the most ambitious ideas of thousands of start-ups and research teams from across Europe and supports each stage of the innovation journey. Its overall mandate is to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough innovations.

During the period 2014 through to its first full year of activity as a fully-fledged initiative under Horizon Europe in 2021, the EIC has supported over 1600 deep tech start-ups and SMEs in their efforts to develop their technology and scale in global markets, alongside over 500

research projects that are creating a pipeline of deep tech ideas that could provide breakthrough solutions for key policy challenges including a successful twin green and digital transition.

Connected EIC beneficiaries with over **100 corporates and public procurers** as well as **400 potential investors** resulting in **77 signed deals**.

## EIC Overseas Trade Fairs Programme 2.0

- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I
- **Duration:** Since 2017
- *More information:* [EIC Overseas Trade Fairs Programme 2.0 \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eic/overseas-trade-fairs-programme-2.0)

Since 2017, the European Innovation Council (EIC) Overseas Trade Fairs Programme (OTF)<sup>3</sup> supports EIC beneficiaries to promote their commercialisation strategy in foreign markets and leverage business opportunities at the most popular trade fairs, strengthening the EU innovation brand around the world. Selected EIC-funded SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups from EU Member States and associated countries have access to this programme. Current OTF 2.0 is a continuation of the Pilot OTF Programme, which facilitated the presence of EIC beneficiaries in 15 international trade fairs with a sectoral or cross-sectoral focus in 11 countries outside the EU. Moreover, the OTF 1.0 generated remarkable impact and it successfully allowed EU SMEs to gain precious insights about overseas markets as well as boost their growth potential.

## Horizon Europe

- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I
- *Duration:* 2021-2027
- *More information:* [Horizon Europe](https://ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe)

Horizon Europe is the EU framework programme for research and innovation active from 2021-2027. It provides funding for every stage of research and innovation, from frontier science to close-to-market innovation.<sup>4 5</sup>

Relevant elements of Horizon Europe with respect to SMEs, include:

- The development of the technologies and innovations that will underpin tomorrow's businesses and help innovative European SMEs to grow into world-leading companies:
  - Investment in industrial and enabling technologies: information and communications technology (ICT), nanotechnology, advanced materials, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing and processing and space
  - Access to debt and equity finance for R&D and innovation-driven companies and projects at all stages of development (see below for more details)

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<sup>3</sup> More information available at [https://ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/business-acceleration-services/eic-overseas-trade-fairs-programme-20\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/business-acceleration-services/eic-overseas-trade-fairs-programme-20_en)

<sup>4</sup> Further information available at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html>

<sup>5</sup> [Funding programmes and open calls \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eic/funding-programmes-and-open-calls)

- SME-tailored support to stimulate all forms of innovation in SMEs, targeting those with the potential to grow and internationalise across the single market and beyond
  - A dedicated Fast Track to Innovation pilot scheme to speed up the time from idea to market, and to increase the participation of industry, in particular first-time applicants
  - Innovative public-private partnerships in areas such as new medicines, greener aircraft technologies and electronics
- A challenge-based approach to key issues facing societies, addressed in the following clusters: (a) Health; (b) Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society; (c) Civil Security for Society; (d) Digital, Industry and Space; (e) Climate, Energy and Mobility; (f) Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment
  - A reinforcement and extension of the excellence of the EU's science base notably through the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and a consolidation of the European Research Area make the EU's research and innovation system more competitive and attractive on a global scale
  - A reinforced European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Horizon Europe is open to the world and promotes cooperation with countries around the world on a value-based approach and on common interest and mutual benefits. International cooperation ensures that the Union and its partners have access to talent and resources wherever they are located; that they can tackle global societal challenges effectively; and that companies participate in global value chains and can access new and emerging markets.

Any European entity (including SMEs) can use Horizon Europe as a tool to internationalise by partnering with European and non-European companies or other actors to carry out joint research and innovation activities. These activities could be, for instance: joint research where partners have complementary expertise; integration of a technology supply chain; demonstration or piloting of a new product, service, or technology; accessing facilities, data or services etc.

### International Urban/Regional Cooperation Program - Americas, Asia, Australasia

- **Sectoral Classification:** FINANCIAL
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [International Urban and Regional Cooperation \(iurc.eu\)](https://iurc.eu)

International Urban and Regional Cooperation programme is part of a long-term strategy to foster urban diplomacy as an important vehicle of the EU's external relations, focusing on city-to-city cooperation in the field of sustainable urban development in the countries concerned.

### Life Programme

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE

- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- **More information:** [CINEA - Life Programme](#)

The LIFE programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. The general objective of LIFE is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation by co-financing projects with European added value.

Launched in 1992, LIFE is the only EU programme exclusively dedicated to the environment and climate action, all areas of citizens' growing concerns. LIFE finances a wide range of activities, ranging from: the protection of biodiversity to the support to circular economy; from the demonstration of new emission reduction technologies and process to the preparatory work for international negotiations; from the protection of citizens' health due to environment degradation to the enforcement of environment and climate legislation. Since its launch, it has financed over 5000 projects, for the protection of the environment and climate.

The European Commission (DG Environment; DG Climate Action and DG Energy) manages the LIFE programme. The Commission has delegated the implementation of most of the components of the LIFE programme to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).

The LIFE programme has four sub-programmes:

- "Nature and Biodiversity"
- "Circular Economy and Quality of Life"
- "Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation"
- "Clean Energy Transition"

The programme is open to the participation of third countries and provides for activities outside the EU (and partners in third countries) under certain conditions. It also provides a framework for cooperation with international organisations.

## Preparatory Action Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** since 2018
- **More information:** [Eyeglobal.eu](#)

A geographical extension of the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) programme to countries outside of Europe started in 2018. Currently, six destinations Canada (British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec), Israel, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and USA (New York State and California) are available for new entrepreneurs from EU and UK for exchange.

## Promotion of Agricultural products

- **Sectoral Classification:** OTHER
- **Duration:** 2019-2024
- **More information:** [ec.europa.eu/agriculture/promotion](#)

The European Union (EU) financially supports campaigns to promote farm products and inform consumers about how they were produced. The assistance is normally given to professional organisations, for example representative trade or inter-trade organisations or agri-food sector bodies for programmes highlighting the specific features of agricultural production methods in the Union in terms of food safety, traceability, respect for the environment, sustainability and the characteristics of agricultural and food products in relation to the quality, taste, diversity or traditions.

Eligible proposing organisations are in principle able to apply for EU financing ranging from 70 % (simple programs on the internal market) to 80% (multi country programs and all programmes targeting external markets) for campaigns concerning agricultural products.

As of the 2021 work programme<sup>6</sup>, award criteria were updated in order to align the selection of successful projects with broader EU policy priorities outlined in the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. In addition, programmes targeting least-developed countries according to UN list should be coherent with EU development objectives.

As part of the overall promotion policy budget, the Commission organises promotion activities on its own initiative. These activities include:

- business delegations accompanying Commissioner's economic diplomacy missions to selected third countries,
- setting up of EU pavilions at major international agri-food trade fairs,
- organisation of expert seminars on EU food safety and quality standards for stakeholders in key target markets,
- communication campaigns to promote the image of safe and high quality European agri-food products,
- Market Entry Handbooks outlining conditions and requirements to export agri-food products to selected countries, particularly useful for the SMEs, available for free [here](#).

More information of upcoming opportunities organised directly by the Commission on agricultural product promotion available at [Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development](#). For more information on promotion programmes see also the Research Executive Agency (REA) [web-portal on agricultural promotion](#).

## Global Action to support the EU Space Programme

- **Sectoral Classification:** DEFENCE
- **Duration:** 2021-2024
- **More information:** [Introducing the EU Global Action on Space](#)

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<sup>6</sup> Each year, the Commission adopts a work programme defining strategic priorities for the promotion policy in terms of populations, products, schemes or markets to be targeted and the nature of the information and promotion messages to be imparted. The objective is to have a dynamic and targeted promotion policy, aligned with the needs of the sector. The work programme is implemented through the publication of the calls for proposals for simple and multi programmes with the aim to select promotion campaigns for funding. Funds are available directly to proposing organisations of selected promotion programmes.

This service contract provides support to maximise awareness and foster the worldwide use of the EU Space Programme components Copernicus, Galileo and EGNOS, namely by:

- Positioning the Union Space Programme as an important economic diplomacy instrument for the EU, to set the conditions for new or deepened space cooperation with targeted third countries.
- Promoting the specific advantages of Copernicus Galileo and EGNOS in more than 80 countries worldwide.
- Providing space-related market intelligence in selected markets around the world.
- Facilitating conditions for industrial / business cooperation using EU space capabilities.
- Providing specific free-of-charge coaching services to EU companies with a potential to internationalise their business by using EU space capabilities.

In a highly interconnected marketplace, digitalisation and the use of space technologies and services are key to ensure the global competitiveness of EU industry. The Global Action on Space seeks to harness the unique competitive position the EU has acquired on space technologies and services by providing concrete business opportunities to EU entities around the world.

The [‘EU Space Platform’](#) provides information and services for free to users.

### Team Europe Partnerships Portal (TEPP)

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- *More information:* [team-europe-partners.network.europa.eu](https://team-europe-partners.network.europa.eu)

TEPP is a new matchmaking web-based platform where partner countries can find, in one place, expertise and support (solutions) provided by Team Europe actors.

European businesses can submit their solutions (services, goods, and products, including technical expertise support in the form of deployment of human resources, remote support of technical staff or capacity building) so that they are accessible to partner countries who may need them.

### SME Trade Defence Helpdesk

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [Trade defence \(europa.eu\)](https://trade-defence.europa.eu)

Trade Defence Instruments (TDI) ensure fair trade for EU enterprises, including SMEs, and help to protect enterprises against unfair trade measures, including low-priced imports due to prohibited subsidies or dumping practices from non-EU countries. The European Commission also provides advice and support if an enterprise that is exporting to a non-EU country is affected by an anti-dumping, anti-subsidy or safeguard measure applied by that country.

In June 2018, the Commission published a guide to help SME’s affected unfair trade or by any trade defence actions, either in the EU or in a third country. The DG TRADE website includes a dedicated webpage providing information for SMEs on how to navigate trade defence

instruments. This includes a comprehensive guide, information on drafting a complaint as well as sample questionnaires. This is supported by a dedicated SME helpdesk.

In 2021, the Commission made additional efforts to ensure that SMEs know about, and benefit from, the trade defence instruments. This involved developing an on-line information package explaining the instruments in clear terms – this is available in all EU languages via DG Trade’s Trade Defence website and Access to Markets website. There will be a roll out of the information package through existing SME networks at both EU and Member States level.

## Technical Barriers to Trade – Enquiry Point

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** since 1995
- **More information:** [ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/tbt/en/](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/tbt/en/)

In order for EU small businesses to take full advantage of international trade, unnecessary and unjustified technical barriers need to be removed. The EU-TBT-Enquiry-Point managed at DG GROW plays a central role in this.

The EU-TBT-Enquiry-Point coordinates and prepares the EU comments on the draft technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures notified by the WTO Members under the TBT Agreement. By doing so, it relies both on the assessment of the competent Commission services and of the economic operators. During the comment period, all contributions received from economic operators, including SMEs, are welcome and taken into account during the assessment. By using this mechanism, economic operators can signal possible technical barriers to trade already at a draft stage and the EU can issue comments and engage in a dialogue with the notifying WTO Member to prevent them.

The EU-TBT-Enquiry-Point also maintains a free, comprehensive on-line database, containing all TBT notifications and the related comments. It is easily searchable and contains a mailing list function, which can help, among others, also SMEs to follow the new notifications of their interests.

# Multi regional

## IP Key

- *China, Southeast Asia, Latin America*
- **Sectoral Classification:** FINANCIAL
- **Duration:** Since 2019
- **More information:** [Home | IPKEY](#)

This action promotes a secure environment for EU investment and business, by promoting European standards in intellectual property rights’ legislation, protection and enforcement. The actions support the interests of European business and right holders’ operating in these regions:

- [IP Key China](#)
- [IP Key Latin America](#)
- [IP Key South-East Asia](#)



## International Intellectual Property (IP) SME Helpdesk

- *China, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and India*
- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** 2022-2024

The International Intellectual Property (IP) SME Helpdesks provide expert advice on how to protect and enforce IP in or relating to China, South-East Asia (SEA), Latin America (LA) and India to EU SMEs and SMEs established in countries participating in the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme (SMP SME) and cover the following target markets:

- For the [China IP SME Helpdesk](#) for mainland China, Hong-Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.
- For the [South-East Asia IP SME Helpdesk](#) for Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- For the [Latin America IP SME Helpdesk](#) for Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.
- For the [India IP SME Helpdesk](#) for the Republic of India.
- For the [Africa IP SME Helpdesk](#) for the African Continent

In the relevant target market, each IP SME helpdesk provide individual first-line advice on IP matters, training and training programme on the use and management of IPs, support during business match-making events, and general IP information at relevant awareness-raising events.

The international IP SME helpdesks co-organize an annual stakeholder meeting in Europe and develop a strategy for reaching out to other EU-supported internationalisation services for SMEs, in particular for [Europe](#) and [Africa](#). The helpdesks manage and keep up to date information concerning both the target markets and the EU IP landscape on a common website hosted by the Commission.

The international IP SME Helpdesks provide the Commission with bi-annual reports on IP challenges faced by EU SMEs, submit data to the IP enforcement portal of the European Union Intellectual Property Office ([EUIPO](#)) and attend meetings with the EU Delegation to the countries of the target market and EU Member States representatives there. Part of their tasks involve cooperation with each other (e.g., sign posting) and develop a strategy for reaching out to other EU-supported internationalisation services for SMEs.

## European Network of Research and Innovation Centres and Hubs (ENRICH)

- *USA, Brazil and Africa, the EU-India Innovation center*
- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I
- **Duration:** Since 2020
- More information: [enrichcentres.eu](http://enrichcentres.eu)

Supported by Horizon 2020, the ENRICH Networks connects European researchers, innovators and businesses to third countries, with the overall aim to develop global products, services

and technologies as well as facilitate market access, through research and innovation in strategic third country markets. There are currently three ENRICH projects, targeting [Brazil](#), the [United States](#) and [Africa](#).

ENRICH provides standardised as well as tailor-made services targeting commercially viable technology maturity levels (Research2Research, Research2Market and Business2Business stages) and including research connection symposia, business matchmaking opportunities, working visits and innovation tours to explore technology/product partnerships and/or business development middle/long term opportunities, pitching to potential investors, entrepreneurial boot camps, work space access, hands on business acceleration programmes, etc.

In view of sustainability, the Enrich in Africa (EiA) foresees the establishment of an EiA Center. This target will be achieved in 2023 whereby an Enrich Center will be established in the offices of one of the leading members of the Enrich Network, Methys, in Cape Town. The learnings from the project will be transferred to the Center staff.

## Low Carbon and Circular Economy Business Action in the Americas

- *Focus on Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Canada*
- **Sectoral Classification:** [CLIMATE](#)
- **Duration:** Since 2015
- More information: [Low Carbon Tech](#)

The overall objective of this action is to enhance the position the European Union as a leader in tackling climate change by promoting the decoupling of economic growth and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the Americas. The specific objective of the project is to establish long-term business partnerships in the areas of low carbon and circular economy between the EU and selected partner countries in the Americas.

By working closely with European industrial clusters and facilitating partnerships between European SMEs and public and private business partners from the countries in the Americas, the project promotes the adoption of low carbon technology by existing industry in the partner countries, promote the creation of new low carbon technology industry and foster the circular economy technologies in businesses in Canada and in preselected countries in Latin America.

The project brings together Europe's economic interests through support to internationalisation of European SMEs thus contributing to creation of jobs and growth with Europe's political ambition to remain at the forefront of addressing the global climate change challenge and could act as a significant example of European Economic Diplomacy in action in the Americas. The project works closely with industrial cluster intermediaries in Europe to promote joint business partnerships and develop commercially viable business projects with partner countries. The action builds upon the Cluster Internationalisation Programme for SMEs developed under COSME for the last 4 years, as well as on the Low Carbon Business Action projects successfully piloted in Mexico and in Brazil, were launched in January 2020.

## Responsible Business Conduct in LAC

- Focus on Latin America and Caribbean
- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 2011
- *More information:* [RBC LAC](#)

The Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean (RBC LAC) aims to promote responsible business conduct in nine Latin American and Caribbean countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru) financed by DG INTPA Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe Instrument. The Project aims to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the region by supporting responsible business conduct (RBC) practices in line with international instruments. The instruments, developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), namely the - OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, have set the global expectations on responsible business and are aligned and complement each other.

Responsible business conduct standards are playing a predominant role in EU regulatory efforts to promote responsible supply chains, as well as a means to promote sustainable development through its trade agreements. It will furthermore play a promising role as part of the accompanying measures foreseen under the forthcoming EU corporate sustainability due diligence directive.

Continuing on a successful Phase I under the Partnership Instrument (PI), Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean continues under INTPA guidance to engage public sector, private sector and civil society organisations to engrain RBC practices in line with international instruments as developed by UN, ILO, OECD. The programme primarily focuses on the agriculture (including forestry) and mining sector, which are two strategic sectors for the EU.

## Aviation Partnership Projects

- *South Asia, South-East Asia, China, Japan, South-Korea, Latin-America and the Caribbean*
- **Sectoral Classification:** OTHER
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- More information: [Technical Cooperation with Third Countries \(europa.eu\)](#)

The purpose of the actions is to enhance the role of the EU as a global actor in the domain of civil aviation. The project aims to strengthen cooperation between aviation authorities, facilitate market access for European industry, reduce barriers and promote industrial

exchanges, to increase mutual awareness of aviation best practices, promote EU standards, raise environmental protection efforts and encourage climate action.

## Regional

### Africa

#### The AU-EU Innovation Agenda

- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [New EU-AU Innovation Agenda to drive sustainable growth and jobs \(europa.eu\)](#)

The African Union-European Union (AU-EU) Innovation Agenda was endorsed at the second AU-EU R&I Ministerial in June 2023. It aims at translating research results into tangible outputs, support the enhancement of innovation ecosystems, create partnerships between research, education and innovation stakeholders and scale-up proven solutions. It focuses on the 4 priorities of the EU-AU High Level Policy Dialogue on Science Technology and Innovation: Public Health, Green Transition, Innovation & Technology and Capacities for Science. Several tools will be used towards its implementation: Horizon Europe through its Africa Initiative I and II, Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), national instruments from Member States on both sides, private sector funding.

### Asia

#### Responsible Business Conduct for green, digital and resilient supply chains in Asia

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [RBC ASIA](#)

Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) for green, digital, and resilient supply chains in Asia. The project is implemented in Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, with possible activities in Australia and New Zealand financed. The project is financed by NDICI Global Europe Instrument.

The objective of the project is to enhance knowledge and awareness of responsible business conduct policies (including EU and OECD approaches) as well as convergence, and harmonisation and mainstreaming of responsible business conduct in public policies and boost industry capacity to implement standards and engaging on cross-cutting issues in the supply chain, including mobilising businesses to advocate for public policy on responsible

business conduct. The actions respond to challenges of global concern and support EU trade policy, access to partner country market, and opportunities for EU companies.

This project is managed by FPI with support of European delegations in said countries.

## **Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**

### **AL-INVEST Verde**

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE
- **Duration:** 2021-2025
- *More information :* [Sobre AL-INVEST Verde - Programme AL-INVEST Verde](#)

The overall objective of the programme is to promote sustainable growth and jobs creation supporting the transition towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and a more circular economy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The programme will provide financial support, through a Grant Scheme, to innovative projects testing new approaches on sustainable economic practices, including where relevant the introduction of digitalised processes. The scheme will target mainly SMEs, business organisations and industrial clusters, research centres and universities, willing to test and adopt cleaner and more sustainable production processes as well as improve the sustainability of their products or services.

Each proposal should be submitted by a partnership which has to include at least one organisation from a Member State of the European Union and at least one organisation from a Latin American country where the action is to be implemented. This will provide a means to increase sustainable technical expertise, share of lessons learned, share Best Available Techniques (BAT) and ensure the EU added value into programme's activities.

The proposals will need to put forward concrete types of actions to ensure an effective replication and outreach towards a large number of SMEs taking into account the country and sector-specific characteristics.

Projects should address economic sectors<sup>7</sup> which present a substantial potential to produce bankable projects. Multi-country proposals will be allowed as long as they include only countries belonging to the geographical sub-regions.

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<sup>7</sup> Sub sectors will be defined in consultation with the national ministries in target countries, with EU Delegations and, when adequate, with relevant stakeholders. These sectors are connected to the key priorities of the EU Green Deal. The programme may consider (but not exclusively) the following sectors: (i) sustainable use/management of natural resources and biodiversity, (ii) promotion of fight against deforestation and forest degradation and deforestation-free agriculture, (iii) agri-food, including organic farming sustainable use of pesticides and promotion of bio economy, (iv) industrial sectors such as Plastics Textiles and leather, (v) buildings and construction. Special attention will be given as well to the areas of water and waste management and, in view of its importance in the demographics of the region, the area of smart cities must be also considered.

The innovative projects shall promote sustainable economic practices along the project cycle phase, such as inter alia:

- Design phase: use of eco-innovation and eco-design approaches supported by new technologies; etc.
- Production phase: introduction of resource efficiency practices (e.g., energy, water, etc.); reduction of CO2 emissions; industrial waste prevention/ minimisation/ reduction and management; promotion of circular economy and 3R practices (reduce, reuse, recycle approach) and business models; promotion of responsible business practices to change corporate policies benefitting the environment; compliance to EU and ISO standards for products, industrial processes and services; etc.
- Logistics and distribution phase: lowering CO2 emissions in the distribution of products and services to retailers and consumers and uptake of new business models based on renting goods.
- Consumption and end-of-life management: Adoption of schemes of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR); increase consumers awareness (promotion of recycling practices, information on traceability and carbon footprint of products); etc.

## **Neighbourhood East**

### **EU-EBRD Country-specific Investment Climate Reviews and Action Plans for Eastern Partnership (EaP)**

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [Eastern Partnership](#)

This regional project aims at supporting the development of sustainable and equitable economic growth models in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries which, in turn, will generate more investment and improve socio-economic conditions and employment opportunities for citizens. The Action builds on the EU-EBRD Country-specific Investment Climate Reviews and Action Plans (ICAP) for Eastern Partnership (EaP) Countries (Phase I), funded under the Grant Agreement ENI/2018/396-433 signed on 31 August 2018 and scheduled to be completed in April 2023.

**Neighbourhood East – Eastern Partnership (EaP):** There are several **bilateral and regional programmes** in support of SMEs and private sector development in the Neighbourhood East region. We also have bilateral and regional programmes helping those countries (Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia) that signed new Association Agreements (AAs) including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with the EU adapt to the challenges and opportunities of these new trade agreements.

### **EU4Business initiative**

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS & FINANCIAL
- **Duration:** Since 2021
- *More information:* [EU4Business](#)

The **EU4Business** initiative brings all regional and bilateral support to SMEs in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries together under one umbrella in order to increase access finance, improve business development services and create an enabling business environment.

As of 2021, the EU4Business initiative consists of a portfolio of 108 active projects in Access to finance, Business Enabling Environment or Business Development Services. In 2021, the EU supported a massive 78 045 SMEs across the EaP, of whom 31.32% were women-owned. In total, this support contributed to the creation of 66 678 new jobs, growing jobs by 8.87%. Across the region, SMEs supported by the EU grew on average in 2021 by 26.23%.

**EU4Business**<sup>8</sup> offers support at three levels, namely access finance. In 2021, a total of 19 026 SMEs benefited from Access to Finance supported by the EU, 1 045 in the form of grants and 17 979 in the form of loans. In the same year, 59 019 SMEs were supported by the Business Development Services Instruments. Across the EaP, a total of 463 government institutions including policy makers, regulators and enforcement agencies have been capacitated, with the highest number of organizations supported in Ukraine.

EU4Business data from 2022 on access to finance (A2F) in the EaP countries:

- 19,026 SMEs benefited from access to finance supported by EU, of which 36.15% were women owned
- 17,979 SMEs received loans (36.3% women owned)
- 1,045 SMEs received grants (33.49% women owned)
- 39 local financial institutions supported

### EU4Business: Connecting Companies

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 2021
- *More information:* [EU4Business: Connecting Companies](#)

The project, implemented by Eurochambres, aims at boosting economic development and supporting job creation by connecting SMEs and Business Support Organisations (BSO) from the EU and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region through B2B matching, twining study and a mobility scheme. This project is organised on a sectoral basis, which allows a more strategic approach, targeting the specific needs and opportunities of each sector and allow the creation of alliances between businesses from both regions.

The following sectors are selected: wine, bio-organic food, textile, tourism and creative industries.

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<sup>8</sup> Further information on regional projects under EU4Business available at [www.east-invest.eu](http://www.east-invest.eu)

## EU4Business: Eastern Partnership Trade Helpdesk

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** Since 2021
- *More information:* [EU4Business: Eastern Partnership Trade Helpdesk](#)

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) Trade Helpdesk is an EU-funded project under EU4Business initiative, designed and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) to boost trade competitiveness of the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) of the EaP countries within the region and the EU.

The Trade Helpdesk portal is a core element of the project providing an online trade intelligence gateway for companies and business support organisations in EaP countries. The web platform consists in 3 complementary modules: identify opportunities, market information, help center. The project also consists in data collection and capacity building.

## EU4Business: From Policies to Action

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 2021
- *More information:* [EU4Business: From Policies to Action](#)

The EU in cooperation with the OECD and other partner organisations evaluate SME policy-making in partner countries through the SBA (Small Business Act for Europe) Assessment. The assessment monitors the progress in the implementation of the ten principles of the SBA and measures convergence towards EU practices and standards. The SBA principles are designed to create a level-playing field for SMEs and to foster entrepreneurship and competitiveness. The SBA Assessment provides policymakers with a detailed overview of SME policy performance and gives direction on how to make improvements within each policy area.

The first phase of EU collaboration with OECD began in 2017. The project aims to improve strategic policy framework for private sector development (strategies/action plans) and the second phase focuses on SME digitalisation:

- Enhance institutional capacity of the government to deliver support to the private sector with a focus on SME digitalisation
- Enhanced capacity to monitor implementation of government policy
- Undertake peer reviews on competitiveness reforms carried out
- Undertake various studies, including the economic consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine in the region.

## Neighbourhood South

### EU-ILO programme to strengthen trade and investment policy reforms

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** Since 2013



- *More information: In particular their links with job creation and quality of work created at [ILO STRENGTH](#)*

The programme aims to strengthen the capabilities of partner countries to analyse and design sectoral, trade and investment policies that would enhance employment creation and better jobs; at assisting partner countries in the region in harnessing international trade and foreign investment to provide more opportunities for decent work as well as increase the number of productively employed workers.

Implementing partner is the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the programme makes use of various ILO instruments such as TRAVERA for value chain analysis, based on a successful experience in Morocco.

### **EU-OECD programme to Enhance Investment policies and Investment promotion in Southern Mediterranean Region**

- **Sectoral Classification:** INVESTMENT
- **Duration:** 2021-2025
- *More information:* [MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme](#)

The objective of the programme is to assist partner countries' ownership and capacity to implement investment policies and initiatives regarding investment aiming to enhance inclusive and sustainable growth and employment. This EU-OECD joint initiative aims at boosting private investment and job creation opportunities in the Southern Mediterranean region, through support to the implementation of sound and inclusive investment frameworks and policies, capacity building to investment promotion agencies (IPAs) in the region and networking, in particular with EU counterparts.

A second phase of this programme was signed in 2020. It is a continuation of the first phase on investment promotion in the Southern Neighbourhood, but it integrates a new component, focusing on the investment climate in the thematic windows covered by the External Investment Plan. To this end, the action will:

- Provide targeted policy advice and technical support on specific policy areas;
- Encourage a multi-stakeholder's approach for inclusive investment reforms that benefit all segments of the population.

### **Euro-Mediterranean Trade and Investment Facilitation Mechanism Phase II**

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** Since 2014
- *More information:* [Euromed TIFM 2](#)

This joint initiative between the European Union (EU) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) provides an online portal of information – the EuroMed Trade Helpdesk –, covering Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Türkiye.

During Phase II, the scope of the Euromed Trade Helpdesk will be expanded to include the following information and features for the eight countries:

- Investment related information (FDI flows)

- Export potential data to analyse untapped potential between the European Union and the eight Euromed countries
- Rules of origin information allowing users to benchmark available trade agreements at product level
- Notifications on SPS and TBT as reported by WTO member countries
- Trade in services data in selected sectors
- Expansion of the national focal point network to answer users' queries related to additional information and features (investment, SPS-TBT, Rules of origin).

## Pre-accession countries

### EU-OECD support to competitiveness and sustainability in the Western Balkans & Türkiye

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** 2022-2026
- *More information:* [Small Business Act Assessment](#) & [Competitiveness Outlook](#)

The European Small Business Act (SBA), a set of policy guidelines and recommendations to enable Member States to improve various aspects of the business environment for SME's, has become an important co-operation tool in the EU's relations with the "near abroad". In co-operation with the OECD, the European Training Foundation and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, a concise measurement and benchmarking instrument has been developed, to assess and compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of each country in different fields of the SBA. The ten policy dimensions of SBA have been unpacked and disaggregated into a number of indicators, allowing countries to score five different levels, depending on policy achievements according to these indicators. This process is an inclusive and participatory process, in which countries provide self and independent assessments and organise meetings of policy stakeholders to debate the policies and the assessments.

The process is a regular one, repeated usually every two years, to assess progress made over time. It has first been introduced in the Western Balkans in 2007 (Türkiye joined in the 2012 SBA assessment), then in the Mediterranean partner countries and subsequently in the Eastern European partner countries, implying that already more than 20 non-EU countries use the SBA to develop their SME policies. The findings of the regular reports based on comprehensive evidence-based assessment, are also often used to engage government authorities and stakeholders in the policy design process and implement reforms in specific areas where the EU (and other donors) could provide financial and technical assistance.

For the Western Balkans and Türkiye, a new project with the OECD (2022-2026) supported by the European Union, aims to address identified challenges to reinforce economic governance and integration, while strengthening resilient and competitive markets, in line with the OECD global relations strategy and the EU enlargement strategy, the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, its Western Balkans Investment Agenda and the Green and the Digital Agendas for the Western Balkans. The Action is a continuation of the ongoing OECD work in the region (i.e. [2021 Competitiveness Outlook](#) and [the 2022 Small Business Act \(SBA\) assessments](#)) with a new "green" focus. It will support the 2024 Competitiveness outlook

assessment, the seventh SME policy index edition for Western Balkans & Türkiye, and it will help Western Balkans governments in designing & implementing the circular economy roadmaps.

### Horizontal assistance: SIGMA

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [SIGMA - OECD \(sigmaweb.org\)](http://sigmaweb.org)

Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) is a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union, principally financed by the European Union. Its key objective is to strengthen the foundations for improved public governance in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, and hence support socio-economic development through building the capacities of the public sector, enhancing horizontal governance and improving the design and implementation of public administration reforms, including proper prioritisation, sequencing and budgeting. AA/DCFTA implementation is regarded as one of the strategic priorities for the most effective use of both TAIEX and SIGMA resources.

### Western Balkans Investment Framework

- **Sectoral Classification:** INVESTMENT
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [European Union and the Western Balkans \(wbif.eu\)](http://wbif.eu)

The main aim of the Economic and Investment Plan is to spur the long-term economic recovery of the region and foster regional economic integration with the aim to support a green and digital transition in the Western Balkans, the implementation of reforms required to move forward on the EU path and bring the region closer to the EU Single Market. All of this should lead to sustained economic growth and job creation. The Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) is the main financial vehicle for the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan investment flagships, notably in the fields of sustainable transport, clean energy, environment and climate, digital future, private sector and human capital development.

The Economic and Investment Plan identifies 10 investment flagships and aims to spur the long-term recovery, accelerate a green and digital transition, and foster regional cooperation and convergence with the EU. It will help attract public and private investments, backed by the Western Balkan Guarantee Facility.

The Private Sector and Human Capital flagships aim to support development of the business sector in the region, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). One major objective of flagship investments in support to the private sector is to develop the innovation ecosystems through innovation take up, access to finance, digital and green transition of micro, small and medium enterprises. WBIF also support the development of the global value chain in the industrial sector. In this endeavour, WBIF investments implement the main policy objectives of the Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth

and Sports (Innovation Agenda), that includes a number of actions supporting innovation and SMEs in the region.

## **Southern Mediterranean**

### **Enhancing Business Support Organisations and Business networks in the Southern Neighbourhood**

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 2018
- *More information:* EBSOMED

This 5-year programme promotes the Mediterranean Business Ecosystem by boosting investment and job creation in the region with a view to economic growth. This is being done through the strengthening of Business Support Organisations (BSOs) in the Southern Neighbourhood countries.

EBSO MED increases the overall capacity management of Business Support Organisations (BSOs) in the Euro-Mediterranean region by improving the services offered to SMEs, in particular those who want to internationalise.

#### **i. Strengthening start-up ecosystems in the South Neighbourhood countries**

The project contributes to the maturing of start-up ecosystems and aims to create an environment in which start-ups can innovate and scale up. In addition, it will support the development of start-up ecosystems and increase the capacity of local actors, through assisting innovation organisations and Tech Hubs in generating value-added activities, new sources of economic growth and employment. The project has started on 01/02/2022 and is being implemented by SPARK.

#### **ii. EUROMED Clusters - Enhanced cluster cooperation with the South Neighbourhood countries**

The project supports the development of industrial clusters and enhances cluster cooperation between South Neighbourhood countries and Europe in order to generate new sources of economic growth and employment. It will in particular provide assistance and capacity building to selected industrial clusters, networks and members, in most promising sectors, so as to achieve a better competitiveness in higher value-added products. Dissemination of successful experience for demonstration purposes will be ensured, specifically on innovative SMEs that are member of clusters in the region. It also cooperates closely with the European Cluster Cooperation Platform of DG GROW.

### **EU Initiative for Financial Inclusion/ Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP)**

- **Sectoral Classification:** FINANCIAL
- **Duration:** Since 2016
- *More information:* MED MSMEs

The EU Initiative for Financial Inclusion extends financing to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including support to innovative start-ups, in the Neighbourhood South. Through facilitating access to finance and providing MSMEs with the right tools, the initiative aims to increase their competitiveness, which in turn creates much needed jobs and powers economic growth.

Launched in 2016 in partnership with four leading European finance institutions (EFIs), the initiative provides funding through the Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP).

It is structured into five complementary regional facilities, with different lead financiers, namely: the European Investment Bank (EIB); the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); KfW; and Agence française de développement (AFD), representing a comprehensive package that addresses different aspects and tools for MSMEs in the region. The initiative has the potential to reach up to 200,000 MSMEs in the region through:

- Microfinance through local financial institutions and capacity building (SANAD), led by KfW
- Risk capital facility: Risk capital/venture capital to support SMEs, loans to microfinance institutions for on-lending to micro enterprises, led by EIB
- Advisory services to MSMEs (SBS), led by EBRD
- MSME credit lines and capacity building to local financial institutions, led by EBRD
- Guarantee funds to incentivise local banks to lend new funds to MSMEs, led by AFD

## **MED SMEs - Support to an enabling business environment for MSME development & financial inclusion**

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** 2019-2023
- **More information:** [MED SMEs – Support to an enabling business environment](#)

The project aims at contributing to an enabling business environment for MSME development and for their financial inclusion, in line with best European approaches (e.g., Small Business Act) and international best practices, in view of the important potential of MSMEs for job creation. This is done by supporting studies and by providing technical assistance to key stakeholders to ensure that:

1. Selected aspects of MSME development policies and regulations are better adapted to micro and small businesses' needs and contribute to a more conducive business environment for MSMEs;
2. Administrative simplification and regulatory impact analysis are promoted as an element of SME policy making and the private sector is associated to key phases of policy-making;
3. Selected aspects of MSME finance policies and instruments, notably concerning alternative financial mechanisms, are better adapted to needs and contribute to a broader and easier access to finance for MSMEs needs. Increased awareness of MSME needs by financial intermediaries including Micro Finance Institutions;

4. MSMEs representatives and relevant stakeholders are aware of financial instruments and tools available to MSMEs through a regional platform / coordination mechanism which enhances South-South dialogue;
5. Cooperation with and enhanced visibility of the “EU Initiative for Financial Inclusion” and of this programme will contribute to raise awareness and effectiveness of the Initiative as well as increase the reach out to MSMEs.

## SwitchMed

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE
- **Duration:** 2019-2023
- *More information:* [SwitchMed](#)

This action aims to support the transition to a circular economy in eight countries in the Mediterranean region (Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Algeria Morocco and Tunisia). It consists of three elements: developing a community of stakeholders linking similar initiatives and networks, exchanging information, and scaling social and eco innovations; training green business entrepreneurs and start-ups, empowering grassroots innovations, and providing capacity building for sustainable industry providers; and engaging with policymakers to establish a regulatory and policy framework to drive the sustainable products and services market. The second phase of the project (SwitchMed II) started early 2019 and will be under implementation until mid-2024 through a contribution agreement with UNIDO.

## Trade and Competitiveness Facilities

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE
- **Duration:** Since 2020
- *More information:* [Trade and Competitiveness Facilities](#)

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and European Investment Bank (EIB) Trade and Competitiveness Facilities are financed under the Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP). While the EBRD facility has been operational in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan, the EIB facility started its activities in Q4 2020. The facilities focus on value chains and cluster financing, and facilitate access to finance for SMEs and underserved companies in selected value chains; build capacity of financial intermediaries; improve competitiveness of selected sectors and prospects for trade and networks, exchanging information, and scaling social and eco innovations; training green business entrepreneurs and start-ups, empowering grassroots innovations, and providing capacity building for sustainable industry providers; and engaging with policymakers to establish a regulatory and policy framework to drive the sustainable products and services market.

The second phase of the project (SwitchMed II) started early 2019 and will be under implementation until mid-2024 through a contribution agreement with UNIDO.

# Bilateral

## Advocacy and business services for European companies in Canada through support to EUCCAN

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS *Duration: Since 2013*
- *More information:* [EUCCAN](#)

The objective is to serve and inform companies better on the conditions of EU-Canada trade, by i) ensuring widespread dissemination of sector-specific and targeted CETA information to EU companies and ii) re-arranging its work to be in a position to receive structured and sectoral feedback from EU companies operating in Canada and advocate on their behalf.

## EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE
- **Duration:** *Since 2019*
- *More information:* [ECECP](#)

The overall objective of this DG ENER led action is to enhance cooperation on energy contributing to a global transition towards clean energy. Phase I of the project primarily focused on policy component, while in Phase II it is intended to further strengthen EU-China business cooperation in the energy sector. Namely, project will seek reinforced business opportunities for innovative EU business in China's energy-related markets to support the shift towards clean energy. It will promote EU best-practices and solutions to improve market access of EU businesses to China's energy-related markets, facilitate meetings between relevant stakeholders, using in particular the opportunity of the annual meetings of the EU-China Energy Dialogue, and seek to involve business associations in the EU and in China. Lastly, it will continue to be closely linked to the policy component of this action.

## EU SME Centre in China

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** *2022-2025*
- *More information:* [EU SME Centre](#)

The EU SME Centre is a European Union initiative that provides a first line of advice and a comprehensive range of hands-on services to European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) wishing to develop their presence on the Chinese market, getting them ready to do business in China.

The Centre provides advice and support in four areas:

- business development
- law and regulations

- standards and conformity assessment
- human resources

Collaborating with external experts, the Centre converts knowledge and experience into practical business tools and services easily accessible online. In addition, the Centre provides training programs and one-on-one consultation services for SMEs from EU and SMP-associated countries. Furthermore, the Centre engages in advocacy activities on behalf of SMEs.

The Centre has been running since 2010 and is currently in its fourth Phase. It is financed through the COSME pillar of the SMP, and it is currently run by a consortium with four partners: the China-Italy Chamber of Commerce, the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, the Italy China Council Foundation, and the Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação.

### Water platforms/partnerships in India and in China

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE
- **Duration:** 2020-2023
- *More information:* [Water platforms/partnerships India and China](#)

EU-India Water Partnership (Phase II 2020-2023) is supporting the India-EU Water Partnership and facilitating coherent involvement of the EU and its MS in water-related issues of mutual interest, including on the Clean Ganga initiative of Indian Government by promoting policy dialogue, joint research and business development in the water sector between India and EU.

The set-up of EU-India Water Partnership and China-Europe Water platform will strengthen the official dialogues on water management and improve management in rural and urban areas of India and China with a positive impact on the environment of those countries.

- **India-EU Water Partnership (IEWP)**
- **China Europe Water Platform project**

These projects are bringing together governments, business, and other key stakeholders for the promotion of innovative approaches and for the elaboration of new policies and/or legislation on water protection, based on EU longstanding experience and vast know-how.

The approach followed by this project should favor transfer of relevant parts of EU policies and legislation, as well as best practices in the sector, thereby opening business opportunities for EU companies through the implementation of pilot demonstration projects showing effectiveness and cost-efficiency of new technologies and systems applied in the EU. These projects are implemented in close cooperation with EU Member States.

### EU-India Cooperation with the International Solar Alliance

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE
- **Duration:** Since 2018
- *More information:* [International Solar Alliance](#)

The purpose of the project is deepening the cooperation between the European Union and the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and its Member Countries by sharing European models,



policies, expertise and technologies to accelerate the clean energy transition in third countries and support the competitiveness of EU companies.

### EU-India Innovation Centre

- **Sectoral Classification:** R&I
- **Duration:** 2021-2023
- *More information :* [EU-India Innocenter](#)

Building on the EU-India Innovation Partnership, consisting of a network of 100 incubators (50 from Europe and 50 from India), the Horizon 2020 project called 'EU-India Innocenter' provides professional services to European start-ups and Innovative SMES to reach the India market. The services are hands-on services from scouting and selecting to explore and validation, before entering the accelerator phase. Following the support received by the InnoCenter, several European SMEs have reached the stage to enter the Indian market. The project runs from January 2021 to end of 2023.

### EU-India Resource efficiency initiative in India

- **Sectoral Classification:** CLIMATE
- **Duration:** Since 2023
- *More information:* [EU-India REI](#)

The purpose of the action is to support the India-EU Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Partnership, to foster the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources in India by supporting Indian policy making and by promoting EU standards and business best-practices on resource efficiency. This project is expected to establish partnerships between European and Indian businesses and stakeholders and encourage cooperation between private and public sectors on resource efficiency and circular economy in sectors of interest.

### Business to Business Cooperation with Japan and the Republic of Korea

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 2023
- *More information:* [B2B Cooperation with Japan and Republic of Korea](#)

The action supports the implementation of trade and investment agreements and economic partnerships. It builds on previous EU flagship programmes (EU Green Gateway to Japan, Korea and EU Business Avenues for Southeast Asia) that supported European businesses' internationalisation (mainly SMEs), market access, and increased turnover and business partnerships (including for technology development and innovation in key industry ecosystems). The project supports market access to Asian market for EU companies, notably SMEs and cluster organisations and building resilience and diversification of supply chains.

The project increases EU companies' competitiveness and internationalisation by facilitating business to business (B2B) matchmaking, by promoting exchange of know-how and the identification of market opportunities, and by building partnerships between European and

Asian enterprises. In doing so, the action will pursue greater visibility of EU branding and standards.

This project is managed by FPI with support of European delegations in said countries.

## EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation

- **Sectoral Classification:** TRADE & BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 1987
- *More information:* [EJCIC](#)

The EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation (The 'Centre') is an important first contact point for EU businesses that wish to enter the Japanese market, in particular SMEs. It is a unique joint-venture between the European Commission (DG GROW) and the Japanese government (METI). The Centre celebrated in 2022 its 35<sup>th</sup> year of existence and has over the years imposed itself as the gateway to Japan for SMEs and a trusted partner for European and Japanese businesses.

- The Centre provides a wide range of services to European businesses who want to do business with or invest in Japan. **The Centre provides guidance through its helpdesks** on EPA, tax, public procurement, technology transfer, regional cooperation and business cooperation with Africa, ASEAN & Latin America.
- **The Centre is the EEN's unique national contact point for Japan**, and as part of its EEN activities, the Centre organises 4 matchmaking missions per year, bringing about 50 SMEs to key trade fairs and matchmaking events. The Centre follows up and support these companies in their endeavour to access the Japanese market. In addition, the Centre also promotes European company profiles across its wide Japanese network and Japanese company profiles across the EEN network. Furthermore, the Centre offers logistical support office facilities for European SMEs. Around 16 partnerships agreements are signed every year between European and Japanese companies as a result of the Centre's support (visible part of the iceberg, those made known to the Centre).
- **The Centre organises webinars and seminars about market opportunities in Japan, sector reports, policy seminars, training programs for European managers to learn about the Japanese Business culture, lean management with company visits.** The Centre facilitates the exchange of know-how and experience by promoting R&D cooperation by Japanese businesses, research institutes and universities with European research programs, notably Horizon Europe for which the Centre is the National Contact Point for Japan. The Centre puts in contact European clusters and regions with Japanese clusters and prefectures via webinars, matchmaking events and a short-term mobility program in Japan for EU industry clusters managers.
- **The Centre has a traineeship program** that bring 20 European Master students in engineering and science in Japan for a one-year internship program in a Japanese manufacturing company. A similar program brings Japanese students to European companies.
- The Centre also runs a **Space helpdesk**, to support European businesses active in this sector, organising webinars and participating in trade fairs with them.

- Finally, the Centre runs the **EU-Japan Business Roundtable** that regroups over 80 senior executives from leading European and Japanese companies and organisations that represent a significant part of the EU and Japanese industry. The BRT's main objectives are to submit recommendations to the top Japanese and European Authorities so as to help develop trade and investment between the EU and Japan, and to encourage industrial cooperation in fields of common interest such as innovation, climate change, or industrial standards.

## Support facility for implementation of EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 2018
- *More information:* [EPA Helpdesk | EU-Japan](#)

The action aims at improving conditions for EU companies accessing Japanese markets through an increase and diversification of exports and/or investments, supporting more resilient, green and digital value chains and supporting the implementation of EPA. The activities supported by the project will cover organising outreach activities such as workshops to share knowledge about EPA and workshops on specific sectors and new market opportunities facilitated by EPA. The action will also provide sectoral analysis and studies to identify market access opportunities as well as an analysis of existing legislative and regulatory measures, and technical support for monitoring the implementation of EPA.

### The specific objectives:

- Support high utilisation rate of the EPA by strengthening the presence of EU companies in Japan especially in priority sectors, namely clean energy, digital and connectivity, government procurement and agri-food sector;
- Support market access activities to ensure the removal of the trade barriers, including sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) barriers, by the Government of Japan in line with the provisions and deadlines set out in the EPA;
- Reinforce market access monitoring to address implementation of government procurement and other EPA provisions with the aim improving EU's capacity to tackle barriers that block trade and investment; and
- Promote the EPA with business and other civil society organisations, both in the EU and in Japan.

This project is managed by FPI with support of European delegations in said countries.

## European Business and Regulatory Cooperation Programme (Taiwan) (EBRC) II

- **Sectoral Classification:** BUSINESS
- **Duration:** Since 2018
- **More information:** [Taiwan EBRC II](#)

This action aims to advance the EU's trade and economic interests in Taiwan and in the broader East Asian region by building on the success of the European Business and Regulatory Cooperation programme 2014-2017 (hereinafter referred to as EBRC 1).

In accordance with the guidelines of the European Economic Diplomacy and the Partnership Instrument (PI), the EBRC 2 pursues three specific objectives:

- The project shall reinforce the EU's influence on global challenges (ref: Objective 1 of the Partnership Instrument), in particular on climate change, energy security and environmental protection.
- Second, EBRC 2 shall promote a predictable and secure environment for investment and business by promoting EU regulatory principles and standards, in particular in the areas of Intellectual Property protection, food safety, non-tariff barriers to trade, organic agriculture and other mutually identified areas.

## Financial instrument section

The EU provides a variety of instruments which can provide financial support for projects and other operations. The Information on how to apply for EU financial instruments can be found in the section below.

### InvestEU Fund

- **Sectoral Classification:** INVESTMENT
- **Duration:** Since 2023
- *More information:* [InvestEU](#)

The InvestEU Fund may support through financing and investment operations, projects between entities located or established in one or more Member States and extending to third countries or territories if there is a partner in those countries or territories.

Third countries can contribute to the InvestEU Fund and each of the policy windows in order to participate in certain financial products, except under the strategic European investment window.

Third countries are defined broadly as:

- Countries with an existing comprehensive agreement with the EU. This includes:
  - European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), namely Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

- Acceding or candidate countries.
- Potential candidates.
- Countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy.
- Other third countries, as long as they enter into a specific agreement covering the participation of the third country to any Union programme.

*i. InvestEU - SME window*

*More information: [InvestEU Fund – SME window](#)*

The InvestEU SME window facilitates access to debt and equity funding for SMEs. It targets primarily SMEs, but also small midcaps, and aims to enhance their global competitiveness, at any stage of their development, and in particular those that are perceived as high risk and lack sufficient collateral.

The InvestEU SME window builds on the success of several EU-level financial instruments from the previous Multiannual Financial Framework (COSME Loan Guarantee Facility, COSME Equity Facility for Growth, InnovFin SME Guarantee Facility, InnovFin Equity, Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee).

Financial products under the InvestEU SME window have been designed with a strong policy angle – they aim to support the twin transition of SMEs to digitalisation and sustainability, provide innovation and solvency support, and - in line with the objectives of the Capital Markets Union (CMU) - help diversify sources of financing to SMEs by supporting equity investments in companies in order to internationalise, pursue IPOs, target gender-smart investing, scale-up etc.

## European Investment Bank

- **Sectoral Classification:** INVESTMENT
- **Duration:** Since 1958
- *More information:* [EIB](#)

The European Investment Bank (EIB) operates in EU Member States and in more than 140 countries. The EIB supports the internationalisation of EU businesses by contributing to the European Economic diplomacy in multiple ways, comprising:

- a) Financing of innovation and skills within the EU, which contributes to improving the competitiveness of the EU economy;
- b) Support to outward and cross-border investments including connectivity operations
- c) Enhancing opportunities for EU companies to participate in projects as suppliers or contractors;
- d) Support to working capital facilities in favour of SMEs and Mid-Caps active in EU/non-EU trade;

The EIB lending facilitates access to finance in support of SMEs through local financial intermediaries both inside and outside the EU. Products for SMEs are being proposed by these local partner banks and financial institutions<sup>9</sup>.

The EIB Group already proposes a palette of products for SMEs and Midcaps (loans, trade finance guarantees and equity) that can support the internationalisation of companies, including with third countries. The EIB can also provide long term financing in support of EU presence in partner countries through foreign direct investments (FDI) within areas covered by the external mandates' objectives or at its own risk, and in support of access to financing for SMEs from the EU investing in the external mandates' regions.

An example of EIB support to the internationalization of European businesses (SMEs) is the partnership with the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) where the two institutions have joined forces to set-up a loan facility for SMEs and midcaps from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) seeking to expand to the EU and, conversely, for EU SMEs and midcaps seeking to invest in or expand to LAC. The main objective is to increase trade and internationalisation of companies, and ultimately support employment. In parallel to these specific initiatives, credit lines with EU financial intermediaries have been set up in support of the internationalisation of EU and non-EU companies, for example the AKA Bank Export Finance Platform (2017) or the Malawi Credit Line for Exporting Industries (2013) in support of agricultural investments or the ICO Internationalisation Loan for SMEs (2016).

The EIB directly supports the construction of vital essential infrastructure (transport and logistics, energy, water, telecommunications and digitalisation, etc.) improving the critical enabling environment for the well-functioning and nurturing of EU and non-EU businesses. Investments favouring regional integration are particularly targeted to tackle and reduce barriers to trade and investment. The Bank supports all phases of innovation and research and development, knowledge and technology transfer as well as entire value-chains for specific sectors (agri-food, renewable energy, circular economy, resource efficiency, etc.). In 2019 the EIB Board of Directors approved a new set of ambitious targets for climate action and environmental sustainability which will have an impact on the EIB **share of its financing dedicated to climate action**. The aim is to reach 50% of its operations in 2025.

Several main players in Climate action and sustainable development are EU companies so these financing operations often support EU exports.

The EIB also provides direct financing in support of the outward and cross-border investments of EU companies, with more than 4600 FDI projects have been financed by the Bank since 2000. The EIB also enhances opportunities for EU companies to participate in projects outside the EU as suppliers or contractors, while also supporting working capital facilities in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and mid-caps active in commerce inside and outside the EU.

Dedicated trade finance and export credit facilities supporting the internationalisation of EU SMEs and mid-caps have also been implemented in some countries.

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<sup>9</sup> List of EIB Partner Banks available at [www.eif.org](http://www.eif.org)

For example, such a Trade Finance Facility (TFF) is implemented in Greece. Under this instrument, EIB is providing guarantees to non-Greek banks covering their risk vis-à-vis their Greek counterparts for letters of credit and other trade finance instruments, to mitigate the risks of non-payment. The EIB as part of the Team Europe Initiatives and in view of following the policy first approach will support projects of strategic interest outside of Europe, including those intended to help EU SMEs to transform new challenges into opportunities. The EIB finances private sector activities globally, including in countries outside the EU. For this, the EIB utilises several instruments.

The EFSD+ framework under NDICI foresees a dedicated window for EIB private sector activities in addition to windows that will target sovereign and sub-sovereign lending. Under this investment window, the EIB aims to support private sector investments in partner countries that contribute both to the promotion of EU economic interests, including through FDI and help Partner Countries to achieve the SDGs and achieve better integration into the world economy. If agreed, this instrument will enhance the EIB's ability to contribute as part of the overall toolbox for the implementation of the EU Economic Diplomacy.

The European Investment Bank will continue assessing further contribution to enhancing European companies' internationalisation.

EIB offices in 28 countries outside the EU: [info centre](#)

## Funds Under Shared Management

- **Sectoral Classification:** INVESTMENT
- **Duration:** 2021-2027
- *More information:* [SME Competitiveness](#)

Support to SME competitiveness is a top priority for the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). In addition, the European Social Fund (ESF) supports SME competitiveness mainly via support to self-employment, entrepreneurship, business creation and development of related skills.

The ERDF investment priorities include entrepreneurship promotion, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms including through business incubators, developing and implementing new business models for SMEs, in particular with regard to internationalisation, supporting the creation and extension of advanced capacities for product and service development and supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets and to engage in innovation processes, save energy and resources. Thus, the ERDF supports the growth and competitiveness of SMEs, with internationalisation of SMEs considered an important aspect of these objectives.

Programmes under shared management can, in principle, finance a whole range of SME internationalisation measures making companies fit for global competition and often include funding and advisory support services for market access (e.g. participation in trade fairs and foreign trade missions), financial services (export guarantees, loans), market intelligence, assistance in identifying business partners, support to international activities of clusters and

business networks, the creation of cross-European value chains and the development of more competitive 'world-class' clusters, etc. Internationalisation including interregional cooperation is also a goal of smart specialization strategies, the policy frameworks including ERDF research and innovation investments for and within SMES.

The choice of specific objectives and measures, the development and publication of calls and the project selection are the responsibility of national and regional authorities based on seven-year Programmes negotiated with the Commission. Therefore, not all of the over 300 shared management programmes that include SME competitiveness investments foresee internationalisation support measures, as the programmes are conceived to complement national or regional support programmes and focus on key issues for the specific region or country.

- Information on the ERDF and explanations on how to access the funds are available at [Info-regio - EU Regional and urban development \(europa.eu\)](http://info-regio.europa.eu)
- Up-to-date information on projects and beneficiaries co-funded by EU Cohesion policy can be found at [Kohesio \(europa.eu\)](http://kohesio.europa.eu)
- A Guide on how to support internationalisation of SMEs using the structural and investment funds has been recently published by the European Commission: [Business friendly environment](#)
- Information on how to apply for EU financial instruments: [www.access2finance.eu](http://www.access2finance.eu).



# Annex

## EU Business Fora (national and regional)

- **Sectoral classification:** BUSINESS

EU Business Fora are unique events to promote active dialogues between public and private stakeholders, local and European. Over ten EU business fora took place in 2022 and over 20 are planned for 2023 at regional and country level, most of which will be first editions. The organisation of these events is led by the EU Delegation together with the local government as well as the private sector (local and EU). A strong mobilisation of EU businesses will be a key feature of success, this includes all EU business networks (business organisations, chamber of commerce, etc.).

In 2022, EU Business Fora took place in countries such as Angola, El Salvador, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Uganda and Iraq. At regional level, the 7<sup>th</sup> EU-Africa Business Forum (EABF) was held in February 2022 and the EU-ASEAN Business Summit took place in December 2022.

In 2023, business fora are expected to take place in countries such as Niger, Kenya, Tanzania, Nepal, Rwanda, Argentina, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, and Mozambique. A regional business forum between the EU and Latin America and Caribbean is also scheduled for July 2023.

## EU Business Fora in/with Africa

- **Sectoral classification:** BUSINESS
- More information: [EU BF AFRICA](#)

The Commission has been organising the EU Africa Business Forum (EABF) since 2006. The event takes place in margins of the EU-Africa Summit. The last edition of the EABF took place in February 2022 in Brussels. The EABF gathered business organisations from both continents. 120 partners organised 30 high level events, over 200 online workshops and showcases and more than 20 signatures. Over 18,000 people registered to watch more than 200 hours of meetings on the online platform.

The EABF is an important opportunity to bring together representatives from the leading business organisations and political communities of the EU and Africa to discuss challenges, propose solutions, strengthen their bilateral relationship and look forward to constructive cooperation in the future. The EABF will become as permanent structure this year and enhanced activities will start at the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024.

## European Business Organisations Worldwide Network

- **Sectoral classification:** BUSINESS
- More information: [EBOWWN \(eboworldwide.eu\)](#)

The EBO Worldwide Network (EBOWWN) is one of the biggest networks representing EU-wide business interests in third countries with presence so far in more than 40 markets. The

main objective of the network is to promote the exchange of views between their members, associations and their host countries, to raise awareness on EU policy priorities and to improve the market access for European business in third countries. DG GROW finances one annual meeting per year for the network which allows the Commission to receive actionable and up to date information from businesses and industry regarding issues, challenges or opportunities in third countries.

To become a member of the EBOWWN the local European Business Organisation needs to receive a letter of endorsement from the local European Union delegation, thus their work with the delegations is crucial. In particular for establishing synergies on the ground, providing valuable intelligence and enhancing ways of promoting European businesses and most notably SMEs abroad.

### Economic Missions abroad led by Commissioners together with European Businesses

The economic missions abroad led by Commissioners as well as senior management from European Commission help to further foster cooperation, address market issues, and ensure new market opportunities for European Industry at a high political level.

Several economic missions have been organised in 2022-2023:

- Vietnam and Singapore, Agri-food (10-16 July 2022)
- Japan, Agri-food (planned: 2-6 July 2023)
- India, Agri-food (planned: autumn 2023 tbc)

### **Missions and events that took place in 2021:**

- Online TAIEX flagship seminar on European Green Deal for the Enlargement, Eastern Partnership and Southern Neighbourhood countries (26-28 January 2021 Director level)
- Online open policy dialogue session with Japan on circularity in plastics (23 March 2021 - Director level)
- Online World Circular Economy Forum + Climate' (WCEF+Climate) co-hosted by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (15 April 2021 - Executive Vice President & Commissioner level)
- Online TAIEX flagship workshop on 'Sustainable production and consumption' for the Enlargement, Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood countries (27-28 April 2021 Director level)
- Online Green diplomacy webinar with Kenyan Ministry of Environment (11 May 2021 Commissioner level)
- Online circular economy event for 3 Western Balkan countries (Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina) in cooperation with TAIEX and EPPA program (26-27 May 2021 - Director level)

- Online 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Circular Economy Forum co-hosted by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra and Environment and Climate Change Canada - ECCC scheduled to take place on 13-15 September 2021
- Circular Economy workshop back-to-back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and Climate Change scheduled to take place in Cairo in early October 2021
- Second EU Circular Economy Seminar organized by the EU Delegation in Ghana together with DG ENV and INTPA scheduled to take place in October 2021
- Sub-regional workshop on Circular Economy for 3 enlargement countries (Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia) in cooperation with TAIEX and EPPA program scheduled to take place in October/November 2021
- High-level follow up conference on circular economy organized by the EU Delegation to Malaysia under the Partnership and Cooperation (PCA) Facility scheduled to take place in 2022 back-to-back to the launch of the ASEAN Platform on Circular Economy

## GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

### In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you online ([european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en)).

### On the phone or in writing

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696,
- via the following form: [european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/write-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/write-us_en).

## FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

### Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website ([european-union.europa.eu](https://european-union.europa.eu)).

### EU publications

You can view or order EU publications at [op.europa.eu/en/publications](https://op.europa.eu/en/publications). Multiple copies of free publications can be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local documentation centre ([european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en)).

### EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex ([eur-lex.europa.eu](https://eur-lex.europa.eu)).

### EU open data

The portal [data.europa.eu](https://data.europa.eu) provides access to open datasets from the EU institutions, bodies and agencies. These can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The portal also provides access to a wealth of datasets from European countries.

